

## CHRIST THE APOTHECARY.

COMPILED FROM MATERIAL COLLECTED BY EDWARD KREMERS.

CONCERNING pictures of Jesus as an apothecary, which are quite rare, Dr. Hermann Peters gives an account in *Janus*, V, 438-440, which translated from the German reads as follows:

"In the Berlin *Pharmazeutische Zeitung* some time ago it was pointed out that Jesus is also very frequently represented symbolically as an apothecary. Paintings in oil of this character occur in the Evangelical Church at Werder on the Havel and in Lehnin. More recently the Hanover *Courier* called attention to a similar painting in the court chapel at Wittgenstein near Laasche. The artist of none of these pictures is known, but the last one mentioned bears in the upper left-hand corner the inscription, 'Well-Appointed Pharmacy of Souls,' and at the right on a white ribbon, "The blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth us from all sin.'

"The Germanic Museum at Nuremburg possesses a painting which likewise bears the inscription, 'Well-Appointed Pharmacy of Souls.' The year 1731 is given and the picture owes its existence to the brush of the artist Maria Appeli. As motto it bears the verse from Matt. xi, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The subject of the picture is a well-equipped dispensary in which Jesus is represented as the apothecary. In one hand he holds a balance and in the other a banner with the inscription, 'Come and buy without money and without price,' (Is. lv. 1). On the jars which stand in the foreground of the picture the labels do not indicate names of drugs, but instead may be read the remedies of the Christian religion, such as faith, love, hope, long suffering, constancy. The jars on the shelves in the background bear mostly the notation of actual *materia medica* whose names have some reference to the Christian religion, such as Christ-flower (hellebore), Benedict-root (bennet), crosswort (groundsel), etc. A large number of jars were labeled with the

names of materials which found their special application in the cult of superstition. Such are the mandrake, *rhiz*, *polygoni* (*Siegwurz*), springwort, all of which were famous for their magical powers even in antiquity. Perhaps this pious picture originated in some cloister cell. An "S." before the name Marie Appeli makes it probable that the artist was a sister in some convent.

"In the National Swiss Museum at Zurich there are two glass pictures from Thurgau in the windows of the historic pharmacy,



CHRIST AS APOTHECARY.

Stained glass window by unknown artist (1630). Original in the Swiss National Museum at Zurich. From original photograph in the possession of Dr. Edward Kremers.

and these are here reproduced. In both the Christian Saviour is shown as a physician dispensing medical remedies, characterized by the scales he holds in his hand and by the jars of medicine surrounding him. The circular painting is executed mostly on leaded panes of red and blue glass. At the left appears the heraldic device of the donor's family with the inscription: *Michael Weltz, Maria*

*Zündlini seel. sein erste Ehefrau und Sussanna Federlinn, sein andere Ehefrau, 1630.* ("Michael Weltz, the late Maria Zündlini his first wife, and Susanna Federlinn, his second wife, 1630.") In the gar-



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Stained glass window by unknown artist. Original in the Swiss National Museum at Zurich. From original photograph in possession of Dr. Edward Kremers.

land which frames the picture are the words: *Wer glaubt, vertraut und hofft in mich, des rechter, wahrer Arzt bin ich*

[To whoso trusts and hopes in me,  
A true physician I will be.]

"For a legend on the ribbon above the Saviour, passages from Is. lv. 1 and Matt. xi. 28, have been selected. The pharmaceutical jars on the table behind which Jesus is standing bear on their labels the names of Christian remedies for the soul, such as truth, justice, faith, love, hope, mercy, constancy, patience, etc. Of the *materia medica* of earlier centuries only the crosswort (groundsel, Lat. *senecio*) is included. This doubtless owes its mention on the picture more to its name than to its effect, of which Becher says in his *Parnassus Medicinalis Illustratus* (1662) :

"Creutzwurtz heilt, tödt die Würm, stellt ein das Blutausspeien,  
Die Leber thut sie auch von grosser Hitz befreien.  
Den weissen Weiber-Fluss, das Gliederreisen auch  
Curieret Creutzwurtz, ist in Wunden in Gebrauch.

[Crosswort heals: kills worms and stops the spitting out of blood,  
The liver too it frees from heat and cures it as it should;  
Neuralgia in the joints and many other ills  
Including wounds, are cured by crosswort, herb or pills.—ρσν.]

"The unknown artist who shows us Jesus as an apothecary on the second square stained glass, has used almost the same Biblical passages for his purpose and has embodied the same ideas and thoughts. He especially emphasizes faith as a Christian remedy, symbolizing it by the eucharist cup in the foreground. This of course corresponds to the modern attempt to cure by means of suggestion. The effects thus attained rest mainly upon the patient's faith in the treatment and in its divine representative (*geistlichen Träger*)."

