

Stigmatic Sorcery

Jesus Christ supposedly bore five wounds after his crucifixion. Padre Pio, St Gemma Galgani, St Catherine of Siena and St Francis of Assisi allegedly received the same marks by way of a miracle. There have been many stigmatics whose wounds baffled their doctors and whose marks have never been declared believable by the Church.

The Church only accepted the wounds of St Catherine and St Francis of Assisi and St Teresa of Avila as miraculous. If God did a miracle to show the Roman Church was genuinely of divine origin he would make sure that the Church would support believers in the miracle of stigmata. Some stigmatists have wounds in their left sides and others in their right sides. Hardly any have the wounds in the wrists where Jesus would have had them if he had been nailed to the cross. Some have nail formations of flesh in their hands and feet and others have gaping holes. This suggests that fraud or suggestion is behind them. Stigmata demonstrates that the Church arbitrarily chooses what miracles to accept. It is strange that Church investigators maintain that hysteria or self-hypnosis can produce the wounds for neither can change the shapes of noses so why should they be able to make wounds? It is either a fraud or a miracle.

Some say that if it is a miracle, then it is not a miracle from God. The thought that a loving God would violently put wounds on a person is insane. If the miracle is not from God then who is doing it? It does not cast Catholicism in a good light if it is worshipping a cruel God and ignoring his bad side.

The suggestion of some that there might be people who have unusual levels of electricity in their bodies that enable them to subconsciously and sometimes consciously produce the wounds through suggestion is odd because you would expect some of these people to have been able to program their bodies to live to 200. If you can open wounds in your hands by desiring the wounds then you should be able to change the breakdown rate of your body or slow it down dramatically.

Science has verified that some people under extreme stress and fear for their lives can sweat blood like Jesus allegedly did in the Garden of Gethsemane before his crucifixion. Surely under suggestion or hypnosis it would be possible for one to produce this bleeding from certain areas of the body corresponding to the crucifixion marks of Jesus Christ? A person like that has never been found with perhaps a couple of exceptions mentioned in Ian Wilson's *The Bleeding Mind*. It is possible that nobody can induce the wounds but themselves which is why most hypnotists fail to produce the wounds. You would need the circumstances to be right to produce your wounds and you want to believe they are supernatural so hypnosis should normally fail to produce them. The suggestion would need to be extremely strong and working for a long time. It would need to involve a deep pious desire to suffer with Christ by having miracle wounds which would prevent hypnosis from producing them for the person does not want naturally induced wounds.

All stigmatists, however, may be frauds. What is sure and certain is that the very fact that they claim to have these wounds means we should regard the wounds as having nothing to do with calling us to obey the Church. They are not signs and it is a mistake to allege that they are. The fact that a person of dubious morals, Jesus, is glorified by the stigmata is a clear warning signal and the fact that the crucifixion is more an assumption than a fact yells just as loud.

Herbert Thurston SJ in *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (H Regnery Co, Chicago, 1952 or Roman Catholic Books, PO Box 2286, Fort Collins, CO 80522) discussed some cases where women hadn't eaten in years and were still alive. He decided that this was not a miracle. If the body can do that, it can produce stigmata wounds. It should be easier for the power of your mind to open wounds in your hands and feet than to keep you alive for years with hardly any food. He was particularly fascinated by the case of Molly Fancher, the Brooklyn Enigma who stayed alive without nourishment. No religious claims were made in the Fancher case. The Church cannot recognise a miracle when strange events are reported but without any spiritual or religious context. Fancher never even claimed that her inedia was caused by God or was miraculous.

ST PADRE PIO WITH THE MITS OFF

If you find fatal problems with the best investigated and best respected stigmatist then you can be sure that the other claimants to having stigmata are not very convincing either.

St Padre Pio was an Italian Franciscan who got the visible stigmata in 1918 after having pains in his hands and feet and side on and off since 1915. He was supposed to have the power to read minds and be in two places at the one time. His blood was perfumed and he was thought to have made the wounds himself and kept them open with carbolic acid and used eau-de-cologne for the allegedly miraculous fragrance. Carbolic acid does not cause wounds but burns but could certainly be useful to prevent infection and avoid the need to keep re-inflicting the wounds.

