

A PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW - NO. 41

MIKE DEEMING WRITES:

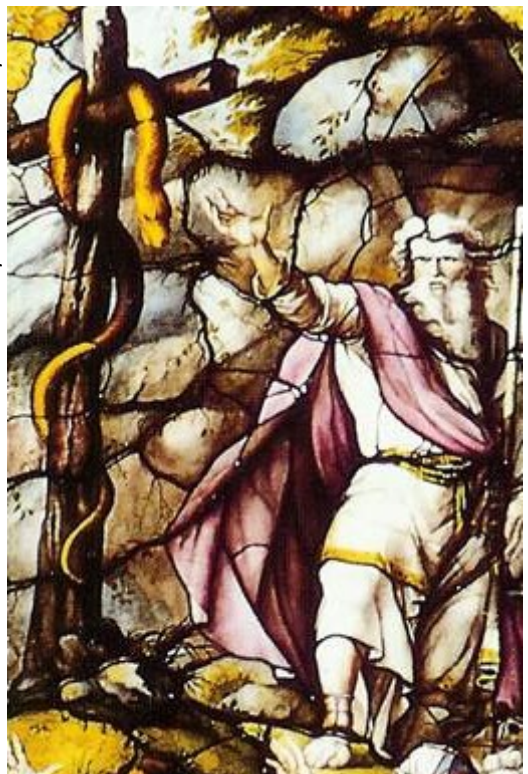
Healing is a central tenet of Christianity and it is widely depicted in the Cathedral's windows. Most of the images relate to Christ's miracle cures – the window which is a memorial to Dr Martin Coates[1] (opposite the tomb chest and marble effigy of William Longespee) depicts four such miracle cures, including this one of Christ raising the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7)[2]. Others are in the Trinity Chapel south window and in the St Thomas and St Edmund Chapel windows. Another window shows Christ and the woman of Samaria (John 4) and Isaiah bringing water to the city (Isaiah 22) - it commemorates Andrew Bogle Middleton's campaign to replace the Salisbury drains, improve the fresh water supply and thus reduce the risks of outbreaks of cholera.



Another image from the Old Testament is Moses and the Brazen Serpent, in the clerestory window above the Quire. The staff wrapped with a bronze serpent is known as the Nehushtan (2 Kings 18 and Numbers 21) and seeing or touching the staff saved Israelites from the plague of snakes. The image is a powerful one and was included by Michelangelo in his painting of the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

A similar story occurs in Greek mythology, that of Asclepius, the Greek God of medicine, whose snake-bound staff became a symbol of medicine from the 5th Century BC.

The rod of Hermes (left), known as the caduceus and featuring two snakes winding around a staff (often winged), is associated with his role as the messenger of the gods. In Roman mythology, Hermes is known as Mercury. This rod is regularly mistakenly used as a symbol of medicine instead of the rod of Asclepius (right), especially in the United States. This confusion



may also be part of the reason that the Hermes logistics service recently changed its name to Evri!

None of the windows mentioned above actually feature pharmaceuticals because the



exponential growth in prescriptive medicine has largely taken place in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It reinforces the argument that the various military nursing corps should be represented in the Cathedral windows, as it was they who administered care and medicine during WWII. Thus it was in 1982 that the insignia of four such corps were included in the new

Chapter House east window, one of which – the Princess Mary’s RAF Nursing Service Association - includes the caduceus.

[1] See Alastair Lack, ‘Medical Men and their Monuments in Salisbury Cathedral’, *Sarum Studies* 7

[2] Picture courtesy of Paul Smith, ‘Salisbury Cathedral : Windows in the West’

