

The Angels of Mons

Dr Victor Pearce (who died August 2010) lived in both wars and chronicled the amazing stories of the revealing of the power of prayer and the intervention of the Lord during warfare. I think you will be moved and inspired, and I pray the Spirit of God will speak into your spirit through what you read –

Jonathan Bellamy, Cross Rhythms CEO.

The below accounts were first published in Miracles & Angels, Dr E K Victor Pearce and appear on the website: <http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk/articles/life/>

Dr Victor Pearce became an honours graduate of London University in anthropology, through University College, and specialised at Oxford in prehistoric archaeology. He travelled to archaeological digs and conducted research around the Mediterranean including Turkey and the Levant and also in the USA. He read theology at the London College of Divinity; is a Prebendary of Lichfield Cathedral; was Rector of one of the largest Anglican parishes in England; has had 25 curates, built two churches and several halls (one by voluntary labour). He was a member of the Diocesan Synod; was chairman of an ad hoc committee of the Education Council for a new religious syllabus and a visiting lecturer in two Bible colleges.

Dr Victor Pearce was an eminent scientist, archaeologist and theologian. He was well known for his lectures and international broadcasts.

Angelic Intervention Reports

My father was in the first expeditionary force, which fought in the dramatic battle of Mons, about which strange reports began to filter through of angelic intervention. Dad was one of the 'Old Contemptibles', so called by the Kaiser when he referred to Britain's small force of seasoned soldiers as 'a contemptible little army'. Dad wore a special medal on his chest.

When war broke out unexpectedly, Britain was unprepared, so this hurriedly equipped force was sent across the Channel. It was far weaker in guns and manpower than the opponents who had shocked the world by massacring helpless Belgian home-dwellers, but our army fought a dogged rearguard action as they fell back before the terrific impact of massed enemy attacks.

A big thrill was when Dad came home on his first leave, after the battle of Mons. I remember when he lifted me up on his broad khaki-uniformed chest. I did not know how many Old Contemptibles would never return. Dad was surprised that the 'contemptible little army' managed to hold up the German advance during two days' fighting around Mons.

Those two days were vital, because the war could have been lost there and then. Those gallant Old Contemptibles did not know at first that there was more to tell about what happened behind the scenes.

The First Angelic Intervention

Individual stories and official reports began to filter through about strange happenings at Mons in Belgium. A lieutenant colonel reported:

On August the 26th, 1914, the battle of Le Cateau [near Mons] was fought. We came into action at dawn and fought until dusk. We were heavily shelled by artillery during the day, and all our division had a horrific time of it. Our brigade, however, retired in good order. We were on the march all the night of the 26th; and on the 27th with only about two hours rest, the brigade to which I belong was rearguard to the division, so during the 27th we took up a great many different positions to cover the retirement of the rest of the division, so we had very hard work and by the night of the 27th we were all absolutely worn out with fatigue - both body and mental fatigue - but nevertheless we moved in excellent order and were not being routed.

There must have been a reason why they were not overwhelmed. What was it?

I was riding along in the column with two other officers, and I became conscious of the fact that in the fields on both sides of the road along which we were marching, I could see a very large body of horsemen. These horsemen seemed to have the appearance of cavalry, and they seemed to be riding across the fields and going in the same direction as us and keeping level with us. The night was not very dark, and I fancied that I could see squadron after squadron of these cavalrymen quite distinctly. I didn't say a word about them at first, but I watched them for about twenty minutes. The other two officers stopped talking. 'Did you see anything?' one asked. I told him what I'd seen. 'I've been watching them for the last twenty minutes,' he said. When we reached the next halt, another officer took out a party of men to investigate the mystery. They found no one there, and yet the same phenomenon was seen by many men in our column.

The Sound of Marching

In the First World War, a soldier's wife received a letter from her husband, which said: 'During the battle I saw the angels all around. It's nothing short of a miracle.'

