

## Joseph Weissenberg, “Faith-Healer” (1928)

### Abstract

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The charismatic prophet Joseph Weissenberg gained a following in the first third of the twentieth century for his purported ability to cure people of their ailments by laying on of hands and a type of fresh cheese known as quark. At the height of his fame, Weissenberg had the ability to hold hundreds of thousands in rapt attention, and in 1926 he founded his own church. The self-described “Weißkäseheiler” (white-cheese healer) had attracted such a dedicated following that some of his flock took all of their money and possessions and joined him in building a new town for believers, located about 30 kilometers south of Berlin. Dubbed “Friedensstadt” (City of Peace), Weissenberg and his followers broke ground in December 1920 and eventually completed a large church, a clinic and spa for healing practices, a water works, homes, and a school. By the time of Friedensstadt’s completion it ranked as one of the largest private settlements in Germany.

Weissenberg later faced criminal charges in a November 1930 case that grabbed headlines in Berlin, both because of Weissenberg’s celebrity and because it involved a child who had gone blind after receiving one of his “Miracle Quark” [Zauber-Quark] treatments. Initially sentenced to six months in prison, an appeals court later exonerated Weissenberg, and even the baby’s parents forgave him. The case had become so well-known that Kurt Weill even wrote a satirical song about it called “Das Lied vom weißen Käse” [The Song of White Cheese].

Weissenberg was just one of many charismatics, prophets, faith healers, and spiritual gurus who managed to fascinate and then captivate people during the Weimar Republic. Particularly in times of upheaval and uncertainty, some Germans sought hope and guidance through radical self-renewal or in the support that came from tight-knit communities of fellow believers. This photo taken in 1928 shows Weissenberg (left) and one of his “mediums” [Werkzeuge] who, like him, were supposedly able to heal the sick by laying on of hands.

### Source

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Source: Joseph Weissenberg and one of his mediums with a patient, 1928. Unknown photographer. wikimedia commons. Available online at: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c0/De\\_assistent\\_van\\_de\\_Duitse\\_gezondbidder\\_en\\_profeet\\_Joseph\\_Weissenberg\\_\(staand\)\\_legt\\_bij\\_een,\\_SFA022006080.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c0/De_assistent_van_de_Duitse_gezondbidder_en_profeet_Joseph_Weissenberg_(staand)_legt_bij_een,_SFA022006080.jpg)

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