

KNOCK - THE QUESTIONS THAT RAISE SUSPICION

About 15 people said they saw the Blessed Virgin Mary appear in a great light flanked by St Joseph and St John at the gable wall of the Roman Catholic Church in Knock on the 21st August 1879. A lamb standing on an altar was also reported.

The Church teaches that:

* Miracles, by definition, are exceptional.

* And therefore you need very good evidence that they really happened.

So far so good. But does Knock fit into the miracle category?

There are so many claimed apparitions in the world that there has to be a few, just by chance, that seem believable and miraculous. And that is usually through luck. It doesn't mean that they are really miraculous.

Insufficient Evidence that the Sight was Supernatural

Mary, Joseph and John did not appear at Knock. Their statues did. The evidence that the figures were alive is almost non-existent. A witness, Mary Beirne, at a distance thought the figures moved. Everybody else said they stood still. At a distance its easy to think that an image or statue is moving and especially if you mistake it for a live being. However, she agreed with the rest later that they were motionless. Clearly, Beirne was only saying she thought they moved at the time but later she realised they didn't move. She did not mention the moving in the deposition - so she realised it was a misperception. And moving does not necessarily indicate life.

Patrick Hill said he saw them move but seems to have meant that the figures moved in and out. That was the only movement he mentioned and suits the idea that the vision was caused by a projector.

We just have the testimony of an old man - John Curry in 1937 that the apparition appeared to be alive (page 56, The Apparition at Knock). But he annulled this by saying the figures didn't move (ibid, page 56). Also, John Curry's testimony is invalid as he was only 6 at the time of the apparition. Curry never stated why he thought they were alive so we can pay no attention to his claim. It may be because he believed that Mary and Joseph and John would appear in person - the thought of an apparition of statues is absurd.

Bridget Trench said they didn't move (page 29, The Apparition at Knock) and in 1880 Mary Beirne said, "The figures gave no indication of life" and that the image of St Joseph looked the most lifelike because he had more colour in his face (page 48, The Apparition at Knock). If this were a real miracle, the Blessed Virgin would look the most healthy and normal. It is accepted that all the visionaries came to agree that the figures never moved (page 185, 197, 211, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in the Nineteenth Century). Archbishop Murphy of Tasmania asked pilgrims to pray that the figures of Mary had not been an image of her but really her (page 197, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in the Nineteenth Century).

The evidence that the figures were rounded is poor. The witnesses said the image seemed to go away from you onto the wall if you went too near. So nobody could know for sure if they were really rounded. Mary Beirne said they "seemed" to stand out from the wall but go close to the wall if you went near (page 48, The Apparition at Knock). Mary Beirne added that, "When we went near the wall, the figures seemed to go back to the wall, as if painted on it. Then when we came back from the wall, they seemed to stand out and come forward" (page 51, The Apparition at Knock).

Margaret Beirne left the sight at about 15 minutes. And Mary McLoughlin left after an hour. Blessed Virgin fanatics like the poor people of that locality were simply do not behave that way. Its an indication that the vision was not supernatural and not as impressive or obviously miraculous as we have been led to believe.

No evidence can suffice to satisfy sensible people that the vision was really from Heaven as they were not there that night. Only those who see miracles or experience them can believe in them and still be rational and sensible.

Evidence that the witnesses were malleable

The fact that they did not think the bishop that appeared was St Patrick is very strange. Mary Beirne had too much influence over them for they took her word for it that the bishop was St John.

If the light at the gable was as bright as they said then why did nobody outside the village but Patrick Walsh seem to notice it? Walsh is contradicted by those witnesses who said the light was soft.

A dying woman Mrs Campbell was ignored as the people watched the vision. She was left on her own. Her daughter was a major witness - Judith Campbell later Judith Salmon.

It is hard to believe that all of them left the apparition at the gable to help her when she was found lying at the door of her house. It didn't take the whole town to help.

