

# (History of the Salvation Army) Let Battle Commence

by H. Scotney

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*The Salvation Army was launched in Australia in 1880, with spontaneous activity and pioneering efforts by John Gore and Edward Saunders, and later developed and grew under the leadership of Major James Barker.*

**Duration:** 36:09

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Luke 14:23, John 3:3, Acts 2:38, Romans 10:9

**Topics:** "Salvation Army"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the spiritual state of the average Australian, describing them as under-shamed materialists and hedonists. The preacher emphasizes that people have become more concerned with external pleasures and consumer goods, neglecting the importance of God in their lives. The sermon also mentions the historical context of Sydney in the 1880s, describing it as a society characterized by cheerful brutality. The preacher then goes on to talk about the beginnings of the Salvation Army in Australia, highlighting the providential workings of God in bringing together the founders and their decision to start holding open-air meetings.

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## Transcript

What was Australia like in 1880? It's helpful to remember that it was less than one hundred years since the entry of the first fleet into Sydney Harbour. And you may remember from your school days, I suppose, that for quite a few years after that, progress was very slow indeed. In the 1850s, when gold was discovered, there was a rush of people towards Australia.

But in 1880, the year that concerns us tonight, the total population at that time was only two and a quarter million people over the whole of this continent. Our nation had a very inauspicious birth. It was designed to be the refuse heap of an empire.

And the people who populated this country in those early days were mostly rebellious and adventurous types. I'm not thinking only of those who were transported here, but the people who came to Australia, the people who chased the gold. When gold was discovered in 1850, were people who all had some reason for leaving their homeland.

They were adventurers. They were resistant to authority. They were hardy and tough characters.

Christianity got off to a very bad start in Australia. We have no Pilgrim Fathers tradition in Australia. There was a complete absence of any religious motivation in the foundation of this nation.

And right from the very start, Christianity has had to fight against great odds. The first chaplain, many of you here will recall the story, was left to preach the gospel in the open for years. He was regarded as an adjunct of the police force and received his stipend from the police funds and was not looked upon as a chaplain.

Religion has always been peripheral in the history of the Australian nation. There have been no nationwide revivals of religion. Right up to this very present day, the Billy Graham Crusades, going further back, the Chapman Alexander missions, have all had some impact.

But this nation has never known a nationwide religious revival. Nor have any great religious movements been originated here in Australia. The beliefs of most Australians have always been secular, materialist and humanist.

The life of this country in the 1880s and even today is a life largely without any vertical dimension. There is a vast cynicism about ethical and spiritual values. The spiritual taproot has been severed and most people are concerned only with externals.

The average Australian is an unashamed materialist and hedonist. He has made a religion out of pleasure and sport and the bat, the ball, the bottle and the bookie are its emblems. God doesn't matter so long as the supply of consumer goods is plentiful.

Well, what about Sydney in the 1880s? A writer has described Sydney in this manner. The Sydney of the early 80s was Hogarthian in its cheerful brutality. Hogarth, some of you may not know, was an English artist or painter and his paintings always caricatured what was brutal and coarse in society.

Hence the word Hogarthian. And this writer said the Sydney of the early 80s was Hogarthian in its cheerful brutality. It was an uncouth metropolis of less than 280,000 people who managed to support 3,200 public houses to say nothing of hundreds of lesser grog shops.

I worked that out at one public house for every 78 people in the population. The life of the average working man was all too frequently lived in a muddle of alcohol, street brawling and domestic shirking. Institutions were astoundingly corrupt.

Ground out under rolling periods of Victorian oratory, graft, public vice and social cruelty flourished as luxuriantly as ever they did in the equivalent communities of the American West. And by all accounts, much the same could be said of the other Australian cities. I thought it helpful to give you this picture of the background, just a brief summary, to help us to project into that kind of setting the Salvation Army.

It's important for us to remember that William Booth never intended to launch a separate religious organisation nor to extend his mission overseas. But both those things happened. And during those early 1880s, a great many English and other people from the United Kingdom were migrating to what were called the colonies in those days.