He then went on to describe how he'd been ordered to advance into a certain wood with his troops. On reaching the road, to his surprise, his horse stopped dead and nothing whatever could make his mount move. He turned to his ADC, but he found that the same thing had happened to him and to the whole troop. Nothing would make the horses move. The whole troop was at a standstill so they could do nothing else but return to their former position.

Later they discovered that a strong enemy ambush had been waiting for them along the road they were following.

The incident encouraged them greatly, but there were a lot of questions in their minds. Was it some instinct in the horses? They'd never experienced anything so unanimous amongst so many horses! Perhaps it was yet another supernatural intervention. Perhaps it was something like Balaam's ass in the Bible. The ass refused to go on because it saw an angel of the Lord standing in the way. Its rider was angry and tried to whip the horse forward time and time again and then the rider saw the angel blocking his path. The angel then rebuked Balaam for trying to twist religion to his own ends. If the war incident was similar then it was both horses and angels involved.

King David in the Bible was often seeking guidance. God told him, 'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will guide you with my eye.' David was often in peril. On one occasion his country was invaded by the Philistines which threatened his very existence. David enquired of the Lord, 'Shall I advance against the Philistines?'

'Yes,' said the Lord, 'Go up and I will deliver them into your hands.'

There was a big breakthrough, and David destroyed all their idols and images.

But the enemy invaded again, and again David asked for guidance, 'Shall I advance against them?' This time God said:

'No! Circle round behind them, and then wait silently. Wait until you hear an angelic sound! The sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees. That sound will be the hosts of the Lord marching out before you. That will be the signal. The moment you hear that you must act promptly and burst out onto the enemy!' David did and avoided a trap. He routed the invaders and pushed them out of the country.

Newspaper Reports

Reports began to come into the newspapers. The Observer of August 22nd, 1915, said that a nurse in a military hospital was told by a soldier that at a critical period in the retreat from Mons, a luminous angel with outstretched wings came between the Germans and themselves. At that moment the onslaught of the enemy slackened. Unable to credit the story she discussed it with a group of officers. A colonel looked up and said: 'Young lady, the thing happened! You need not be incredulous. I saw it myself'.

Confirmation also came from the enemy. In a Berlin newspaper it was also reported on July 28th, 1915, that a regiment which was ordered to do a certain duty in battle was censured for failing to carry out certain orders. They reported that they did attempt to charge forward but were absolutely powerless. Why? Because their horses turned sharply round and fled like the wind and nothing could stop them.

A German lieutenant, a prisoner in British hands, said:

I only know that we were charging full on the British at a certain place, and in a moment we were stopped. It was like going at full speed and being pulled up suddenly as if on a precipice, but there was no precipice there, nothing at all, only our horses swerved round and fled. We could do nothing.

Pax, a correspondent of Light dated July 10th, 1915 was enquiring into the many stories of the visions at the battlefield, which were widely circulating. He quoted the following from an artilleryman: and they absolutely vouch for the truth of it.

Two English nurses at a hospital at St Germain-en-Laye, Paris, stated that the accounts were not only implicitly believed, but were absolutely known to be true . . . 'No French newspaper,' she said, 'would have made itself ridiculous by disputing the authenticity of what was vouched for by so many thousands of eyewitnesses.'

The paper Universe reported an officer's letter from the battlefield about a party of thirty men and an officer who were cut off in a trench. In order not to be trapped they decided to make a sortie against the enemy, and although they were so few against so large a force, they dashed out into the open shouting, 'St George for England!' As they ran on they became aware of a large company of men going along with them, and even leading them on against the enemy trenches. Afterwards the officer talked with a prisoner whom they had captured. The prisoner asked a very strange question: 'Who was that officer on a great white horse who led them? Although he was so prominent, none of our men had been able to hit him!'

G. G. Monck of Martock reported a young lieutenant in Oxford who'd been all through the retreat from Mons and had been wounded at Neuve Chapelle. He said it was simply miraculous, but was perfectly true. Almost the same thing happened at Neuve Chapelle.

A young woman who was at Stepney Soldiers and Sailors meeting, said she had just received a letter from her husband who was at the battle of Neuve Chapelle. He wrote: In the course of the battle I saw the angels all around us.'

