

Solar Miracle of Fatima

At Fatima in 1917, it is alleged that God made the sun do a miracle in front of 70,000 witnesses to show that the claim made by three children that they could see the Virgin Mary there was true. The sun appeared to move but we know from science that it did not. So what was going on?

Lucia the child who did all the talking revealed that the Lady promised to do a great miracle that day. This promise was published in the papers and this drew huge crowds on the day of the expected miracle. Sceptics have concluded that this prediction preconditioned the people to see something. They were not going to go to the effort of going to the Cova and taking a day off work for nothing.

70,000? Does anybody really know?

Some books would have you think that it had no less than 70,000 witnesses (eg. Fatima Revealed and Discarded, page 168). But if you look at the photographs you see that this was an exaggeration.

The Lisbon paper, O Seculo, painted a very impressive account of the alleged miracle. It was obviously promoting a mystery. It was the paper that said there was 30,000. Given its adoring attitude towards the alleged miracle, it would not have said that unless it were sure

To argue that 70,000 saw the miracle therefore we should lend it credence is odd considering that thousands more did not see it. And it is not true that 70,000 seen it. Nobody really knows if the crowd was 30,000 or more. One writer said it was about that.

Why is it so hard to get a reasonable number even if not the exact number? G. de Sede claimed that incense bearers at Fatima were exaggerating the number over a few years until it became one of the highest figures that people estimate. Dr Almeida Garrett put it as being over 100,000.

In O Seculo a few days after the "miracle" de Almeida wrote: "This crowd, which unbiased estimates of learned persons, very foreign to mystical influences, place somewhere between 30 to 40,000 people." Later for some reason he wrote that it was 50,000. "On October 13, according to the calculations of completely unbiased people, some fifty thousand people were gathered at the moor of Fatima. Significantly, a neutral publication, the Primeiro de Janeiro, agreed with 50,000.

And what is the use of tons of people seeing something when scientific instruments do not? Science is more reliable than people.

And there is a contradiction between those who did see something.

17 October 1917 O Seculo, "The people ask one another if they have seen anything. The greatest number avow that they have seen the trembling and dancing of the sun. Others however ... swear that the sun fell almost to the point of burning the earth with its rays".

This account by a witness talks about the miracle of the sun at Fatima wherein it is boasted that thousands of people saw the sun spin and change colour. It shows that the sun dancing and trembling is not supernatural. If you look at the strong sun it will be hard on the eyes and yourself and you will think it is moving and shaking. If you are shaking you will think it is the sun that is shaking. The quote shows that the witnesses did not all agree on what they saw. It also shows that they noticed people around them who seemed to have seen nothing. You do not ask others if they seen something unless it is clear that they may not have seen anything.

Thankfully a Catholic priest wrote in his book that many saw nothing. <http://www.amazon.com/God-sun-Fatima-Stanley-Jaki/dp/B0006R7UJ6>

If the number was 50,000 and not all seen anything then are we talking about a few thousand alleged witnesses or what? Who knows?

Greatest Miracle?

The greatest alleged miracle of the twentieth century has to be this miracle of the sun at Fatima.

The paper *O Seculo* gave the following account, "From the height of the road where the people parked their carriages and where many hundreds stood, afraid to brave the muddy soil, we saw the immense multitude turn towards the sun at its highest, free of all clouds. The sun called to mind a plate of dull silver. It could be stared at without the least effort. It did not burn or blind. It seemed that an eclipse was taking place. All of a sudden a tremendous shout burst forth, 'Miracle, miracle! Marvel, marvel!' before the astonished eyes of the people, whose attitude carried us back to biblical times, and who, white with terror, heads uncovered gazed at the blue sky, the sun trembled and made some brusque unheard-of movements beyond all cosmic laws; the sun danced, in the typical expression of the peasants."

This dress goes beyond what most of the witnesses said.

If you study the photos, a lot of witnesses were shielding their eyes during the miracle and squinting. No wonder they were unable to look at the sun! Some ask why there were no complaints about eye problems or dizziness that you might expect if somebody is directly gazing at the sun. But there are! The accounts are typical for damage. And as for nobody complaining, out of thousands, hardly a few even bothered putting the vision down on paper. The silence is more bizarre than the miracle itself and shows something more mundane than a miracle was going on. Were those who saw problems intimidated by those who said the vision was scary? Were they afraid of divine retribution if they said the "wrong" thing? Even at fake vision sites (eg Tre Fontane scene of the Marian visions of brute Bruno Cornacchiola, Mary Ann Hoof and at Marpingen, October 1999, where many out of 35,000 pilgrims claimed visions in the sun) where eye damage is reported the solid reports are never numerous even if the hearsay is strong. Why that is is not clear. The Bible says three witnesses are enough and in each of those sites you can manage that so any false vision can manage enough witnesses to a solar miracle! So it does not matter if the visions were seen by thousands - three people alone matter if they agree enough.