In those days, a lot of callers visited houses where the dying were. Why was the number of witnesses at Knock so small?

An Analysis of the 8 October 1879 Depositions

General Problems: Amazingly not one of the witnesses said that the Virgin was beautiful. It is typical of apparition witnesses to claim that they saw the most beautiful woman imaginable.

Testimonies about how honest the visionaries were are useless. Why? Because even the honest person will often tell a lie that doesn't do much harm and when he or she is reasonably sure he or she won't be found out. That's human nature. The visionaries may not have known that it was a serious sin to lie about an apparition. If so, we cannot say, "They knew it was a serious sin and they were devout Catholics who frequented Confession and Communion so they would not have resorted to such sin." The Church is clear that a person inventing messages from Heaven is a mortal sinner but what if the person is only saying they saw something from Heaven that didn't speak - like the silent Knock apparition? That would be different. It would be in a different league. Also, what is a mortal sin normally might not be a mortal sin under certain circumstances. For example, if the visionaries lied in order to make a Lourdes of their village and get the people out of dire poverty could it be possible that that really was a mortal sin? No.

A serious if not fatal problem is how the believers are forced to embellish the story to make it look like a believable account of a miracle. Here's a major example. When Mary Beirne told the Weekly News in 1880 that the apparition was lit up by a soft light like moonlight, believers say this was a mistake she made or that the witnesses who saw a super-bright light around the images were talking about a different time than her. Some even say that the paper misrepresented what she said. All of these excuses are worthless speculation. If we have to speculate, then by the rules of logic we have to speculate that something natural but perhaps strange happened so it was not a miracle.

Witnesses - Why Doubt their Story?

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?

He was certainly guilty of exaggerating. He saw things the others did not see - some did not see the altar he mentioned. His testimony if true would give room for a natural explanation for the apparition. The strange elements are that he mentions the images seeming to go away from anybody that tried to touch them and that they stayed dry. But you would expect that moving away from people if a three dimensional illusion was taking place. If you reach for what you think is a 3-d image and find its only two dimensional you will get that impression. Also, as the image is an illusion made of light it will not get wet. He does not mention the alleged miracle of the dry gable. He mentions the angels fluttering around the altar who did not seem to have heads. He mentions noticing the sparkles composing the top part of the Virgin's crown. These seem to me to indicate that the rain was interfering with the light source. The angels sound more like an effect caused by a light source in the rain.

"I saw St Joseph to the Blessed Virgin's right hand; his head was bent from the shoulders, forward. He appeared to be paying his respects. I noticed his whiskers; they appeared slightly grey."

"The third figure that stood before me was that of St John the Evangelist".

Compare this to Mary Beirne: "In the figure of St Joseph the head was slightly bent, and inclined towards the Blessed Virgin, as if paying her respect; it represented the saint as somewhat aged, with grey whiskers and grayish hair."

"The third figure appeared to be that of St John the Evangelist."

Either the witnesses had been colluding to get the story straight or they had been asked leading questions to prompt them and confuse their memories so that their story matched better. Or were the priests who wrote down the depositions plagiarising?

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*).

Lennon had scientific investigation skills which the commission of 1879 did not have thus we should listen to him. Father Lennon examined Hill's claims and dismissed them. His testimony is annulled by this authority.

Hill testified in 1879 that he went to the vision at 8. Not that long after he testified soon in the *Weekly News* that it was dark then (page 59, *The Apparition at Knock*). He testified to the *Daily Telegraph* that he went to the apparition when it was night and dark (page 60, 61, *The Apparition at Knock*). So it was dark that night at 8.

His testimony states he stayed with his aunt at Knock. Where was she during the vision?

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.

Was Hill near that near the vision at all? He lied about taking Curry up to it. Hill mentions that when he went to the scene of the vision the people were resting on the wall. "At this time we reached as far as the wall fronting the gable ; there were other people there before me ; some of them were praying, some not ; all were looking at the vision ; they were leaning over the wall or ditch, with their arms resting on the top."