It's Happened Before!

Yes, it's happened before! Long ago in fact. It's recorded in the oldest book in the world. Compare these reports of Mons with a similar record in the Bible: 2 Kings 6:16,17, when Elisha was given the ability to see God's hosts of angelic fighters all around.

When the king of Syria was at war with Israel, he said to his officers, 'We will mobilise our forces at ... (naming a place in secret)'. Immediately Elisha the prophet warned the king of Israel, 'Don't go near . . . (naming the same place), for the Syrians are mobilising their troops there!'

The king of Israel sent a scout to see if Elisha was right, and sure enough he had saved him from disaster. This happened several times.

The king of Syria was puzzled and called together his officers and demanded, 'Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel about my plans?'

'It's not us, sir.'

One of the officers replied, 'Elisha the prophet tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!'

'Go and find out where he is at once!' raged the king. 'We'll send our troops to seize him!'

The report came back, 'Elisha is at Dothan!'

So one night when it was very dark, the king of Syria sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city. When the prophet's servant got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses and chariots everywhere.

'Alas, my master!' he cried out to Elisha. 'What shall we do now?'

'Don't panic!' Elisha told him. 'Our army is greater than theirs!'

The servant couldn't believe his ears. Was the prophet mad? In answer, the prophet prayed: 'Lord open the young man's eyes and let him see.'

The Lord opened the young man's eyes, and he saw horses of fire and chariots of fire everywhere upon the mountain!

As the Syrian army advanced upon them, Elisha prayed: 'Lord please make them blind!' and God did. Then Elisha went out and told them, 'You've come the wrong way! This isn't the right city. Follow me and I will take you to the man you're looking for!' He led them to Samaria!

As soon as they arrived, Elisha prayed, 'Lord, now open their eyes and let them recognise where they are.' The Lord did, and to their consternation they were in Samaria right by the strong capital city of Israel!

When the king of Israel saw that the Syrians were at his mercy, he shouted over to Elisha, 'Oh, sir, shall I slay them? Shall I slay them?'

'Certainly not!' Elisha told him. 'Do we kill prisoners of war? Give them food and drink and send them back home!'

Well the king did more than that. He made them a great feast and then sent them back home to their king. The Syrian raiders were quite flummoxed. They did not know how to react to such kindness, so they stayed away from the land of Israel.

Unbelief Leads To More Evidence

Of course there are many who find it difficult to believe such stories in the Bible. Such events are outside their everyday experiences. It was the same in the First World War. An outburst of discussion appeared in the newspapers. Some were suggesting naturalistic explanations. So because of this a private soldier, Robert Cleaver, swore the following affidavit. It was printed in the daily newspapers, and years later a copy of it was sent to me by Mr C. J. Atton of Prestatyn:

AFFIDAVIT. I, Robert Cleaver No. 10515, a private in the 1st Cheshire Regiment of His Majesty's Army, make oath and say as follows: That I personally was at Mons and saw the vision of angels with my own eyes. Sworn at Kinmel Park in the County of Flint this 20th day of August 1915. Robert Cleaver. Before me Geo S. Hazelhurst, one of his majesties Justices of the Peace, acting in and for the County of Flint.

In an interview with Mr Hazelhurst, Private Cleaver explained that things were at their bleakest with our troops. If it hadn't been for this supernatural intervention they would have been annihilated. Suddenly the vision came between them and the German cavalry.

Debated In The Churches

The subject began to be debated in the churches. The following is taken from a detailed address given at Bridge Street Methodist Church, Mansfield, and was reported in the Mansfield Reporter. The information was given from a high source as it was given by the Assistant Chaplain General to the Forces, The Reverend Owen S. Watkins, CMB, CBE.

At the retreat from Mons, the only division of British cavalry was practically wiped out in a few minutes. It was a sad story which never has been told in full detail. The 'Charge of the Light Brigade' was child's play compared to that action. Out of a regiment of 500-strong only 12 men were left alive.

