

COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION MEMBER BOURKE'S LETTER

The following letter gives us an insight into Canon Bourke who investigated the apparition and took some depositions. He took Patrick Hill's testimony. Bourke's role in the investigation casts a lot of doubt on its professionalism and integrity.

Kilcolman

Claremorris

14th January, 1880

The 'chapel' or Catholic Church at which in August 21st 1879 near the gable [why near the gable rather than at the gable?] fronting the South East – the vision of our "B. Lady" and "St Joseph" with a mitred personage, supposed by pious people who saw the sight to be St. "John the Evangelist", [he puts the names in quotation marks as if he doubts that the witnesses really knew who they were. But when he mentions another vision later he does not use quotation marks around the names of the entities that appeared. Did he find the latter more impressive?] with an altar and a lamb thereon and angels flitting around – is not in this parish, it is just a half a mile beyond the mearing [his use of the word mearing makes us think he got Patrick Hill to use the word in his testimony. The letter indicates that Bourke was prompting Patrick Hill or using leading questions when he was taking down Hill's testimony – this would pour suspicion on the accuracy of the deposition] line of Kilcolman, the ancient name of this district of which Claremorris is the rising town.

Visions were seen again on New Year's eve: and on New year's day: on twelfth day (Epiphany) eve: on Epiphany – and that night too. Hundreds of miracles are narrated by the country people regarding themselves and their friends. In this town there are some 20 or 30 people who, on Thursday last witnessed what they believe to be miracles, and on last Monday evening of all (12th January) I have just heard from one of my curates, a dumb girl received the use of speech. I visited the place a second time on this day week, Wednesday, in company of 3 priests, strangers; and they and I interrogated those who had beheld the vision on New Year's day, between 12 & 3 o.c. They all, who saw it, say that our Lady appeared to them about 1 o.c. clothed in white with the child Jesus as a grown boy, and St. Joseph. The holy child was between St Joseph and the B.V.M.. His hair rolled in golden ringlets on his shoulders. His divine face beamed full and open. He bore a lamb in his arms. The B.V.M. was clothed in a white tunic, or robe usually worn by women, with an outer one not tight but flowing, of a sky blue, and outside and over a mantle of a brown colour – wearing a crown on her head, with eyes raised to Heaven. The child Jesus was as I have just described. St Joseph was to her right on the west side so to speak clothed as is usually seen in pictures and of an age say 55 to 60 with hands joined and head bent in token of respect [wording similar to the testimony of Patrick Hill]. Angels or bright flitting spirits like balls of flame [similar wording in the Hill testimony] appeared bounding about the holy family – all this was seen by many from 1 to 3 o.c. mid-day time. The figures were raised 3 to 4 feet above the earth or sod. **[Here we have people been checked out soon after a vision This vision is even more believable than the 21st August vision. It makes no sense to hold that this investigation fails to prove anything other than imitation or imagination was at work while holding that the investigation of the 1879 visions is credible! And the Church does not take the January 1880 vision seriously at all! Also, the Holy Spirit was not too impressed for if the latter had been a real vision he could have prevented it being forgotten!]**

I examined 1 of two policemen [why not give their names?] who say that on that night at 11 o.c. P.M. they beheld supernatural light, like balls of fire or electrical flashes chasing one after the other, on and about the gable of the Church. They saw no images or angels. One of these was a Protestant, but I did not examine the Protestant, and I only heard he was one.

[The vision was supposed by many to be a hoax engineered by a Protestant policeman using a magic lantern. Could it be that one of these policemen was the culprit and that this vision was a lie in order to cover up the fact that a hoax had taken place? Was the hoaxer trying to lay the magic lantern hypothesis to rest by claiming he saw lights when there was no lantern involved? Did he really not know that the other policeman was a Protestant?]

I was commissioned some two months ago by the Archbishop to take down the Depositions of the first apparition which occurred on the 21st August last. Fifteen aver solemnly to all the facts – differing only in trifling points. [A blatant lie. Some said the apparition was dull like moonlight and others said it was brilliant like the sun. Some did not see a cross or a lamb. Some said it was a vision and others said it was statues. Trench alleged said the Virgin's robe was all one garment while another witness, Mary Beirne's mother, said she wore a mantle. Dominick Beirne said she wore a white cloak. One talked as if there was nothing there but lights. Patrick Hill told Warren in 1880 that he saw angels wings around the angels while his companion at the time John Curry said he only saw twinkling lights.] Several clergymen and myself examined

them separately and the testing of all goes to confirm the facts attested – 3 others at a distance saw the supernatural lights.
[Who are these people? We only have one testimony by Patrick Walsh.]

Like the blind man ordered to go and wash his eyes and he went and saw, I suppose all you need to do is to apply this small relic taken from the place. St Paul's handkerchief cured those that were sick – so anything of this kind applied with faith in Jesus Christ and in His Blessed Mother conceived without sin, will with God's blessing effect a cure. However, as in the times of the Prophet all were not cured; so now all may not be cured.

Say 3 Hail Mary's in honour of her Immaculate Conception.

Yours,

Canon Bourke P.P.