Doctor George Festa in 1919 found Pio had a scar on his breast that was not a wound but from which there were some drops of blood issuing. Professor Bignami found superficial wounds on his breast and hands and feet. Both doctors agreed that there were no deep fissures (page 100, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*). Pio's stigmata is unsatisfactory. There is nothing remarkable about it (page 100, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*).

Nobody ever said he could press on each side of the wound and get his fingers to touch one another through the wound. Romanelli tried but assumed that his fingers would meet if he tried harder but was afraid to for Pio was in great pain (page 14, *The Stigmata and Modern Science*). But with the priest crying and struggling and wincing with the alleged pain would it have been done right? There is no doubt that the testimony of Romanelli is the only one that is worth examining for it is detailed and though not great it is the best of a bad lot. He is the leg that the pro-Pio devotees have to stand on because they want to believe in deep wounds. But it is a terrible witness.

All saints-to-be have followers who cook up ridiculous miracle stories about them and there were a lot about Pio. He never condemned these stories so it would be no mystery if he faked his own stigmata. He claimed that he was attacked often at night by demons in his cell and they fought. Demons would harm him more discreetly than that. A man who declares that unverifiable miracles happen is not to be trusted. There was nobody there to verify the attacks and who saw them happening.

Pio was reportedly beaten by demons at nighttime. When demons gave him bruises why couldn't they give him the stigmata? Why did they make so much noise that others near Pio's cell heard them? Why were they so keen to make him look like a target of evil spirits? They would only do that if he was one of their followers. It was all just a performance if demons were involved at all. Or perhaps Pio was the performer!

Demons would not come up from Hell to kick the door and shake Pio's bed when he could do that himself. Nobody can prove that Pio was not doing these poltergeist stunts himself for he was alone in the room. No God would let miracles happen that one could create oneself for if he would do that then we should believe in miracle-workers who accomplish feats that any magician can do easily. Pio was not the miracle man he had people thinking he was.

It is interesting that Pio who acted so determined to hide his stigmata did not gag himself to stop shouting at the demons and screaming so that nobody would know what was going on. He was conniving and manipulative. The fact that suspicion regarding the source of the wounds hangs over him shows that the faithful are dallying with demons for risks like that should not be taken for God says he comes first.

In 1964, Pio shouted out in his cell one evening at 10pm. The monks ran to his aid and found him in his cell with a gash on his head claiming that it was inflicted during a battle with Satan who had been trying to scrape his eyes out. Pio admitted that Satan could inflict wounds. Interesting. And there is no doubt that Jesus who said that you have to hide your prayers and good works in the Sermon on the Mount would not think much of a man who had to tell people that the Devil was to blame for his head wound for that is the same as saying, "I am such an important person in the Church and such a good man that the Devil himself came up from Hell to knock me about". Satan would die with embarrassment if Pio had been going about with no eyes for it would be practically advertising Pio as a man of God. Satan was slandered. It was either a poltergeist that caused the wounds not Satan or Pio did it himself.

The Church has made no declaration on the authenticity of the miracles allegedly surrounding Pio or even his supposed stigmata excepting the two healing miracles that were required for the canonisation. One miracle was the cure of a woman with lung disease and the other was of a Italian boy who was in a coma with meningitis. That medicine is full of anomalies like that and doctor's despairing predictions are sometimes disproved is conveniently forgotten.

John Paul II declared Pio a saint. Pio never should have been canonised. He was just the kind of man that wanted to bring people back to the days when unconditional obedience and self-degradation under the heels of bishops and engaging in physical torture was an essential part of being a Christian. That the man hasn't caused too much evil is down to the fact that believers are weak in faith not down to any good influence from him.