These figures were confirmed recently on BBC1TV on the eightieth anniversary of Armistice Day, 1998, when one of those twelve ex-soldier survivors gave his traumatic reminiscences. He was over one hundred years old, had lost the sight of one eye and was being pushed around in an invalid chair. On the screen we saw him take the presenter to the actual field. No one would have thought that such a tragedy had happened. Fresh green grass covered rising ground with a wooden fence on the far side behind which was a forest. With a sweep of the hand the survivor indicated where the 500 had perished, and the lower corner where the rain of exploding shells had missed him.

All the time a dogged rearguard action was fought by the British trying to hold back a mass of grey-coated 'Huns' advancing shoulder to shoulder. Without the angelic intervention the thinly-spread British would have been overwhelmed.

Another church where the subject was aired was St Mary-at-Hill, in the City of London. Dr Richardson, who I knew much later when I attended the church as a young man, advertised that he was going to speak on the 'Angels of Mons'. This beautiful Christopher Wren church was crowded and the result was reported in the well-known London Evening News.

'I would like to ask,' said Dr Richardson, 'whether there is anyone in the congregation who has letters in his possession or has seen such letters from soldiers who can tell of seeing angels on the battlefield.'

A lady at the back of the church stood up. 'I have seen letters from three different soldiers. In each one there is a clear and convincing testimony that the soldiers had themselves seen the angels. All the letters were written in convincing matter-of-fact statements. The soldiers declared that the invaders had been kept back by troops of angels. They also averred that the French soldiers affirmed that they had also seen the angelic forces.' Many others in the congregation added similar evidence.

Mrs Quest of St Leonards-on-Sea told how a nurse just back from France spoke to her on the train because she was wearing her son's regimental badge. The nurse was bringing with her three letters from different soldiers, each one firmly declaring that they had personally seen the angels, and that the French soldiers had seen them also. They described a powerful figure on a horse. He had golden hair and his face shone, as did his white garments, and he had a great troop of horsemen in white.

Many in church must have thought of Revelation chapter nineteen:

I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse, and him who sat upon it was named Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes were a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns . His

name is called The Word of God, and his armies followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword and with it he will smite the nations.

The Stampede

The soldiers' letters agreed that the intervention came at the height of crisis. It made the German horses stampede. German prisoners who were taken tried to account for it. Some said that the English must have had spies who tampered with their horses. Others said they just had to flee because large reinforcements for the English suddenly came up. But the English soldiers described it as a phantom army which appeared as they had no reinforcements; in fact they were so thin on the ground that they could only space one British Tommy for every fifteen yards to make a firing line.

Newspapers Continue the Debate

More newspapers came in on the debate. They were the Manchester Guardian, the Daily Mail, the Observer and many others.

Some reported that a dying soldier had said to a nurse, 'It's a funny thing, sister, isn't it, how the Germans say we had a lot of troops behind us.'

'Do they?' she said.

'Yes, the German prisoners ask "How could we break through your lines when you had thousands of troops behind you?"'

'Sister, I told them, "You must be joking! Thousands of troops! We were just a thin line of only two regiments, and nothing behind us."'

A sergeant major responded to this nurse saying that he'd heard an officer talking to a German prisoner who also spoke of the crowd of troops behind the British line. He said all the Germans had seen them.

The Church Times also published letters on this subject. One was from a Miss Campbell attending the wounded. She was bandaging up the head of a Lancaster Fusilier who was a Methodist when he told her, 'The phantom army was led on by a tall man with yellow hair. He was in golden armour and mounted on a white horse, and holding high his sword.'

A man sitting on the floor beside him butted in. 'It's true, Sister! We all saw it! It was just as the Germans were coming up over the hill like a solid wall in their thousands - then they all turned and fled, and although we were so few we rushed after them.'

Miss Campbell said that she also heard similar stories from Russian troops, two British officers, and three men of the Irish Guards.

The Church Times then published a letter by an objector named Mr Machin. In reply, a lieutenant colonel wrote: 'The British army was saved in a manner which puzzles the intellects of all soldiers.'