The year preceding the appearance of the articles by Dr. Daniels and Dr. Peters, Professor Kremers, who is editor of the *Pharmaceutical Review*, published an editorial account in that periodical (August 1899) of the picture at Werder of which Dr. Peters barely makes mention. We here quote Dr. Kremers's brief article in full, and reproduce the illustration which has been taken from an original photograph of the painting in Dr. Kremers's possession:

"That Moses and his sister Miriam, also other representatives of the sacred scriptures have figured in alchemistic writings, is generally known to students of the history of chemistry. That the person of Christ should have been used in similar capacity to lend dignity to a calling may not be commonly known. Indeed very few apothecaries may have known that their calling has thus been idealized in painting, inartistic though it may be in execution. The painting referred to has recently been rescued from oblivion by Mr. W. L. Schreiber of Potsdam. The original is to be found in the

church at Werder where it was discovered, one might well say, by Mr. Schreiber in a very dusty condition, wellnigh forgotten. At his instigation it was cleansed and restored. Before being put back in position he had it photographed. It is due to his kindness in remembering the writer with a copy of the photograph, that we are able to reproduce it for the benefit of the readers of the *Review*.



CHRIST AS APOTHECARY.

Painting by unknown artist in the Evangelical church in Werder on the Havel. From original photograph in the possession of Dr. Edward Kremers.

A copy of the painting is to be found in the church at Plötzin, near Werder. Mr. Schreiber is of the opinion that the painting belongs to the beginning of the eighteenth century. That the painter was no great artist becomes apparent, for instance, from the left arm which is misdrawn. The colors, however, are said to be good. It



is supposed that some pious apothecary donated both paintings. Though no artistic treasure, the painting is one that must naturally appeal to every pharmacist whose "love of profession" is not solely influenced by the almighty dollar.

"Christ is represented in a conventional manner as far as features and dress are concerned, but is surrounded by a number of apothecary's containers and in the act of weighing. In the left hand he holds a pair of hand scales. The one scale pan evidently contains a weight or weights. Whether these are of the conventional form or whether they are symbolized does not become apparent even from the original photograph. The other scale pan contains small crosses which have been taken with the right hand from a jar marked "*Kreutz Mintz*," (cross mint).

"The containers bear the labels "*Gedult*" (patience), "*Hoffnung*" (hope), "*Liebe*" (love), "*Bestendigkeit*" (steadfastness), "*Hülffe*" (help), "*Friede*" (peace); the one to the extreme right, "*Gnade*" (grace) and the small flask on the center block, "*Glaube*" (faith), evidently containing the most precious drug of all.

"The three scriptural passages quoted on the standard are here-with reproduced in the English of King James's Version.

"'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' (Is. lv. 1.)

"'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.' (Is. lv. 6.)

"'And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' (Ps. l. 15.)

"Whereas the above are taken from the Old Testament, the following scriptural passages inscribed on the block are taken from the New:

"'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' (Matt. xi. 28.)

"The fourth line on the painting is taken from the last part of the twenty-ninth verse:

...."and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

"The last quotation is made up of the second half of each of verses 12 and 13 of Chapter IX of the Gospel According to St. Matthew.

...."They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.'

...."for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'"

Two years later referring again to this picture, the *Pharmaceutical Review* quotes from Theodor Fontane in *Havelland* (p. 462) a description which we repeat in full in English translation:

"Here there is among others an ancient altar-piece which bears the very surprising but significant title, 'Christ as Apothecary.' It is so exceptional, so unique of its kind that a brief description of it will not be amiss here at the end of our chapter. Christ, clad in a red robe, if we are not mistaken, is standing behind a prescription desk, an apothecary's scale in his hands. In front of him in a straight line stand eight canisters which bear the following inscriptions: Mercy, Aid, Love, Patience, Peace Constancy, Hope and Faith. The canister with Faith is the largest of all.<sup>5</sup> In each container there is a spoon. In front of the canisters, as the most important thing lies an open sack of crosswort. Christ is represented as taking a handful of it in order to bring the scale into equilibrium one pan of which is laden with guilt.

"The inhabitants of Werder, probably on Schöнемann's authority, have dated this picture back to Catholic times. This is a great mistake. The Catholic period displayed no such want of taste. Such trifles were indulged in under the after effects of the second period of Silesian poetry at the beginning of the last century when it became the fashion to work a thought or picture to death, carrying it out with relentless consistency to the end. Moreover if the theme should cause a doubt to be raised the technique would at once set it at rest.

"In 1734, the year in which the church of the Cistercians was renovated, a pharmacy was opened in Werder. It is extremely probable that its fortunate possessor took upon himself the privilege of gratefully and hopefully donating this curiosity of art which has just been described."

