

**FIRST WITNESS TO KNOCK VISION ANALYSED**

First Witness

Testimony of Patrick Hill

I am Patrick Hill; I live in Claremorris ; my aunt lives at Knock; I remember the 21st of August last; on that day I was drawing home turf, or peat, from the bog, on an ass. While at my aunt's, at about 8 o'clock in the evening, Dominick Beirne came into the house ; he cried out : Come up to the chapel and see the miraculous lights, and the beautiful visions that are to be seen there. I followed him ; another man, by name Dominick Beirne, and John Durkan, and a small boy named John Curry, came with me ; we were all together ; we ran over towards the chapel. When we, running southwest, came so far from the village that on our turning the gable came in view, we immediately beheld the lights, a clear, white light, covering most of the gable, from the ground up to the window and higher. It was a kind of changing bright light, going sometimes up high and again not so high. We saw the figures — the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and St. John, and an altar, with the Lamb on the altar, and a cross behind the Lamb. 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. I saw the figures and brightness ; the boy, John Curry, from behind the wall, could not see them ; but I did ; and he asked me to lift him up till he could see the grand babies, as he called the figures ; it was raining; some — amongst them Mary M'Loughlin — who beheld what I now saw, had gone away ; others were coming. After we prayed awhile I thought it right to go across the wall and into the chapel yard. I brought little Curry with me ; I went then up closer ; I saw everything distinctly. The figures were full and round, as if they had a body and life; they said nothing, but as we approached they seemed to go back a little towards the gable. I distinctly beheld the Blessed Virgin Mary, lifesize, standing about two feet or so above the ground, clothed in white robes, which were fastened at the neck ; her hands were raised to the height of the shoulders, as if in prayer, with the palms facing one another, but slanting inwards towards the face ; the palms were not turned towards the people, but facing each other as I have described ; she appeared to be praying ; her eyes were turned, as I saw, towards heaven ; she wore a brilliant crown on her head, and over the forehead, where the crown fitted the brow, a beautiful rose ; the crown appeared brilliant, and of a golden brightness, of a deeper hue, inclined to a mellow yellow, than the striking whiteness of the robes she wore ; the upper parts of the crown appeared to be a series of sparkles, or glittering crosses, I saw her eyes, the balls, the pupils, and the iris of each — [the boy did not know those special names of those parts of the eye, but he pointed to them, and described them in his own way] — I noticed her hands especially, and face ; her appearance ; the robes came only as far as the ankles ; I saw the feet and the ankles; one foot, the right, was slightly in advance of the other ; at times she appeared, and all the figures appeared to move out and again to go backwards ; I saw them move ; she did not speak; I went up very near; one old woman went up and embraced the Virgin's feet, and she found nothing in her arms or hands ; they receded, she said, from her; 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 gray ; there was a line or dark mearing between the figure of the Blessed Virgin and that of St. Joseph, so that one could know St. Joseph, and the place where his figure appeared distinctly from that of the Blessed Virgin and the spot where she stood. I saw the feet of St. Joseph, too; his hands were joined like a person at prayer. The third figure that stood before me was that of St. John the Evangelist ; he stood erect to the Gospel side of the altar, and at an angle with the figure of the Blessed Virgin, so that his back was not turned to the altar, nor to the Mother of God ; his right arm was at an angle with a line drawn across from St. Joseph to where our Blessed Lady appeared to be standing ; St. John was dressed like a bishop preaching ; he wore a small mitre on his head ; he held a Mass Book, or a Book of the Gospels, in the left hand ; the right hand was raised to the elevation of the head ; while he kept the index finger and the middle finger of the right hand raised, the other three fingers of the same hand were shut ; he appeared as if he were preaching, but I heard no voice ; I came so near, that I looked into the book ; I saw the lines and the letters. St. John wore no sandals ; his left hand was turned towards the altar that was behind him ; the altar was a plain one, like any ordinary altar, without any ornaments. On the altar stood a Lamb — the size of a lamb eight weeks old ; the face of the Lamb was fronting the west, and looking in the direction of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph ; behind the Lamb a large cross was placed erect or perpendicular on the altar ; around the Lamb I saw angels hovering during the whole time, for the space of one hour and a half or longer; I saw their wings fluttering, but I did not perceive their heads or faces, which were not turned to me. For the space of one hour and a half we were under the pouring rain ; at this time I was very wet ; I noticed that the rain did not wet the figures which appeared before me, although I was wet myself; I went away then.

