

CONSIDERING THE CASE AGAINST PADRE PIO FAKING THE STIGMATA WITH CHEMICALS

Padre Pio allegedly carried the nail marks of Jesus' crucifixion in his hands and feet. He had a wound in the side. A vision supposedly imprinted them. Iodine and carbolic acid seem to have been the ingredients of the marks. There is no evidence that Pio was marked all the time for he kept the wounds hidden and revealed them when he had a purpose.

Padre Pio: Miracles and Politics in a Secular Age page 31 tells us that Pio's alleged wounds were examined by the subprefect of San Severo and the subprefect's reported stated that the stigmata were almost circular in appearance. They had a dark yellow colour as if made by iodine tincture (page 31).

Professor Enrico Morrica, a scientist, stated in an article that Pio's marks looked like iodine was used to dye unbroken skin and that Pio's cell smelled of lysoform or iodoform and that a bottle of black carbolic acid was found in it (page 33, Padre Pio: Miracles and Politics in a Secular Age).

The book showed that Pio had been secretly getting supplied with carbolic acid.

Padre Pio Under Investigation: The Chemicals

In pro-Pio book, Padre Pio Under Investigation, Francesco Castelli we read the following.

Pio had been ordering veratrine which can be used to make fake wounds according to his own Second Deposition which is kept by the Vatican (dated 1921). The book claims that he just, as he said, was using this substance only to play jokes on the other monks. Again no evidence is given that these jokes took place. There is no record of these jokes or testimony. Pio himself asserted as the book says that he only ordered a lot of it because he didn't know that this was too much and that it was poisonous! No evidence exists that Pio really didn't know. If Pio had been using it to play jokes it would have poisoned his friends.

The friars supposedly used a tiny amount of the veratrine powder once on Pio to make him sneeze. When he found out about this surely he would have been told that only a small amount was used? He knew fine well that he didn't need all that veratrine for a joke. And it was an expensive joke! The only practical joke was making the stigmata presumably! At least the Church is not lying and trying to explain away the order for veratrine as a hoax planted to discredit Pio or something.

The friars would have been disciplined for carrying out a joke like that on Pio who was never a well man. Perhaps the joke story was invented by Pio. He wanted to cover up what he really wanted the veratrine for by pretending that he wanted to use it to get back at them for the joke they played on him.

The book says that Pio ordered carbolic acid from outside the monastery in secrecy as he didn't want those who brought it to him to know he had got it without prescription. It is alleged by Pio himself in the same Vatican document that he did not hide this from his brother friars. Why did the pharmacists reveal his secret order? They would not have broken confidentiality over something as trivial as exposing somebody who merely gets stuff without prescription. Anyway Pio was not worried about people finding out he had no prescription. Why would pharmacists seek a bad name for giving out drugs without prescription? They spoke out because Pio was using their services to pretend to be a miracle man. What other reason would it have been?

In the Fourth Deposition, Pio was asked if he kept the order of the acid secret from his brothers. His response this time was that it did not concern his brothers. Evidently he is indicating he lied before when he said he didn't hide it from them. He said he wanted it because he knew how to administer injections to boys at the boarding school. If that was true then why hide it from his brothers for they did injections too? Where was it kept? It would have been put in a place where anybody could find it if it were needed. Pio as a monk was not allowed to keep things as if he owned them. And it is reported that Pio never did injections. His superior who knew him well stated that in 1921- see The First Deposition of Father Lorenzo of San Marco, Superior of the Capuchins, San Giovanni.

Pio also stated in that deposition that the secrecy was simply so that those bringing the acid wouldn't know they were carrying a dangerous chemical. Again that does not hold water. It was packed well enough. They would have carried chemicals before. The pharmacist would have warned them. Pio was lying.

Pio came across as childlike and innocent to many people who met him. This does not fit his above average knowledge of chemicals. He even used the term starch glycerolate in his Third Deposition to the Vatican. When the Vatican asked him

about veratrine and carbolic acid they didn't need to clarify anything as he was so familiar with them. Why the interest in chemicals and in particular ones that could be used to fake stigmata?

