

PADRE PIO AND HIS WEB OF DECEPTION

St Padre Pio was an Italian Franciscan who said he got the visible stigmata in 1918 after having pains in his hands and feet and side on and off since 1915. Jesus was supposedly nailed hands and feet to a cross and got stabbed in the side. A stigmatic is a person who carries similar wounds as the result of a miracle.

Pio was only officially investigated three times and that was in 1919. If he was a fake, he just needed to fool people that year and it would be easier afterwards. The evidence is this is what happened.

There is no evidence but Pio's testimony that the wounds appeared suddenly. There is no evidence of major tissue modifications and the unblemished skin when he died would indicate that the evidence is against. There is no evidence that Pio tried to treat them with the aid of a doctor. Any help given by a doctor would only be as good or as bad as Pio would let it be. There is no evidence that the wounds bled. If he made the side wound that could have been used to make the hands seem to bleed. The absence of infection means nothing. There was no sudden disappearance of the wounds. Their perfect disappearance could be down to them not having been real in the first place. Nothing matches even the Church criteria for supernatural stigmata.

Pio was surrounded by adulation from the start of his career as a saint to be. It led him to the pious fraud of the stigmata and sustained him in keeping it up. Had his stigmata been real, it would have been holes like those made by nails. Nobody was able to put the finger right through the hand wounds. Unbelievers are accused of never being satisfied with the evidence for the supernatural. That is not true. We would recognise somebody who had a hole right through their hand that say vanished in later years completely like Pio's did as something not naturally possible so we would see it as supernatural. We have no reason to believe in Pio's stigmata as supernatural. The Church never hid the fact that Pio had access to chemicals with which to make the marks. It simply refused to believe he was using them for that purpose. It is like saying that somebody who is 90 years of age and who has brown hair is telling the truth that they are not dying their hair even though they keep bottles of dye in their bathroom. Pio was maliciously deceptive as his fake stigmata enabled him to popularise the Catholic notion that suffering is to be welcomed. He soon learned that hiding the alleged marks won him more fame as religious people love mysteries and displays of humility whether real or intended. There is no evidence that he had the marks apart from the few times he let them be seen. There are plenty of Catholic religious claims about miracles and apparitions in the world. But why is it the ones where people are caught faking are very few and far between? There should be more of them. When Spiritualism started out, its reports about miracles were put to the test and one loved medium after another was exposed as a fraud. The Catholics then are ignoring signs of faking or saying nothing. How can we be expected to trust Pio?

On June 17, 1921, Pio took an oath on the gospels that he never suffered from nervous disorders and that he never used perfumes though he smelled of perfume. He swore on the gospels that he did not make the stigmata marks. If we can cast doubt on his veracity, then he is guilty of swearing to the truth of lies before his God. And we can. Pio was a liar of the most manipulative kind.

Pio using Healing Treatments for the Stigmata

Pio even took on healing treatments for the wounds (page 9, Who is Padre Pio? page 7, The Bleeding Mind). This may indicate that Pio was trying to pretend the marks were miraculously staying put despite the intervention of medicine. Or it indicates that Pio did not see them as a miracle. To look for a cure would be like defying God who may have originated the wounds ie a sin. His supporters suppose he just took the treatments to convince the sceptics that the wounds were real and miraculous but that would not stop them being sceptical for he could have kept them open with acidic solutions. What Pio was really up to was this: he was trying to persuade people that he did not make the wounds himself and accordingly wanted to get them cured. Pio with his masochistic penances and the absence of infection in the wounds could not seriously expect us to believe that he really wanted a cure. I repeat Pio was giving a false impression of himself and his wounds. He was being very manipulative.

Pio Lets it Slip that Wounds are not Miraculous

Pio told a couple of young girls to listen to their father who warned them that kissing his hand would lead to infection (Who is Padre Pio? page 37). This is a denial of the supernatural nature of the marks. It shows that he feared they could turn septic. More importantly, it shows he knew far more than he let on about the nature of the wounds. Perhaps he had overdone the wounding and did get infections though this immunity to disease is boasted by the followers of Pio to prove that he had miracle stigmata. Pio was indicating then that there were times the wounds turned septic that only he knew

about. When Pio lied to the girls and when he knew fine well that loads of people do dirty things with no harmful effects and that the risk was nothing it shows he did not like anybody seeing his wounds too closely at least at that particular time. The wounds would naturally look more convincing at some times rather than others and especially if he was making them himself.