Why were they so far away from the images? You get the impression that the images looked better further off - that would suit the magic lantern theory. He was not telling the truth that the image was detailed when it was looked at close up.

The Hill description of the vision is far too detailed. Nobody's memory is that good. If somebody gave a testimony like that to a policeman two months or more after a crime it would be dismissed as embellished if not fictitious.

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.

3
Witness: Mary Beirne

Recognised as reliable. She asked (according to Judith Campbell) ask Judith Campbell to come to the gable even though she should have been urged to stay with her dying mother. If true, Mary's testimony would not really indicate the vision was supernatural.

Why Doubt Mary Beirne?

She did not put the claim that the images moved like living beings into her testimony. Beirne's handwritten deposition

shows she called them statues. The priests were anxious for the witnesses to testify that they saw they saw living beings and not statues. That she resisted this pressure shows that the entities did not look like they were alive.

Mary Beirne says that McLoughin came to her house at 7.30 and stayed only a little while and left at 7.45 or 8. She claimed in her 1879 testimony that it was still bright then.

She said, "At the distance of three hundred years or so from the Church, I beheld, all at once, standing out from the gable, and rather to the west of it, three figures which, on more attentive inspection, appeared to be that of the Blessed Virgin, of St Joseph and of St John. That of the Blessed Virgin was life-size, the others apparently not so big not so high as her figure; they stood a little distance out from the gable wall."

She softened this 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*).

It is easy to think flat figures stand out from the wall when you are three hundred yards away from them. Why is she not sure if the others were life size or not? Doesn't match her claim that she saw them for an hour and a quarter.

She stated in her deposition that she saw little jets around the lamb that seemed to reflect a light source. That's as good a witness as that the rain affected the light source - a magic lantern? - as I ever read.

In 1880 she admitted to the *Weekly News* that there was good light. This was her response to the question if there was daylight at the time. As the weather had been so bad and it had been raining all day it could have been quite dark. Good light shows that it was not that bright after all.

She told the paper that she was going from the house to the chapel at 8 to lock it up (page 46, *The Apparition at Knock*). This was a lie as the chapel had been locked at 7.30 by her sister Margaret who lived in the same house. Why did she lie? If she went to lock the chapel, what was she doing going in the direction of the southern gable when the door to be locked was in the north?

Mary Beirne told a lie about going to lock the Church. Her later claim that the image was like a painting on the wall clothed in soft light like the moon gives us reason to think that the apparition was a natural occurrence. She was regarded as the best witness though there is much in her testimony to indicate that no true miracle took place. Obviously the investigators didn't notice that! This makes the testimonies to the magical side of it all to be questionable.

She said in 1932 that the light was like the soft silvery light of the moon (page 50, *The Apparition at Knock*). And she said it was not like any light she ever saw. Nobody could say that of anything that looked like moonlight. This is an indication that she was attempting to say that the light was magical and got it wrong and let the truth slip. It shows that somebody had been guiding her in what to say - she knew she wasn't supposed to admit that the light was like the moon.

In 1880, the book *The Apparitions and Miracles at Knock*.: Also, the *Official Depositions of the Eye-Witnesses* stated, "As some persons were hurriedly going along the road which leads to the chapel, at about 7-30 P.M., they perceived the wall beautifully illuminated by a soft, white, flickering light, through which could be perceived brilliant stars twinkling as on a fine frosty night."

A magic lantern would give off a soft light that would get brighter as night falls. And we do know that night was exceptionally dark!

In 1880, in an interview with the *Weekly News* she stated the following.

She claimed that three or four times since the apparition, she saw stars come out of the gable and form a light like the moon but she saw nothing else. She was prone then to seeing visions. Had she seen a crude light at the gable that stayed for a while its easy to picture her getting carried away and thinking she saw people standing in the light.