And amongst them were many of the converts of the Christian mission and the Salvation Army who carried with them to their new homes their new faith. And such was the vitality of their religion that wherever they went, they, to use St John Irvine's very pregnant phrase, they seeded themselves. And in

many countries of the world, there was this spontaneous outcrop of Salvation Army activity here in Australia and in other places as well.

So that 1880, which I've called the year of multiple births, is the year that we come to now, 100 years ago. It is, we're all familiar with the Adelaide story and our minds are focused on Adelaide at the moment. But it's not generally known that at the same time, there was something of this spontaneous army patterned activity going on in other parts of Australia at the same time.

In Brisbane, for example, a Mr. and Mrs. A. K. McNaught were running a mission somewhere up in the Spring Hill area, which was known as McNaught's Mission, and they were running it on Salvation Army lines. On the 4th of October, 1880, McNaught wrote to the founder asking for support and recognition. He referred in this letter to earlier correspondence that he had had with William Voo.

He reported weekly open-air meetings, marches with banners and singing and conversions. He requested an increased supply of war cries for distribution and he offered to house and maintain an officer. His letter was printed in War Cry No.

50, which was published in London on the 4th of December, 1880. Allowing for the time that that letter would take to get to London and get into print, and allowing for the fact that there was earlier correspondence, it's quite reasonable to assume that fairly early in 1880, this army patterned activity was going on in Brisbane. Down in Melbourne, I have read in the Brisbane Courier of that year, reports of the activities of that mission.

Down in Melbourne, a group of young men were actually calling themselves the Salvation Army and they were holding regular open-air meetings and marches in the city streets. Most of these men were members of the YMCA, in the days when the letter C in that name really meant something. Their activity was reported in the War Cry No.

14 in London, quite early in the picture, dated 27th of March, 1880. And the report said, they get sinners saved on the spot. And then went on to say, we should like to know more of this lot, who must surely be related to us.

Allowing again for the time it would take for this activity to get to London and be reported in the press, this could even have gone back into 1879. But certainly, this was going on in Melbourne in 1880. And it's interesting to know that at least three of those young men later on became officers and two others became internationally known preachers.

Here in Sydney, the beginning was not quite so spectacular. A man by the name of Thomas Newdemon, a convert of the Christian mission in Limehouse in London, decided to drop his anchor in Sydney. And he arrived here, settled in Sydney in 1880.

He showed great courage by wearing his Salvation Army shield and singing army songs and holding one-man open-air meetings in the Sydney domain on Sunday afternoons. The domain has always been a kind of a forum of free speech. And we can imagine him holding his one-man open-air meetings there.

He also wrote to General Booth. And the story in Adelaide, whilst all this was going on in Sydney, in Brisbane and in Melbourne, in Adelaide in April 1880, a mission was being held in the Wesleyan Church in Pirrie Street. And in the service one night, an opportunity was given for testimonies.

Whereupon a man stood to his feet and he said, I was born again at Edinburgh Castle, Stepney, at a meeting conducted by the Reverend William Booth of the Christian mission, now the Salvation Army. Whereupon another man jumped up and said, Glory to God, I too was saved in the Christian mission at Bradford. The man who spoke first was John Gore, a railway ganger or fettler, although known to his comrades in England as the Hallelujah Milkman.

The other man was Edward Saunders, a stonemason and a builder. They met outside the church at the conclusion of the service. And Saunders, whose home was not very far away, took Gore home and they talked until the small hours of the morning.

And they decided two things. One, that they would both write letters to William Booth, and secondly, that they would start holding open air meetings the very next evening. Well, they both wrote their letters.

Saunders actually requested Captain Dowdle be sent over, who had been the means of his conversion. He also offered to pay the fare, which later on he did too. And that doubtless added weight to his request.

Saunders also stated, and this is a very important point which is not generally known, he also stated that while he had been in the colony a period of 18 months, he had, quote, made the acquaintance of 12 or 15 soldiers of the Salvation Army converted under various captains in dear old England who all pledged themselves to rally round the captain and help in every possible way to roll the old chariot along. End of quote. Well, these two pioneers, I should have mentioned that their first open air meeting the next night was held in a part of the city of Adelaide called Knight Square.