Together with this report of Fontane's, Dr. Kremers reviews Dr. Peters's description of the two stained glass representations of Christ as apothecary which had in the meantime appeared in *Janus*, incorporating the illustrations of them also. Comparing the art of these paintings and of that at Werder, Dr. Kremers says: "Whereas the painting in Werder is very poorly executed, these two represent some artistic skill even if they may not be regarded as masterpieces. Of the two here reproduced the second is the more dramatic both in

<sup>5</sup> This is not correct. The container is the smallest of all; neither is it a *Büchse*, but a flask. However, it occupies the most prominent position. Fontane evidently wrote the above from insufficient notes or from memory.—E. K.

its conception and execution. The first reflects somewhat too strongly the 'well-to-do' apothecary, whereas the second represents Christ as the man with a mission. Though at first sight it makes the ap-



CHRIST AS APOTHECARY.

From the collection of the late Dr. A. P. Hellmann, of Vienna, founder of the *Pharm. Post* and late honorary secretary of the Austrian Pharmaceutical Society.

pearance of being rather carelessly sketched, its significance grows upon more careful study. This can hardly be said of the first."



Besides these three pictures so fully described, Dr. Peters mentions three others; the one at Lehnin, which is probably a copy or the original of the one at Werder; the one at Nuremberg painted by S.[ister] Maria Appeli; one in the castle of Wittgenstein by Laasche. To these Dr. Kremers adds a seventh in the possession of Alois Hellmann, a prominent apothecary of Vienna. Evidently Dr. Kremers had not at that time seen a copy of this picture since he gives no details concerning it. However, in the first number of the *Pharmazeutische Post* for 1905, the editor, Dr. Hans Heger, refers to Dr. Kremers's article in the *Pharm. Rev.*, gives a résumé of the seven paintings of Christ as apothecary there enumerated, and adds a reproduction and full description of the painting which had belonged to Dr. Hellmann, late honorary president of the Austrian Pharmaceutical Society, who had died since the publication of Dr. Kremers's article in 1902. The description of this interesting painting as given by the editor of the *Pharm. Post* reads in an English translation as follows:

"Some years before Dr. Hellmann's death he inherited this picture from his wife's uncle, Mr. P. Willim, the beneficed curate of the church of St. Peters at Vienna, who loved him and respected him greatly as a connoisseur. The painting probably originated in some ancient cloister and is not so remarkable for artistic value as for its originality and antiquity.

"Jesus is represented as standing before a prescription desk in a dispensary, with a pair of hand scales in his left hand. The shelves behind him are filled with antique apothecary jars, canisters, and flasks whose inscriptions are still for the most part legible. The following labels have been deciphered:

"a. In the top row: liberality, purity, righteousness, fear of God, obedience, holiness, constancy.

"b. In the middle row: liberality, mercy, cheerfulness, fervency, good nature, openheartedness.

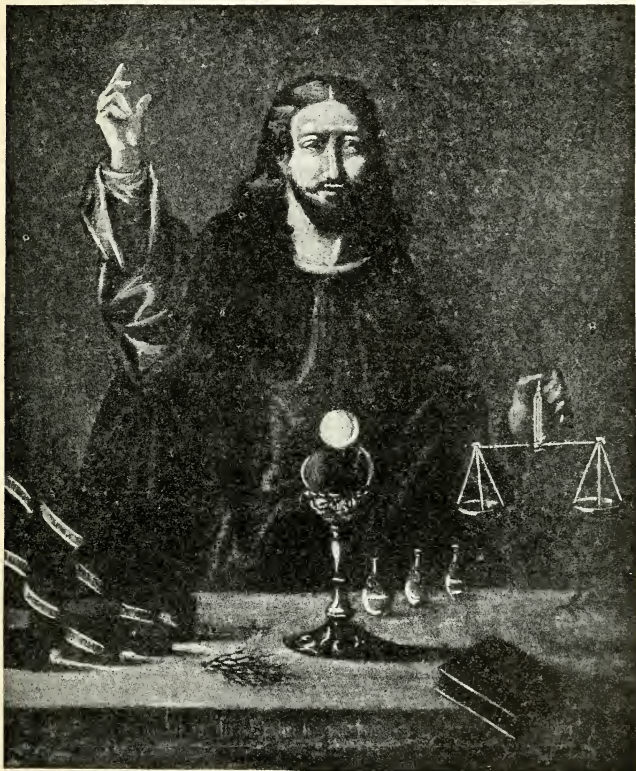
"c. In the lowest row: heart-water, eye-water, power-water, etc.

"This pharmacy evidently boasts of none of the remedies known to *Materia medica*, but virtues which are considered remedies of the soul, whereas in other pictures medicinal drugs are also mentioned.

"On the prescription desk lies an open book in which may be read *Selig sind die Gottes Wort hören und dasselbe halten*. [Blessed are they who hear God's word and keep it]. In front of the book we see the three divine virtues, faith, hope, and love, symbolized in the chalice, anchor and heart; and upon a paper lying beneath them may be read in German the inscription: "Come to me, all ye that are

heavy laden and I will give you rest; call to me and I shall hear you; seek and ye shall find; ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you."