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. 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 this 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. All the priest writing the depositions down had to do was ask questions phrased to avoid causing the witness to mention any shadow or if a witness did mention a shadow all the priest had to do was just leave it out. It would have reflected badly on the idea that the apparition was a miracle. There is no evidence at all against the possibility that a shadow was caused. Trench was unlikely to have tried to touch the feet or wondered why she couldn't feel them when the image seemed to go flat against the wall when approached. She may have lied when she said she tried this thing and wondered why the 3-d feet could not be felt. We can take the testimony as to the flatness as being true.

Thanks to Beirne, it was recorded in 1880 that the Archdeacon upon being told of the vision said it was a reflection from a stained glass window! Considering that the area was victimised by a culture of visions of fairies and holy virgins this scepticism is obviously feigned. The culture is verified in Knock The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland.

Beirne went to her own house after discovering the vision and her brother Dominick was in bed. She got him to go with her to look at it and they stood at the schoolhouse. He testified - "I then went with her, and by this time some ten or twelve people had been collected around the place, namely, around the ditch or wall fronting the gable, where the vision was being seen, and to the south of the schoolhouse". What were they doing at the schoolhouse? You don't stand that far away from an amazing vision! The interviewer asked her why so few saw the vision. She stated that she thought twelve people saw it. She claimed that they were so rapt in the vision that they never thought on telling other people. That was a lie for she was the one that did most of the running to get the word out. She even went to the house where people were sitting with a dying woman. And the visionaries that left surely must have told people.

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 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.

NOT ALL THE TESTIMONIES INDICATE THE SUPERNATURAL

Only Trench and Hill, two out of 15 testimonies definitely indicate that there was something supernatural going on and that is only at face value. And sadly for believers the current version of the Trench testimony is fraudulent.

It is said that more than the 15 saw the vision. Was the 15 considered sufficient or were the others not interviewed for their testimony would cast doubt on the miraculous nature of the vision?

A couple of testimonies clearly indicate a possible supernatural cause but they are no good for evidence. The light, the clarity of the images, the way they could not be touched even though they looked three dimensional can be explained without a miracle.

The rain battering in the direction of the gable and not wetting it or the ground under the vision would be miraculous. Patrick Hill says for at least an hour and a half there was very heavy rain. McLoughlin mentions rain but does not clarify if it rained all the time. Walsh merely says it was raining heavily at 9. Margaret Beirne says it was raining but doesn't say it was raining all the time. Trench says it was raining heavily at the time - from the lines before that she meant when she tried to kiss the feet of the Virgin. It may have dried up after. Campbell says that night came on when she was at the vision and it got wet and dark. She does not clearly say it rained all the time. There is only one testimony as to the heavy rain being constant. If the rain was really hitting the gable as Trench alleged, why was the child Curry not put on the other side of the wall four foot high around the Church for shelter? Hill said he was not on the side facing the Church and had to be lifted on top of the wall. Why not just put him on the other side?

Mary and Margaret Beirne denied seeing a cross on the altar. This contradicts Patrick Hill and Mary McLoughlin and Judith Campbell whose depositions said there was a cross. The other witnesses never mentioned the cross. If Hill was wrong about the cross was he wrong about the rain lasting all the time? Was the gable simply dried up by the wind?

The evidence for the miraculously dry gable is weak. It's insufficient.



It has been noted that Father Lennon from Maynooth wrote a neutral report on the evidence for the Knock apparition being a miracle and devotees just select what suits their agenda, namely to promote the vision as genuinely supernatural, from it (page 184, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland). It is impossible to deny that most supporters of religion do that. That is why we would expect the visionaries at Knock to have been cross-examined properly and questioned using techniques similar to those deployed by the police. For example, no witness should have been allowed to hear what the other witnesses were saying. And because religious people can be so unfair with the evidence, we can be suspicious of the priests who investigated the apparition.