The book responds to claims that Pio used iodine to preserve the wounds. Pio told the Vatican in his Fourth Deposition that he was using iodine for the bleeding and nothing else and said he used it on all his marks. Accordingly, the book uses the excuse that Pio used it not to preserve the wounds but to stem the bleeding. It did not work that well then according to most of the photographs! In the Fifth Deposition Pio declared that he used the iodine for two years. If it was not working why was he so keen on getting it and applying it so much? But why iodine? Using a substance that preserves wounds is a strange way of coping with bleeding. He evidently did want it to maintain the wounds. If we don't believe those medics who said the wounds were the result of the application of iodine then we are gullible idiots. Pio claimed later he stopped using the iodine.

Pio told Father Lemius who was investigating him that he used it to disinfect his wounds. (Genuine stigmata will not need disinfection!). So the Church says it was to stop the bleeding.

Alarming, Pio swore on oath he was not making the marks himself in the Fifth Deposition after showing himself to be a liar.

Catholics have to resort to speculation and rationalising and making excuses to get around the suspicious elements in Pio's behaviour. If we start thinking the way they do we will never be able to tell a fraud from a genuine wonder worker.

The Main Arguments against Stigmata Fraud

OBJECTION: Author Frank Rega (*Padre Pio and America*, 2005) wrote: "The boys in the Seraphic College could not understand why [Pio] seemed to be hiding his hands under his garments during the classes that he was teaching. The Father Guardian, Padre Paolino, noticed that Pio appeared to be covering up red spots on his hands with the sleeves of his habit. However, he was not too concerned since he and Padre Pio had recently received burns on their hands from carbolic acid. The boys had needed injections to fight the Spanish Flu which was raging at that time. Due to a shortage of doctors, Padres Paolino and Pio administered the shots, using carbolic acid as a sterilizing agent." Pio was trying to hide his marks because they were stigmata. He did not make them with carbolic acid deliberately or otherwise.

REPLY: Why cover up? It is said that Pio and the other man did not know they should have diluted the acid. This is unlikely. The human eye easily sees the difference between a red spot and a wound. Have you ever mistaken a red birth mark for a wound? Paolino observed only that Pio had red spots. He thought they matched carbolic acid marks. If Pio was trying to cover them up, it was in a clumsy way. Had he no fingerless mittens then? Did he want them to be seen? A good trick to accomplish that is to mess about with the sleeves. That gets attention to the marks one is supposedly trying to hide! The objection does a better job of showing that Pio was using the acid to make wounds that he was pretending to be embarrassed about.

This information though meant to deny Pio was cheating with the stigmata shows he was hiding his hands before he got them and was getting red spots. He got a trial run for his fake stigmata. The Church, while investigating Pio for beatification, had the information but chose to dismiss it as irrelevant but tellingly gave no evidence why it had to be dismissed. This should not have been done full stop.

The secret note to the pharmacist for what seems to be used to make the marks, the note that gave him away was very clandestine as if some ploy was happening.

Also, if Pio had been using carbolic acid to sterilise it would have been diluted so his burn marks were deliberate and came from using concentrated doses as an experiment.

We see that if it is true that Pio used pure carbolic acid on the boys he injected, he would have known by then that it was dangerous and burns. Yet the notes he wrote in secret requested undiluted acid!

OBJECTION: Carbolic acid or phenol is toxic.

REPLY: Pio might not have used the chemicals to make the stigmata very often. The toxic effects could then have been minimal. Were they? He was a sickly man most of the time. It seems that he was not able to keep food down very well. Maybe he was accidentally poisoning himself?

OBJECTION: The acid would have cauterised the wounds. They would have stopped the bleeding.

REPLY: There is no account of blood seeping from his wounds. There was just the scabs. And the cauterisation would have

been limited by the presence of the dense scabs so bleeding was still possible. And there is evidence that Pio only used the acid on his hands and not on his side and could have used the blood from his side which he probably simply just cut.

And there is not a single certificate to the effect from any medical professional who saw the wounds that excluded a role for carbolic acid in the production of the hand wounds.

How does carbolic acid affect the skin? "Corrosive. Rapidly absorbed through the skin with systemic poisoning effects to follow. Discoloration and severe burns may occur, but may be disguised by a loss in pain sensation."

Pio never really showed signs of pain despite pretending the marks were hurting. He had no problem walking despite the "wounds" on his feet. The burns get worse and more irritated if they are rubbed. They look more like scabs and Pio was using iodine as well which accounts for their crusted appearance and colour.