Rome expressed scepticism about the wounds in 1923

In 1923, Rome declared that nothing supernatural had been proven about the wounds. The Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office decreed in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* that “after due investigation” that nothing supernatural had been determined in relation to Pio and that the faithful must accept this (page 99, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*). This is very important for less was known then about magic tricks and chemicals that keep wounds open and the power of the mind than is known now. The wounds then would have seemed supernatural indeed for the same reason that the cures for smallpox would have seemed miraculous to many. This shows that the Church did find indications of possible fakery. For believers, the Vatican is to be considered reliable if it says the wounds are inexplicable but unreliable if it says they may have been faked. Rational! And the Vatican to this day has not definitively accepted the wounds as supernatural. If proof appears that he faked the wounds the Church will say that he made them unwillingly and without intentional fraud for he is a saint so we can put this down to his psychological problems.

People were not allowed to interview Pio or write about him in Church decrees issued in 1926 and 1931. Yet in the early days of the stigmata Pio once claimed that the wounds were painful for the Lord did not give them to him for a decoration (page 9, *Who is Padre Pio?*). He was declaring the wounds were from God which was something that only the Church had the right to decide. Pio was not very bright and he knew he was not a theologian, psychologist or a doctor. Many would say this is evidence of his arrogance and false respect for the Church.

The End Comes...

Believers claim that when Pio's health deteriorated in old age the stigmata marks began to fade. This was observed in summer 1968 so that by the time he died there was no trace of the stigmata (page 283, *Padre Pio: Miracles and Politics in a Secular Age*). Maybe he was less particular in making them or was too ill to do so! Incredibly at the Mass of 20 September 1968, it was noticed that Pio had no marks at all on his hands.

The sources say that the healing of the stigmata was gradual. The bleeding slowly stopped as well. There is nothing unusual about bleeding wounds healing.

Dr Sala had a look and the hands and feet and chest of Pio's corpse and found the healing was complete. The skin had no trace at all of wounding. Dr Sala stated that the healing was an even greater miracle than the stigmata itself and claimed that where there had been only decaying flesh and indeed no flesh at all, fresh new tissue had regenerated. Now any reasonable person would take this perfect skin as proof that there never had been deep fissures in the first place. And even more so when no doctor confirmed definitely that Pio had deep fissures. Dr Sala is being unprofessional.

Sala himself had not examined the wounds so now he just takes it for granted that the legend about the wounds being right through Pio's body was true. That is bias of the highest order. The unprofessionalism is stunning.

Pio died a few days later. Fr Carmelo found that there was no indication left on the corpse that the wounds had ever been there (page 283, *ibid*). Such was the dishonesty of the Church that it had mittens put on the hands in the coffin as if the marks were still there and still had to be concealed! The excuse was to prevent the faithful coming to hasty conclusions about the absent stigmata.

Did those who had authority over the wake fear that the faithful might conclude that the stigmata was a hoax? That is unlikely. The real reason was that as the official position was that the stigmata was possibly natural and not miraculous it was hoped to discourage the faithful from putting a supernatural interpretation on the disappearance of the stigmata.

Some Thoughts

The Padre Pio stigmata case is interesting and also disturbing. Why are people so fond of lying to themselves and others that miracles and magic happen and are very believable? Why do so many have no conscience about such a thing? Why do they distort facts and lie and bully those who doubt or seek evidence against the alleged miracles and magic? They like feeling chummy with some magical entity such as God or Jesus or Pio. It gives them the illusion of power. It's about feelings. The sceptic is the one whose honour stands out. She sacrifices the illusion of security and control in order to put truth first. There are some dishonest sceptics yes. Our distaste for the arrogance of seeking a sense of control over the uncontrollable must not be allowed to drive us to such duplicity.

The burden of proof is on those who say the stigmata could not have had a prosaic explanation.

The burden of proof is on the person claiming the phenomenon is real, rather than the person offering possible explanations of how it is faked. We sceptics see no proof or at least evidence of an impressive quality for the miraculous nature of the marks. The evidence we are offered is an insult. Interpretations are thrown at us and called evidence. Sceptics are insulted and accused of being NECESSARILY biased against Pio. Just because the burden of proof is not on us we are slandered and our integrity impugned. Sceptics can be unjustly biased but not always.

Luzzato found that Pio was getting chemicals that could have made the marks spirited to him.

Liars (yes you Ms. Tornielli!) in the Church rationalise all Pio's lies away. They even accuse Luzzato of not mentioning how Pio said what he wanted the chemicals for. He did. They fear that Pio may have been using them for their intended purpose but also for a darker purpose - to fake the stigmata.

Honest sceptics are not biased for its not their fault that the burden of proof is on the believers. It is not bias to expect those who say Pio's marks were miracles to give us proper evidence before we will believe. They are the ones who are biased and they are trying to bully us. Our critical examination of Pio is self-defence.