The aspects of the testimonies that indicate the supernatural are very minor. You expect small mistakes in testimonies - that is human nature. What if these things are the mistakes?

The investigation only lasted one day (page 211, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland). That is enough to stop one taking it very seriously.

The investigator Canon Bourke was a gullible fool. He wrote a letter which you can read on page 97 of The Apparition at Knock, The Ecumenical Dimension, Eoin de Bháldirathe, Bolton Abbey, Kildare, 2013. It says the 21 August 1879 Knock vision really happened and was real. It accepts further visions - apparitions supposedly took place on New Years Eve and New Years Day. The Church rejects those visions as mere mimicry. Bourke and other priests investigated and described the visions. It puts forward hearsay about a Protestant seeing lights at the gable and healings including a dumb girl recovering her speech as believable! This was one of the men who functions as giving Knock credibility! In his letter, he spoke about the 21 August vision but treated subsequent stuff as more important!

Mary Beirne testified that she went to ask Dominick to see the apparition at 8. Catherine Murray went to tell Margaret and ask her to go at around 8. Margaret then went to tell the mother get her at 8.15. This is very strange for when they all lived in the same house three journeys to the one family to tell them should not have been necessary (page 248, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland). What is worse, is how they were only living a stone's throw from the chapel!

The Knock apparition is certainly the best attested miracle of all time. Minor details are used to persuade people that this apparition was really miraculous. One witness seemingly said the ground was dry beneath the apparition (not true for the testimony was fabricated but we will forget that for the moment). Another said that the apparition was crisp and clear and not like an image made by a magic lantern. The main details do nothing to show that the apparition was not a trick. But the

minor details are insufficient as evidence for we know that if you have people witnessing some event and ask for their testimony, they will all give the same rough outline and the details will contradict one another.

The Depositions of the Witnesses are Inconclusive

At times one, deposition is too similar to another for comfort.

The Second Commission which took place in the 1930's stated that it seemed to them that ALL of the 1879 documents were "cast into form by someone" (page 185, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland). Why was that interference necessary? Was it because some witnesses were saying things that cast doubt on the vision being really from Heaven? Even believer Father Michael Walsh declared that it is unknown how the commission worked out the visionaries were telling the truth (page 185, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland). He said they created the testimonies from what the witnesses said (page 185, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland).

Archdeacon Cavanagh is suspected of having altered the testimonies to suit his agenda (page 186, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland). For example, somebody changed Mary McLaughlin's mention of a bishop having appeared to St John the Evangelist.

There is no evidence that leading questions were forbidden. The signs that they were indeed asked is evident. Hynes says that the statement that leading questions were used to prompt the visionaries is an understatement (page 188, Knock The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland).

Attempts were made to manipulate the witnesses to say they saw people in the light at the gable not statues.

No evidence that the witnesses read the depositions before signing them or had them read out properly to them is reported. This makes them useless. We would be basing faith on speculation if we overlook this.

The Archdeacon headed the first investigation and he was desperate to have the apparition accepted and believed.

Conclusion:

We do not have to try and explain what happened at the gable that night. Knowing that the evidence that it really was a miracle is unsatisfactory is enough. The burden of proof is on those who say it was a miracle.

Do they escape the burden of proof by saying that it may have been a miracle or that it is possible that it was a miracle? No.

The evidence for the miracle apparition is worthless never mind insufficient. Had a real miracle taken place, divine providence would have been able to preserve the evidence if there had been any. The investigation would have been divinely guided.

Miracles by definition are unlikely. Suppose the depositions were convincing. Then is the miracle that they are convincing or that the apparition really happened? A miracle could delude them to remember the event differently and be convincing while the event itself was pure trickery. The smallest miracle would be the good depositions. The bigger miracle would be the apparition. Considering that miracles are unusual, the smaller miracle is the least unusual. So its the one we have to believe - if any. By default, the depositions cannot establish that a miracle apparition happened.

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