Dr. Heger made a special effort to obtain some reproduction

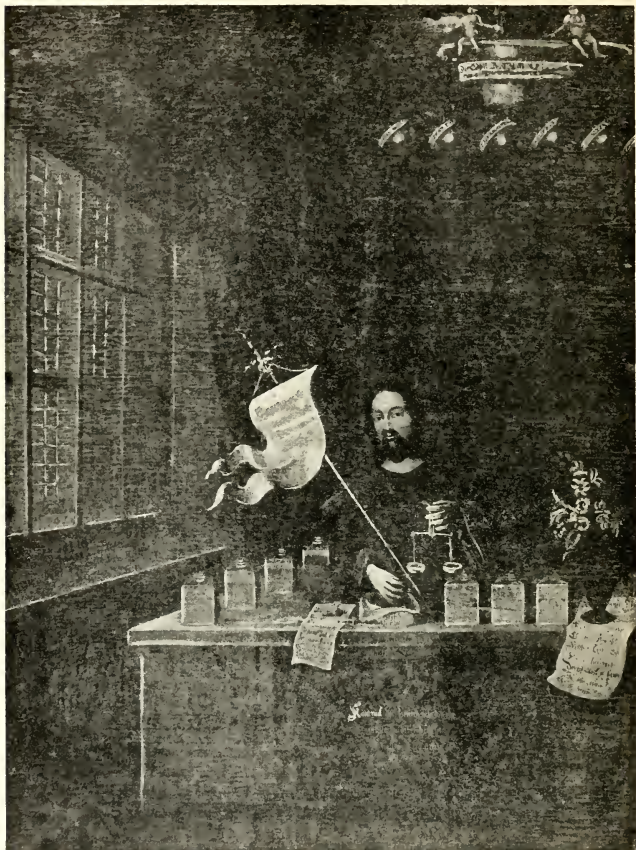


CHRIST AS APOTHECARY.

From the collection of Adolphe Grimus at Vienna.

of the Nuremberg painting by Maria Appeli, and that at Wittgenstein by Laasche which were passed over lightly by Dr. Kremers and Dr. Peters, but without success. Of the former he received

word from the Museum that "the attempt to photograph the picture, 'Christ as Apothecary,' has been made time and again. It has proved,



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An antique painting in the Nuremberg Museum. From a photograph in the possession of Mr. Joseph Jacobs of Atlanta, Georgia.

however, that the picture is in such condition that it can no longer be photographed. Its artistic value is very slight." Dr. Peters wrote



him also in the same connection, "The painting has become very dark, so that it is only clearly distinguishable when moistened with water. My attempt to procure a photograph of it also failed because of the dark hues of the painting." Dr. Heger was likewise unsuccessful in obtaining a photograph of the Laasche painting.

A. Brykczynski, who holds a high place in French art circles, contributed to *Revue de l'art chrétien*, of May 1907, an article on the subject in hand in which he quotes largely from the *Pharm. Post* and indirectly from Dr. Kremers, but also records another painting



PANACEA.

After a copper engraving of the 16th century in the Germanic Museum of Nuremberg.

of Jesus as an apothecary which belongs to the fine private collection of Adolphe Grimus, of Vienna, who purchased it in a poor pharmacy in Upper Austria. The picture which dates from about 1650 is thus described:

"Christ's face is young and his hair is long and black. The garment he wears is black and red. Jesus is standing before a table and holds a scale in his left hand, while his right hand is raised. A chalice with the host stands in the center of the table and bears the



inscription. "Faith." On either side of the chalice are canisters with the inscriptions: constance, prudence, hope, compassion, moderation. The labels on the flasks are illegible except one which reads "eyes." Under the scale may be seen the word "justice," and below the table the text from Matt. xi. 28, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

In addition to these eight instances in which Christ has been represented as an apothecary we know of but one more. This also comes from Nuremberg, an antique painting found in the *Pharmaceutical Museum* there by Joseph Jacobs of Atlanta, Georgia. The painting is not mentioned in the official catalogue of the Museum and is not dated.

It is instructive to note how in former centuries people believed in the all-curative power of medicine. An engraving of the sixteenth century by an unknown artist represents medical science as Panacea, the all-healing one. Furthermore it was a common notion of the day that people expected to cure their bodily ailments by soothing them with spiritual means, and we cannot doubt that in this way much suffering has been assuaged although scarcely obliterated. Thus we learn that what we now call Faith Cure, Mental Healing, or Christian Science, is not so new as to deserve the name of New Thought. It is based upon an ancient belief and has been practiced through centuries. Indeed we cannot doubt that even in periods of which we have not sufficient historical documents, it existed and was utilized both in religion and in popular medicine.