OBJECTION: The pharmacist's testimony about Pio's use of the acid was procured and submitted to the Vatican by the Archbishop of Manfredonia, Pasquale Gagliardi, a crook.

REPLY: The testimony came from the Vatican archives and there is no dispute about its reliability.

The Archbishop did not procure it. And even if he did that does not make it necessarily dubious. If we have to assume the worst about the Archbishop in order to defend Pio then this is at the price of disobeying Jesus who said we must always judge fairly and with careful unbiased consideration of the evidence. Is Pio to come before Jesus Christ in importance?

OBJECTION: Pio would have had scars had he been making the wounds himself. There was not a mark on him when he died.

REPLY: There is no evidence at all against the following theory. Pio made superficial wounds but only when he intended to show them off. Otherwise he just pretended to have them and that was the real reason for wearing the mittens. Why mittens and no bandages? We have only his word for it that he bled every day from his hands. Sometimes blood may have come from a wound (the side?) created just for the purpose of making blood to put on the hands and feet. Sometimes Pio could have just made scabs on his unblemished hands as if they had been wounded and bleeding.

Plus Pio usually settled for just having a mark instead of a side wound and marks on his feet instead of foot wounds. He might have had hand wounds and lets suppose he had. The hand wounds seem too convenient. Why wounds there and nowhere else? Were they there just for show?

Pio having unblemished skin on the side and on the feet cannot be taken as evidence that he was not making the wounds himself. Perhaps there were no wounds or they were too light to leave scars!

And we only have the word of a few believers in him that there were no scars. Nobody knows. Pio's carcass was displayed with the mittens on.

OBJECTION: Pio was so sincere and honest. He wouldn't defraud.

REPLY: People as - if not more - seemingly sincere and honest as Pio did it. Also Pio had psychological problems and might not have been intentionally dishonest.

English Messiah Annie Girling did all the things that Pio did and more. She made great sacrifices to found her own religion and lived in poverty. She had stigmata but didn't show them off. They were never photographed. In fact Pio showed his off accidentally on purpose a few times. Both Girling (page 296) and Pio wore coverings on their hands to hide the alleged marks. She was convinced that she would never die. She claimed visions and revelations. Like Pio, no marks were found on her dead body. Three people at her grave said they saw her rise from the dead (page 444).

In England's Lost Eden on page 24 she had a vision of Jesus at Christmas 1864 during which stigmata appeared in her hands and feet and side. Pio allegedly got his marks in a vision too. Her wounds reputedly bled and she hid them from everyone barring a few (page 439). Pio did the same trick.

Pio was never actually observed bleeding by any medical or scientific professional. It is easy to be a stigmatist if you can get people to take your word for it that your blood on your hands means your hands bled! People like Therese Neumann are suspect stigmatists for they never let anybody actually see the blood coming out.

TERESITA DE VECCHI

Here is a story. "Teresita De Vecchi, went to San Giovanni Rotondo on one occasion in order to make her confession to Padre Pio. As she waited in the confessional line, she was able to see Padre Pio clearly. She noticed that his customary half-gloves covered his hands completely. Teresita had a great desire to see the wounds in his hands. At the very moment she was thinking about his hands and wishing that she could see them, Padre Pio slowly pulled up one of his gloves so that his entire hand was exposed. Teresita noticed that his hand was very white and smooth. In the center of his palm was a large crust of clotted blood which reached almost to his fingers. After a moment, he slowly pulled the glove back down over his hand.

Teresita made her confession to Padre Pio and before she left the confessional, she kissed his hand. She became instantly aware of a strong smell of carbolic acid. After she left the confessional, it lingered in the air around her for several hours. When she returned to her home, she could not get the thought of Padre Pio out of her mind. She kept thinking about the intensity of his dark and piercing eyes and the terrible wounds in his hands.

Several weeks later, Teresita was on a train trip to the city of Lugano in southern Switzerland. As she passed through a mountainous region, she looked out the window and saw the town that she had grown up in. A feeling of homesickness swept over her. Her heart was aching as she thought of her dear family. Precious memories of days gone by flooded her mind. Suddenly, she noticed the same smell of carbolic acid that she had perceived when she kissed Padre Pio's hand in the confessional. She knew then that Padre Pio was near and was aware of her sadness."

Carbolic acid affects the lungs adversely. Pio frequently had respiratory problems ...