

KNOCK 1879 WITNESSES TO MARY, JOSEPH AND JOHN APPEARING ON THE CHURCH GABLE - WHY DOUBT?

On the night of the 21st of August 1879 the Virgin Mary flanked by St Joseph and a bishop thought to be St John the Evangelist and an altar with a lamb and cross on it allegedly appeared on the gable wall of the Parish Church for a few hours. Fifteen people witnessed the vision including a child of five (page 60, *The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary*) and stood watching it for two hours allegedly in torrential rain.

1
Witness Patrick Hill

Hill was allegedly 13 or 14. In fact, believers lie about his age. As he was baptised in 1868 (see page 178, *Knock: The Virgin's Apparition..*) we may presume that he was born that year. People in those days did not delay baptism. he was 11- far too immature to be taken seriously.

Why Doubt Patrick Hill?

A scientist Father Lennon who was neutral towards the visions examined Hill's story and decided that his statement was of little or no value (page 57, *The Apparition at Knock*).

There was a wall 25 paces from the gable (page 65, *The Apparition at Knock*). Hill put little John Curry a child on the wall some distance away to look at the apparition. Why did he keep him away from the apparition? This was not natural behaviour. You would take a child close to get her or him blessed. Hill claimed he went close and took Curry with him. The child said he saw the nice figures from the wall meaning he was not near the vision. Why does the child not say that he saw them close up - a child does not focus on the boring information but the more exciting stuff. Seeing the vision close was better than seeing it from a wall.

Hill said he looked into the book John the Evangelist was holding and could read the letters. Why didn't he write them down? The Catholic psyche associates miracles with messages and there could have been a message in the book.

2
Witness Mary McLoughlin

Why Doubt Mary McLoughlin?

Was possibly drunk. She only said she saw figures like Mary, Joseph and a bishop and a lamb and an altar. There is no detail given that indicates they were supernatural apart from a reference to the gable being dry despite it raining heavily.

Her claim that she saw the figures in daylight has been deployed by those who wish to rule out the possibility that the images were created using a lantern or projector. The night time would be more appropriate for that. Also, it would be easier for a hoaxer to work under cover of darkness.

She said in 1879 that she saw the figures about seven or after and stayed at least a half an hour in Beirnes house visiting. So when she saw the vision again it was quite dark. She says only she was there at 8.15 and sent Mary Beirne to get people to see the vision. At that time she states that it was "beginning to be quite dark. The sun had set; it was raining at the time. She left at 8.30 and extraordinarily she never went back.

Witness Mary Beirne

Saw Mary and Joseph and identified the bishop as John.

Why Doubt Mary Beirne?

She softened her original testimony in 1932 by saying they only seemed to stand out from the wall (page 48, *The Apparition at Knock*). She said in 1936 that if you went near the wall the images looked as if they were painted on it (page 51, *The Apparition at Knock*).

She had no reason to say the bishop was John except that it looked like a statue she seen in Westport. The others followed her into this big supposition and as one of the best witnesses she was a leader and putting things in their heads.

4

Witness Patrick Walsh

Just saw the brilliant light from a distance. No evidence that he saw it before the apparition story came out. Contradicts the testimony of Patrick Hill that the light was soft and white. Nothing indicated in the testimony that the vision was supernatural.

Why Doubt Patrick Walsh? Maybe he did see a bonfire as he reportedly said that was what he thought he had seen and didn't pay much heed and the next day he mistakenly thought it must have been the light of the apparition he saw.

5

Witness Patrick Beirne

Testimony says only that he saw Mary Joseph and a bishop the others saw. It does not go into sufficient detail. No indication that the vision was supernatural.

Why Doubt the Testimony? The testimony starts off with Patrick speaking and it ends the same way. The person who wrote the testimony does not let him testify to the vision but merely says that Young Beirne as he calls him, saw the same thing as the others and it was Mary and Joseph and John standing a certain way. This is like something is being concealed. This is not a testimony at all.

"I remained only ten minutes, and then I went away. All this happened between a quarter or so past eight o'clock and a half-past nine."

Why only stay ten minutes? Was the sight that uninteresting? He probably did really stay about ten minutes as he declared this just six weeks after the apparition.

He doesn't even know exactly what time he was there.

In 1936, he suddenly remembered that he went to the vision at 9 and stayed until 10.20. Evidently he was lying and trying to improve his story (page 54, *The Apparition at Knock*). You don't mistake an hour and twenty minutes for ten minutes. The testimony nearest the event comes first.

Patrick told a board of priests in 1932, "I saw three figures on the gable surrounded by a wonderful light. They appeared to be something like shadows or reflections cast on a wall on a moon-lit night" (page 53, *The Apparition at Knock*). We see that he was honest enough to describe a vision that was probably created by a magic lantern hoax. No wonder the 1879 commission glossed over him.