It could very well have been called Red Light Square because it was a notorious haunt of brothels and grog shops and that was the area where the army launched fire in Adelaide. These two pioneers gathered a small group of associates and they continued their street and prayer meetings. What also is not very well known is that they were invited during this period to conduct services in a number of chapels and a rather amusing story is told about one that they held in Port Adelaide.

In true army style they had an open air meeting up the street to precede the indoor service in the chapel and again in true army style they lined up the folk that were in the open air meeting and marched them back to the church singing choruses all the way back to the church. By this time the clergyman who had invited them was getting a little bit apprehensive and wondered whether he'd done the right thing and in his opening prayer he said, Lord, preserve us from false fire. But he needn't have worried.

The report says that John Gore pitched in. I'm not too sure what that means. I think I know what it means.

He pitched in and then Edward Saunders pitched in and made an invitation and to the great astonishment of the clergyman five people got up and came and knelt before the platform and that was the first time anybody had ever been converted in that church. The clergyman was so impressed that he invited them to come back again on another occasion. So this activity went on.

In due course they received and were greatly encouraged by sympathetic replies that were written to them by Bramwell Booth and on the strength of that they felt they could wait no longer and on the 31st of August 1880 they held a half night of prayer in the dining room of the Saunders home. Seven men whose names we know were present and an unknown number of women were also present on that occasion. They searched for divine guidance and decided then, captain or no captain, they would wait no longer.

They would launch the Salvation Army forthwith. And so advertisements were put in the paper. A hall was engaged for the following Sunday night and on the Sunday afternoon an open air meeting was held in the Botanic Gardens.

The tail board of a greengrocer's cart served as a platform. The opening song, We're travelling home to heaven above, Will you go? And a small harmonium played by Edward Saunders provided the musical support. Besides Gore and Saunders there were possibly ten or eleven others in the party.

It would be a mistake to just imagine two men holding that initial open air meeting. There were possibly a dozen of them in the party. The date was the 5th of September 1880 and this open air meeting is usually reckoned as the birth of the Salvation Army in Australia.

And you'll see when you go to Adelaide a granite block with a plaque marks the spot today. Well now, it might appear from these urgent pleadings and these unauthorised actions that the hand of William Booth was forced. I told you that he had no real plan to develop the Salvation Army in other parts of the world and it would almost appear that these activities forced his hand but we would prefer to believe that it was all in the plan of God and that these spontaneous manifestations were generated by the Holy Spirit.

Well now, to give you a little spell we're going to listen now to a vocal item. Do you mind playing it once more? Cadet Colin Studley. Thank you Cadet Warren Ravenscroft.

You'll find the words of the chorus on the last page if you're not too sure of them and we'd like to hear that one again. Well now, we move on to the official launchings. In Adelaide, following that beginning on the 5th of September 1880 the work was continued by the two pioneer comrades.

In January 1881 General William Booth dispatched Captain and Mrs. Thomas Sutherland just married. They spent their honeymoon travelling steerage all the way from London to Adelaide on a ship which was called the Ark and Cardboard. They arrived in Adelaide on the 17th of September 1881 bringing with them the first flag and it may be of interest to some of you to know that the first Salvation Army flag did not have a star in the centre it had a sun, a rising sun with rays coming out and that was the flag which was brought to Adelaide by Captain and Mrs. Thomas Sutherland.

And they also brought with them 12 uniforms 6 for men and 6 for women which were eagerly put on by the folk who were of the right size and dimensions and the uniforms were a helmet a red jacket and the women with a I forget the description of it now but at any rate the 12 people were very quickly uniformed but more importantly they were met by an eager group of 68 soldiers and recruits. So the army was growing already and what's more a hall was already in course of erection. This was the first Salvation Army hall in the southern hemisphere and it's interesting to know it was a hooker project it was built by a Mr. James Hooker whether anything to do with the present hooker firm I don't know but he later on became a Salvationist and became the first bandmaster of the Adelaide band.

A little later on in August 81 another officer, Captain Emmanuel Rolfe, arrived another corps were opened these were at Bowden which later became Hindmarsh and now has changed its name again and is now known as Renown Park and also a corps at Port Adelaide. Soldiers of the No. 1 Corps were appointed as Cadet Captain and Mrs. Canty to take charge of Bowden and within two years no less than 17 of these original soldiers of the No.