(Signed) Patrick Hill.

Witness present — U. J. Canon Bourke.

October 8th, 1879.

OBSERVATIONS: How much of the above is his authentic testimony? The original document has never been found. White

Created by freemove.com  
 of DocuFreezer

discovered in the archives of the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace, a box containing the 1879 statements made by Margaret Beirne (the thirteenth witness below), Judith Campbell and Dominick Beirne, the Senior. Hill's was missing. The testimonies were all condensed into two pages and had no concern for fancy descriptions or great literary style. Hill's as it stands currently could fill several pages and reads like a short story with fanciness and an attempt at good writing. If the others are anything to go by, we can be sure that Hill's REAL document is very different and a lot less impressive than the one below.

The testimony has been interfered with. It is the writer's version of the testimony - not the testimony. And the alleged clarity is contradicted by "I noticed her hands especially, and face ; her appearance." He speaks as if the hands were clearer and then he adds that he noticed her face - like an afterthought. Why is there no mention of what eye colour the Virgin had?

Campbell and Dominick Beirne Sen and Margaret Beirne's accounts have been preserved for us by the books - near verbatim. Hill's may have got extensive editing and rewriting and if so, no wonder the original is no longer with us.

"I saw her eyes, the balls, the pupils, and the iris of each — [the boy did not know those special names of those parts of the eye, but he pointed to them, and described them in his own way] — I noticed her hands especially, and face ; her appearance".

The mellow yellow of the crown cannot be a golden brightness. The following is contradictory: "and of a golden brightness, of a deeper hue, inclined to a mellow yellow". The crown being a poor imitation of a gold colour is believable. It indicates a projected picture rather than a real miracle.

"I went then up closer ; I saw everything distinctly. The figures were full and round, as if they had a body and life ; they said nothing, but as we approached they seemed to go back a little towards the gable". The as if and the seemed indicate that he was uncertain that the images stood out from the wall.

He says that John's "right arm was at an angle with a line drawn across from St. Joseph to where our Blessed Lady appeared to be standing". A horizontal line went across the images. This indicates that the projector was not giving out a clear image. A line had appeared across the images. And he sounds unsure of the spot where Mary was. It speaks of the place where she appeared to be standing as if he were not convinced she was really standing there.

He says John did not stand with his back to Mary but if he stood at an angle to her he must have done!

Catholic tradition always associated true apparitions with messages. The vision always has something to communicate. Patrick says, " I came so near, that I looked into the book; I saw the lines and the letters" in John's book. Given that no spoken message was given at Knock, surely it would have been assumed that God may have chosen to convey the message in the pages of the book. Nobody even thought of transcribing what was in the book. The assertion about the lines and letters being so clear does not ring true. The entity holding the book was acting like a preacher and that would surely have been taken to be saying, "Hey pay attention to my book. Its my message."

T.D. Sullivan printed the depositions of the witnesses. Eugene Hynes discovered that this material was given for publication to Thomas Sexton by Archdeacon Cavanagh (ibid, page 112, The Apparition at Knock, The Ecumenical Dimension). For such a gullible man, Cavanagh left out the testimony of Patrick Hill as if even he found it worthy of scorn. He did not regard what seemed to be the best and most detailed testimony as valuable. This is odd for Cavanagh's colleague, Bourke, regarded it as the best and most reliable and he trusted Hill for he lived beside him in Claremorris. It is the most vivid account. It is not true that Cavanagh distrusted Hill just because of his youth for he accepted the testimonies of younger people. And it is interesting that Cavanagh was so against Hill that even the fact that Bourke was a respected author on religious and historical matter meant nothing.

When Cavanagh dismissed the most miraculous testimony perhaps we should too?

Hill was not an objective witness for he was visiting the Beirne household which provided many of the witnesses for the vision. Consider the following from a record written in 1880 by Daniel Campbell (MEMORIES OF KNOCK IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY, Memoir of Daniel Campbell, Eden and Smethwick, written c. 1880).

#### PATRICK HILL, WITNESS

The first witness given in the Universe was Patrick Hill of Claremorris, a boy who said he was at his aunt's house at Knock, Mrs Byrne, at the time the first Apparition appeared. Mrs Byrne was sister to Mrs Hill and mother to Mary and Dominic Byrne, who was interrogated by the correspondent of the Dublin Weekly News.