FINALLY

Most cases of stigmata carry indications of wilful fraud. When they are not caught out we still know they are frauds because God and the Devil are certainly not to blame. The stigmata convey an evil message. Normality says nobody in their sane senses would seek or desire the gift of the stigmata. Theology says they would and that those who do not want the stigmata are the crazy ones for God's blessings are the sanest things anybody could every go after. If stigmata is not always fraud then some evil or mischievous spirit is behind the marks.

BOOKS CONSULTED

Arthur C Clarke's World of Strange Powers, John Fairley and Simon Welfare, Collins, London, 1984
Chapter 7 of this book explores evidence that willpower can make bodily changes when it is strongly enough exercised by some people. Breasts have been increased in size by mindpower and the research of Dr Albert Mason and Professor Oscar Ratnoff verifying that non-religious stigmata happens is detailed in this book. A girl Maria K could make herself bleed from the ears and eyes and the head just by making herself very angry according to a study undertaken by Dr Magnus Huss. The fact that Teresa Neumann was doing erratic things and making strange unnecessary motions under her bedclothes before her wounds appeared is mentioned – was she making the wounds then?

The Bleeding Mind, Ian Wilson, Paladin, London, 1991

Looking for a Miracle, Joe Nickell, Prometheus Books, New York, 1993

The Stigmata and Modern Science, Rev Charles Carty, TAN, Illinois, 1974

Who is Padre Pio? Fathers Rumble and Carty, TAN, Illinois, 1974

From Fasting Saints to Anorexic Girls, Walter Vandereycken and Ron van Deth, Athlone Press, London, 1996

Criteria for Discerning Apparitions, Mons Peric, Bishop of Mostar, available from Militia Immaculatae Trust, 35 New Bond Street, Leicester

Gemma of Lucca, Benedict Williamson, Alexander-Ouseley Limited, 1932

Counterfeit Miracles, BB Warfield, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1995

The Book of Miracles, Stuart Gordon, Headline, London, 1996

The Jesus Relics, From the Holy Grail to the Turin Shroud, Joe Nickell, The History Press, Gloucestershire, 2008

The Marian Conspiracy, Graham Phillips, Pan Books, London, 2001

The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism, Herbert Thurston SJ, H Regnery Co, Chicago, 1952

The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism, Herbert Thurston SJ, H Regnery Co, Chicago, 1952 or Roman Catholic Books, PO Box 2286, FortCollins, CO 80522

The Supernatural A-Z, James Randi, Headline Books, London, 1995

(Note: This book in the entry for Stigmata observes that the claims made for people like the alleged stigmatist Teresa Neumann with their miraculous bleeding and living on communion wafers cannot be verified for they were never observed 24 hours a day every day. Fr Siwek, an investigator of Neumann wrote that he had grave doubts about her miracles. To me no God is going to bother doing all these miracles when the miracle worker is not going to be watched all the time.)

THE WEB

<http://www.findarticles.com/>

The lies and the fake stigmata of Katya Rivas are exposed. Many physicians are stated to have concluded that there was no sign of penetration when Padre Pio's wounds were carefully examined and that the alleged pain and the thick crusts were used by Pio as an excuse to prevent any in depth examination. More importantly we read that Pio was examined by a top pathologist who was sent by the Vatican and who said that there was no evidence of penetration behind the scabs and that there was not even any redness and that the side wound was not a wound at all – but just a scab sitting on the unblemished skin. The pathologist testified that he used magnification of the wounds and was sure of his conclusion.

Teresa Neumann's stigmata changed from round wounds to square ones seemingly when she found out that the Romans would have used square nails on Jesus.

www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m2843/4_24/63693003/print.jhtml Joe Nickell who saw the tapes of Rivas bleeding from her stigmata was able to duplicate her stigmata through trickery and was also able to show how wounds like hers could be cosmetically covered up to make it look like they had miraculously healed. The Baptist stigmatist Cloretta Robinson is said to have been declared by doctors almost certainly not to have been faking even though the doctors had to be away before any wounds appeared! It is known that wounds that have dried up can be made to bleed again by an application of hydrogen peroxide.

<http://skeptically.org/skeptics/index.html>