1 Corps were officers including both Gore and Saunders. A very important event happened in 1882. In August 82 the General appointed Major and Mrs. James Barker also just married also spent their honeymoon travelling out to Australia.

He was appointed as the principal officer in Australasia It might be well to pause a moment there the term Australasia was current in those days it included Australia and New Zealand the New Zealand people don't like it a bit they like to stand on their own but Barker was appointed as the principal officer in Australasia and the adjacent islands too. His ship sailed for Adelaide but true to form the waterside workers were having a strike and so the ship was carried on to Melbourne and he and Mrs.

Barker arrived on the 21st of September 1882 total strangers not expecting to meet anybody that they knew and with only a few shillings in their pockets. Here again you see the providential workings of God As they stood on the wharf wondering what they would do they were approached by two young men who addressed them by name and they discovered these two young men were part of that YMCA group who held the open air meetings one of them had had links with the Christian mission in England before he came to Melbourne and no doubt had read in some religious publication that the Barkers were on their way to Australia and no doubt under the guidance of God he was there on the wharf when they arrived and took them to meet Mr.

W.G. Marsh who was the secretary of the YMCA at that time who also introduced them to a man by the name of Mr. Peter Cousin who housed them for a day or two on his orchard at Melbourne you wouldn't find too many orchards in Melbourne today they took part in some YMCA meetings in Melbourne a march and an indoor service and then travelled back to Adelaide by train now the arrival of Major and Mrs. Barker gave the movement a very much needed shot in the arm up to this time, a period of 18 months only three corps had been established all of them in Adelaide no officers quarters had been secured in fact the army didn't own any property at all after the 18 months operation in Adelaide fortunately on the 13th of November a party of seven officers arrived in a sailing ship from England and this allowed for Barker to deploy his forces he decided to concentrate on Melbourne he'd already assessed the strategic value of Melbourne he dispatched the Sutherlands to open fire in Sydney and one of the newcomers, Staff Captain Gibbs was put in charge in Adelaide Major Barker's vision and leadership set the pattern for future development and we shall see this possibly tomorrow night, more than tonight how the army developed with its two wings the field and the social we owe a great deal of this to Major James Barker with the evangelical and social activities in balanced operation here in Sydney Captain and Mrs.

Sutherland arrived to open fire posters announced the first open air meeting which was held on the 2nd of December 1882 as follows the Salvation Army will begin an attack on Sydney at Paddy's Market with heavy field guns and light artillery with sharpshooters bringing up the rear the attacking force consisted of the two Sutherlands with Captain Canty and a little lady called Sister Cox and they confidently sang we're a band that shall conquer the foe the reports indicate that it was a very lively open air meeting down in Paddy's Market on Sunday the 3rd of December which is reckoned to be the birth date of the Salvation Army in Sydney the meeting was held in the Protestant Hall, Casselray Street and was conducted by Mrs.

Sutherland owing to the illness of her husband I'm interested to read in the openings of quite a few of the corps around Sydney it was really Mrs. Sutherland who filled the gap Major Captain Sutherland seemed to be sick quite frequently and it's a good job he had an able-bodied and very capable wife the Protestant Hall those of you that are familiar with Casselray Street will know where the fire station is and the telephone exchange alongside of it the Protestant Hall stood just almost opposite just about in between

those two buildings the fire brigade and the big telephone exchange on the other side of the road was where the Protestant Hall stood and one of the Sydney, in fact all the Sydney papers gave quite lengthy reports of this opening meeting much more than we get nowadays for a Congress here's two and a half quarter pages of a report from one of the Sydney newspapers of the opening meeting and it's most interesting to read the detail in which it was all reported yesterday afternoon the Sydney contingent of the Salvation Army held an initiatory service in the Protestant Hall and it goes on to describe the congregation and the speakers on the platform were three young men and Mrs.