Take for example how in April, 1980, at Mass at Tre Fontane more than 3,000 persons claimed an amazing miracle of the sun! "The sun rose to its zenith, making turns around its own axis and radiating rays of all colors all over. Everyone was frightened; some cried, others screamed, others begged out loud to the Virgin Mary. Another marvelous aspect was the image of the Virgin Mary that at the moment of consecration, became an intense red color, radiating rays that penetrated the roof of the grotto so that they could unite with the rays from the sun. It was a grandiose spectacle, never before seen, and unforgettable. It did not last seconds, but rather half an hour, until the end of the Mass." Visionary Cornacchiola predicted that on November 7, 1979.

In his first vision he said the virgin told him, "I am she who is in the Divine Trinity. I am the Virgin of Revelation. You have persecuted me, now is the time to stop! Come and be part of the Holy Fold which is the Celestial Court on earth. God's promise is unchangeable and will remain so. The nine First Fridays in honor of the Sacred Heart, which your faithful wife persuaded you to observe before you walked down the road of lies, has saved you".

This apparition has the virgin claiming in some way to be God. She said, "Sono Colei che Sono nella Trinità Divina" which despite some lying translations really does say she claims to be in the Trinity.

So we have a miracle of the sun proclaiming a false vision and false idolatrous message.

The vision was subjective

The miracle is proven to be a subjective experience by the fact that no observatory noticed any change in the sun that day or a change in its position. Christians often say that Satan doesn't have miraculous powers but uses tricks that look like miracles. Whatever the so-called miracle did, it did not then demonstrate the miraculous power of God. There are no scientific accounts of the miracle. Is it wiser to believe the machines than the people? You must decide. If three doctors say a person has cancer and a machine which has no faults says they are wrong which do you believe?

The atmosphere was right for many to say that the solar miracle had happened because even before it people were reporting strange things. Some thought the sky had gone dark in September though Canon Formigao who was the first to support Fatima saw nothing untoward at all (page 51, *What Happened at Fatima?*).

Many of the people had umbrellas up. Lucia had told them to put down their brollies before the apparition though it was raining (page 78, *The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary*) which shows that she was planning a solar illusion and had touching concern for the old people who could have caught pneumonia. The brollies might have blocked their vision of the sky so they had to go down. It is obvious that not many would have listened to her or even heard her but many would have noticed people taking brollies down and then they would have followed suit. Mc Clure thinks the crowd did not expect to see the sun spinning but they all knew a miracle was promised and I don't doubt that being asked to put the umbrellas down was an indication that it was time for the miracle. Since the crowd was so large and it was hard to see the apparition site they would have realised that any sign would have to take place in the sky and that most obvious orb in the sky, the sun. The ban on using umbrellas alone would have suggested that. And people were seeing strange things in the sun months before the miracle of the sun (page 76, *Fatima In Lucia's own words*). The role of suggestion and emotionalism and

imagination in the miracle cannot be underestimated. Lucia was able to trigger many of the people in their highly charged emotional state to imagine seeing the sun spin.

The accounts do not all agree

Many of them but not all (page 77, *The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary*) saw the sun spinning or changing colour or both but the accounts do not agree (ibid 78, 80). Now, for the Lady to want the crowd to look at the sun which is very dangerous over visions that might have been hoaxes or paranormal freaks shows that she was not the Virgin Mary but something else – perhaps something equivalent to a fairy-tale playmate. Despite all the photographers who were present there are no photos of the changes in the sky or any physical evidence. The best the defender can do is produce photos of eclipses in far away lands! (page 78, *The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary*). When a miracle is given for unbelievers one would expect the Virgin to have done a better job of seeing to it being authenticated. The picture below shows nothing strange. If it was taken at Fatima which is doubtful then the person who took it thought it was odd. It seems the desperation to see a miracle was at work.

Some of the witnesses must have been liars

It seems that a crowd that is guessed to have been up to 70,000 were at the Cova and were drenched to the skin (*The Thunder of Justice*, page 137). It seems they were up to their ankles in mud. But when the crowd endured so much discomfort which would only have brought them ridicule if nothing happened it is clear that they were desperate to convince themselves or their companions that they saw something. At that stage there was no miraculous or scientific proof that the children were telling the truth. Most of the people then had no regard for evidence and would lie or convince themselves they saw something when they saw nothing.