6
Witness Margaret Beirne

Why Doubt the Testimony? Just gives the basic description. She was obviously not cross-examined. Her wording in relation to the figures is very close to Patrick's which suggests that the priest writing it down was plagiarising. No indication that the vision was a miracle. If it was, why did she only stay a quarter of an hour?

She said she locked the chapel at 7.30 pm. This is important because

7
Witness Dominick Beirne

Why Doubt the Testimony? Gave basic description but said it matched what his sister Mary Beirne said. He was only repeating what she said. No indication that the vision was supernatural.

8
Witness Mrs Hugh Flatley

Saw the three figures as she passed by the Church and thought they were likenesses or statues for ornamenting the Church. We are not told if she stopped at the vision or if she went on. Perhaps she passed on by and saw the people adoring the vision. If so she was not very impressed by the vision - that would tell against it being supernatural.

Why Doubt the Testimony? No reason to doubt. No indication is given that the vision was supernatural. She indicates that she saw nothing out of the ordinary.

9
Witness Bridget Trench

Why Doubt the Testimony? She recited what happened in Irish. Father Corbett wrote it down in English as she spoke. Did he do it right? Was he biased? Did he make the story more convincing? She said she could have stayed at the vision forever but she only stayed an hour - strange!

So the Brigid Trench Testimony was written by a translator and we have no evidence that she would sanction it. Therefore its invalid.

Moreover, we have a copy of the original.

LIVES IN THIS PLACE. ON THE EVE OF 21 AUGUST A PERSON SICK SENT FOR HER THAT SHE MIGHT SEE HER. SHE CAME THAT EVENING TO THE CHURCH [SOMETHING ERASED]. SHE WAS IN THE HOUSE OF THE SICK WOMAN. SHE CAME BY THE ROAD AND SAW GREAT LIGHT. SHE ENTERED AT HER RIGHT HAND. SHE LEFT HER HAND ON THEM. SHE SAW ST JOSEPH AND THE BVM AND ST JOHN AND THE ALTAR AND THE LAMB. THEY WERE NOT STANDING ON THE GROUND BUT PROBABLY TWO FEET ABOVE THE GROUND.

That is just hearsay. It is not admissible as a testimony. It gives the impression that she was suffering from dementia or was an imbecile.

It is nothing like the testimony that the Church created and lied that was hers.

The testimony that the world pretends is really hers when it isn't says that she was asked by Mary Beirne to come to see the vision at 7.30 pm. But that was a lie. Mary Beirne's own testimony says she was with Mary McLoughlin at the time in the Beirne house. McLoughlin said Beirne did not go to spread the word until about 8.15. We know its a lie for 7.30 would have been still daylight and 8.15 was dark. Its on a par as seeing a murder and saying the sun was shining at the time when it was actually raining. You don't make mistakes like that. Or was Trench suffering a touch of senility? That alone would make us question the supernatural claims of her testimony.

She alone testifies that the dry gable was miraculous but the problem is did she really say that it was? She didn't.

Her fake testimony says the ground underneath the vision was dry miraculously and no rain fell against the vision or the gable though the wind was blowing it in that direction. This if true would indicate that the vision was supernatural. And she says that the figures looked like they could be touched but when she grabbed there was nothing there. A natural illusion could explain that. How good was her eyesight? We are told nothing.

The Church says Trench tried to touch Mary's feet and felt only the wall and delights to tell us that no shadows are mentioned. Her hands would have got in the way of the light source had the vision been made of light from a magic lantern. That nobody mentioned any shadows does not mean that there were none. Is it any wonder most if not all of them would have failed to notice shadows given where they were standing?

Mary Beirne testified to the Weekly News in 1880 that she did not see the feet of the Virgin and that they must have been covered (page 47, The Apparition at Knock). She contradicted Bridget Trench by denying that the Virgin's feet were visible. That is important - the story that Trench tried to feel the feet of the Virgin is probably a lie. Also, in the same account Beirne stated, "An old woman came up to kiss the Blessed Virgin's feet" - no mention of the name of the woman or if she touched the feet. Putting two and two together the old woman intended to do that but if they feet were not visible then it didn't happen. That avoids saying there was a contradiction.

It makes a liar of Patrick Hill who said an old woman tried to touch the feet of the Virgin. Maggie Beirne and Mary were sisters and Maggie said the feet were visible meaning that Mary would only have denied their visibility if she were sure. A big thing was made of the old woman trying to kiss the Virgin's feet. It was a quaint thing that would stand out in the whole story.

Psychologically, Beirne could not have forgotten it if it really did happen. If it didn't happen, then the believers cannot say, "If the images were made by a projector, anybody trying to touch them would have made a shadow." We must not forget the important point, that we do not know if a shadow was ever made.

10
Witness Catherine Murray

Why Doubt the Testimony? She was only an impressionable child of 8. Also her testimony is very brief and basic. Its not a testimony at all for believers in wonders and miracles. There is no indication in the testimony that the vision was supernatural.

Children were indoctrinated as to who Mary and Joseph were and pictures of them were rife. The lamb of God was a popular motif. Yet Catherine said she saw "the likeness of of the Blessed Virgin Mary and that of St Joseph and St John, as I learned from those that were around about." If the images were as plain as some of the testimonies say, what did she of all people need to be told who they were of? She was attending school which was saturated in religion and sacred images for goodness sake!

11
Witness John Curry

Why Doubt the Testimony? Too young to be accepted as a witness at 6. We have only a testimony about what he saw which was merely that it was beautiful images. A note says the images were of of Mary and Joseph. But this did not come from the child. The priest writing the testimony indicates that by saying he could only speak of the nice things and the lights. Even a child would not call images of three people nice things. He would say nice people. How clear was the vision? The child says he saw them from the top of the wall. Patrick Hill testified, "I brought little Curry with me ; I went then up closer. I saw everything distinctly". If Patrick Hill had been telling the truth that he took the child very close to the vision the child would have focused on that instead. Children are the last people who will dwell on how something looked from a distance when they got a good close up view of it.

No indication is given that the vision was supernatural. Curry is evidence that the vision was not as clear as the visionaries made out.

12

Witness Judith Campbell

Why Doubt the Testimony? One of the seemingly better testimonies as she said she stood within a foot of the vision and reported that though it was raining the gable was dry where the apparition appeared. But it may be though she attributed no miracle to the dryness. She does not say the rain was in the direction of the gable - only Trench said that. Judith was going through at a terrible time because her mother was dying - nothing was done to rule out the fact that wishful thinking may have impaired her judgement and made her imagine that an unimpressive vision was miraculous.

The handwritten testimony has her speaking of the entities as statues.

Judith Campbell's signature was forged by whoever wrote her testimony down and the same person wrote three other testimonies (page 185, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland). This ruins any value her testimony has.

She allegedly stated in her 1879 testimony that she went to the chapel about 8 and that night came on after that. Judith Campbell - we don't even know if she had anything to do with the testimony at all and her signature was forged so evidence is invalid.

13

Witness Margaret Beirne

Why Doubt the Testimony? Seems to be largely a repeat of Judith's. The wording in relation details about the apparition is too close to hers for it to be a coincidence. Both mention that John seemed to be preaching. Both talk about Mary's crown. Both say that Joseph's head was inclined towards Mary and use nearly the same words. No indication given that the vision was supernatural.

Mentions the light around the altar sparkling - ammunition for those who argue that the rain affected the light source. No rational God would allow this sparkling as it would seem that the rain was doing it. It refutes the notion that the rain did not affect the vision.

14

Witness Dominick Beirne Senior

Why Doubt the Testimony? Heavily influenced by Margaret's. Both say they live at Knock and the date and time of the vision. Both use the words, "The Blessed Virgin and the other saints". Both refer to the images as standing at the south end of the chapel. Both mention where Joseph and John stood. Both mention the Virgin with her hands uplifted. Both mention her eyes looking up to Heaven. Both mention the altar and immediately after mention the light. Only the miracle dryness would indicate that something supernatural was happening. His deposition says, "It was... raining heavily, and yet there was not one drop of rain near the images." Then he immediately mentions the mitre on John's head. Campbell's went, "Though it was raining, the place in which the figures appeared was quite dry" immediately after mentioning the mitre. Obviously, his testimony to the dryness is plagiarism. It's therefore no good as evidence.

Note the similarity between Campbells' "The night came on, and it was very wet and dark; there was a beautiful light surrounding the figures or likenessness" and Dominick's, "The night was dark and raining, and yet these images, in the dark night, appeared with bright lights". Both mention the rain twice in their testimonies - no coincidence either.

Dominick Beirne Sen's testimony was inspired too much by the unacceptable testimony allegedly attributed to Judith Campbell so its spurious.

15

Witness John Durkan

Why Doubt the Testimony? Testimony not recorded - its just stated that his testimony same as the Beirnes so its no good. It is a testimony about John we have not his testimony. No evidence of the supernatural.

There is more.

When somebody takes a testimony and does not write it down but merely states that its the same as somebody else's like what happened with John Durkan that is a sign that something is being hidden. The priests didn't want the testimony preserved - they only wanted the testimonies that fitted together reasonably.

The witnesses may have been asked leading questions. Leading questions are used to make conflicting testimonies agree by putting things in the minds of the witnesses. Memory reconstructs the past - it does not record it. We never really remember much exactly as it happened. They may have influenced each other so that they ended up thinking things happened such a way when they didn't happen like that at all.

Why were there so few at the apparition when it was there two hours? There would have been plenty of children in each family. You would expect all the children in the village and roundabouts to be taken to the vision site.