Many people would have said they saw something though they did not. The Virgin had said the miracle was for unbelievers and those who saw nothing might have been accused of being so stubborn in unbelief that doing a miracle to convince them would not work.

Also anybody who defended the miracle of the sun was helping to undermine the brutal atheistic government and would have felt that it was their duty to lie for Portugal and the Church. Though lying was a sin they probably felt that they had no choice but to say what wasn't true so it wasn't wilful lying. It was popularly believed that if the miracle failed to happen the children would be lynched (page 54, *What Happened at Fatima?*) so there was pressure on people to claim that they saw something.

The miraculous drying of clothes?

Regarding the clothes of the witnesses being soaked through and dried during the vision of the sun let us quote Joe Nickell:

“We can examine photographs of the event and just before, which do not show heavy rain—or any rain at all in fact. The clothing in those visible does not appear to be soaked...Most of those present did not report the drying miracle, and what sporadic stories there are seem to have arisen afterward in classic folkloric fashion.”

Not all saw the solar miracle

The Virgin had vowed at Valinhos to convince all that her apparitions were true and from God by performing a great miracle (*The Thunder of Justice*, page 137). But all in the Cova did not see the miracle of the sun so she lied. The Church lies that the 70,000 did see the miracle (page 54, *What Happened at Fatima?*) but then we are told that no two people seem to have seen the same thing (page 55, *What Happened at Fatima?*). “It is clear that only a proportion of the crowd, probably less than half, actually witnessed the miracle. There is some evidence to the effect that only those who were standing in a broad band across the centre of the Cova saw the vision; but the truth of this is now impossible to establish” (page 78, *The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary*). The Cova was a natural amphitheatre which may mean that the event was a natural illusion caused by the way the sun's rays were focused by the landscape. This would explain the broad band. The children might have seen it before when they were looking after sheep and planned to have the crowd there that day to see it. Remember Lucia did not roar at the people to look at the sun until she saw the “miracle”.

On Halloween day 1917, Izabel Brandao de Melo wrote, "Thousands of people affirm that they saw. As for myself, I saw nothing! I could indeed look at the sun and I was terribly agitated to hear everybody shouting that there were extraordinary signs in the sky. I believe that I was not found worthy by Our Lord to see these phenomena, but in my soul I had no need to see them to believe in the apparition of the Holy Virgin to the children." Cardinal Journet wrote, "I have heard of a very cultured Portuguese lady who, for her greater desolation, saw nothing." This lady was Izabel. A girl who became a nun found it difficult to remember the sun changing colour. Clearly she was under pressure to say she seen what she did not see. Confusion had set in. Lots of miracle tales are bolstered by false and manipulated memories.

Ti Marto and his wife, Olimpia, Maria Rosa, Carlos Mendes, Father Formigao and Father da Silva declared that they saw nothing.

The fear that wasn't

The reports say the sun seemed to be about to drop on the crowd. This sight was met with remarkable calm and there was no mass hysteria or stampedes. That is far more remarkable than anything in the sky and shows that most of the people themselves thought what they were seeing was a trick of the light or their eyes.

"It seemed like a wheel of fire which was going to fall on the people," recalls Maria da Capelinha.

Alfredo da Silva Santos claims that "the sun began to move and at a certain moment appeared to be detached from the sky and about to hurtle upon us like a wheel of flame."

Almeida Garrett would have us believe, "Then, suddenly, one heard a clamour, a cry of anguish breaking from all the people. The sun, whirling wildly, seemed to loosen itself from the firmament and advance threateningly upon the earth as if to crush us with its huge and fiery weight. The sensation during those moments was terrible."

"It suddenly seemed to come down in a zigzag, menacing the earth," according to Father Lourenço.

Ti Marto told Father de Marchi: "We looked easily at the sun, which did not blind us. It seemed to flicker on and off, first one way and then another. It shot rays in different directions and painted everything in different colours – the trees, the people, the air and the ground. What was most extraordinary was that the sun did not hurt our eyes at all. Everything was still and quiet; everyone was looking upwards. At a certain moment the sun seemed to stop and then began to move and to dance until it seemed that it was being detached from the sky and was falling on us. It was a terrible moment!"

Maria Carreira said, "It turned everything different colours, yellow, blue, white, and it shook and trembled; it seemed like a wheel of fire which was going to fall on the people. They cried out: "We shall all be killed, we shall all be killed!" We will take your word for that Maria will we?"

In a Fortean Picture Library photo in *The Book of Miracles* some of the people are not looking up at the solar miracle evidently because they have seen nothing and all of the faces looking up are not amazed. There are no open mouths or hands to the mouth. There is nobody showing any sign of fear. This picture tells a lot of the real truth about the solar miracle. It says Lucia herself did not see the miracle (page 54, *What Happened at Fatima?*) though it seems she saw figures in the sun. So the only one who could prove that the Virgin was appearing did not see the super-miracle. Again, the lady does not care about proving the apparition authentic.

The village of Alburitel for one that reported seeing the miracle at a distance and which gave out reports afterwards that imitated what people at the Cova were saying seems to have seen the sun falling too! The priest wrote, "I feel incapable of describing what I saw and felt. I looked fixedly at the sun, which seemed pale and did not hurt the eyes. Looking like a ball of snow revolving upon itself, it suddenly seemed to come down in a zigzag, menacing the earth. Terrified, I ran and hid myself among the people, who were weeping and expecting the end of the world at any moment. During those long moments of the solar prodigy, objects around us turned all the colours of the rainbow."

An illusion?

Fr Manuel Pereira da Silva wrote that the sun seemed to have come down to the height of the clouds and began to whirl. The people looked yellow. But if you look up at the sun and pretend you don't know how high it is it looks as if it is as high as the clouds. And looking at the sun would make it seem to whirl especially when it is a scary thing to look at for we all know what harm it can do to your eyes. The people looked jaundiced because you cannot see colours right if you have just been looking at an excessively bright light.

An account in a newspaper, *Ordem*, mentioned the sun changing colours and whirling. That can be explained by looking at something too bright for you. It would do strange things to the eyes. The heat mentioned at the time of the miracle was caused by excitement.

Dr Almeida Garret who witnessed the miracle did not agree with the people who said the sun turned a dull silver. He remarked how the sun could be looked at without pain but sometimes that can be done. It is easy when you are excited and anxious to see the paranormal before your very eyes. If you want to fire walk, you won't even feel the heat when the desire takes over and you parade across the coals. Same effect.

Because some people reported seeing something happening over Fatima miles away that day, researchers sometimes conclude that mass hysteria cannot account for the miracle of the Sun. Were these witnesses telling the truth? It is curious that they didn't report anything happening to the sun but strange occurrences in the clouds and sky above Fatima. What they saw doesn't match what the witnesses at Fatima saw that day.

The people at the Cova knew that the children stared into space with few blinks to see their vision which was the traditional practice. When two or more people stare at a strong light source they will be subjected to illusions and different colours and the light changing shape and seeming to come towards them or go away from them. Try it and see. You can make a room seem to fill up with light and colour and things seem to move simply by staring fixedly at the one spot. Many of the people in the crowd wanted to see a vision and they would have stared deliberately and perhaps in eagerness to see something and the illusion started.

Garret said that the clouds seemed to pass behind the sun. But then the miracle of the sun was deceptive for there is no evidence that the sun moved that day except in the eyes of the people. Science can prove that it did not move. Would God do such a dishonest miracle? When the best ever miracle implies that God is a trickster the rest can't be reliable at all. Some of the people thought the sun was coming at them which scared them witless and could have prevented them from thinking straight. If there had been no miracle they would have imagined there had been. If a layer of clouds obscures the sun the sun can look pearly. Clouds look pearly. The light could be bright enough to make it look like the clouds are moving behind it and not in front. People do not normally look at the sun so don't be surprised if these explanations seem too simple to be true.

What would you expect?

The accounts of the solar miracle manage to have differences which is odd. You would expect if somebody expected the sun to behave oddly that it would be reported to move, spin or change colour. The miracle is far from a miracle when you realise there is little else you could expect it to do.

Ti Marto who was the father of two of the visionaries Jacinta and Francisco reports quite a typical experience at sites where people look at the sun seeking visions. "We looked easily at the sun, which for some reason did not blind us. It seemed to flicker on and off, first one way, then another. It cast its rays in many directions and painted everything in different colors - the trees, the people, the air and the ground. But what was most extraordinary, I thought, was that the sun did not hurt our eyes. Everything was still and quiet, and everyone was looking up. Then at a certain moment, the sun appeared to stop spinning. It then began to move and to dance in the sky until it seemed to detach itself from its place and fall upon us. It was a terrible moment."

Finally - for a real miracle you would expect to find better testimonies and evidence. It is far too dependent on hearsay.