Sutherland each of whom wore a medal Mrs. Sutherland, who like her husband holds the rank of Captain and Lieutenant-Canty wearing something like uniform the gentlemen's rank was apparently denoted by one red stripe around the neck and each arm and the ladies' rank by two red stripes and it goes on to describe the service and what Mrs. Sutherland said and so on but the end of this report coming from the press at that time is quite significant it says the Salvation Army must be judged going back a little bit the paragraph begins by saying of hysterical excitement there was none the Salvation Army in Sydney must be judged by its fruits there is plenty of opportunity for the work it professes itself capable of doing and every right-hearted man and woman in the city will be glad to see this work done there is nothing so rare, nothing so powerful nothing so much needed as religious enthusiasm and this enthusiasm is fostered as the leading factor in the Army's success that's rather a good statement coming from a Sydney newspaper following the very first meeting held in the Protestant Hall Thomas Udeman was the doorkeeper the press as you gather from that gave the meeting and the coming of the Army favourable reports Major Mrs.

Barker returned to open fire in Melbourne he was quick to see the strategic importance of this city the first corps was opened at Hottam which later on became North Melbourne and today is not operating as a corps at all but the building for quite a few years now has been called the Open Door and operates as an alcoholic centre a centre for the treatment of alcoholics however, that was the first corps larrikins gave them a lively time progress in Melbourne was rapid as we shall see at least three of the young men who had marched the streets as mentioned earlier later became officers Tasmania, this is a little bit out of sequence but Staff Captain Gibbs present in charge in Adelaide but later on he with a party of ten officers opened fire in Launceston and Hobart in November 83 a rescue home as well as corps were established even at that early date in Brisbane there was an unsuccessful attempt to establish work in Queensland in late 1882 a soldier of the Sheffield Corps in England named Cairns who was about to migrate to Queensland was commissioned as a captain although without training or experience and authorised to open fire on the 27th of November 82 the Brisbane Courier reported the erection of a hall at Sandgate by Mr.

Macnaught whom we've already referred to to be opened and used by Captain Cairns and a party of Salvationists the Sydney Mail reported that Captain Cairns first meeting took place on the 13th of January 1883 evidently the work didn't go too well in Brisbane and later on in 83 finding it difficult to support his wife and family Captain Cairns moved to Ipswich and took employment in that city for those of you that know Ipswich with a well known firm, Cribben Foot and whilst he worked for Cribben Foot he at the same time commenced meetings and tried to establish a corps during this year reports appeared in the Melbourne War Cry from Ipswich which were signed by Captain and Lieutenant Cairns it would seem however that the work in both Sandgate and Ipswich later lapsed although curiously the

Brisbane Directory for 1883-84 lists Salvation Army barracks at the corner of Albert and Charlotte Streets right in the city right opposite the Festival Hall those of you who know Brisbane how this got there and who used it is still something of a mystery there were other abortive attempts by Salvationists amongst them

the father of the late Colonel Cutler and the comrades by the name of Harry to establish work in Brisbane but it was not until 1885 that the work really became successfully established in Brisbane the Pioneer Party consisted of Ashton and Mrs Wright who had already been a pioneer in New Zealand and who later on in his life that was the pioneer army work in Japan a real pioneer the beginnings of the Salvation Army in Australia are a remarkable testimony to God's ability to

use humble but dedicated tools in a mighty way the first officers were in the main quite inexperienced and untrained some of them were even illiterate indeed this newspaper report here remarks on the illiteracy and the grammatical errors of the people who conducted that initial meeting some of them themselves were in notable cases of fairly recent conversion prior to his conversion Sutherland was described as a strolling vagabond and was known as Drunken Tom this sobriquet soon becoming Glory Tom after he was saved Captain Charles Jeffreys the first CO of the Waterloo Corps here in Sydney and a dashing leader in our early days was a captain of the Skeleton Army in Whitechapel before his conversion and similar stories could be told of many the army itself was a new thing typical for us to

imagine this now we've got so much history and experience behind us but at this time the army was a new thing with little or nothing in the way of tradition little or nothing in the way of manuals of guidance regulation patterns of action financial resources public esteem and goodwill all of this missing whilst many Christian people who had heard from England of William Booth's soul-saving movement welcomed the army's arrival the church as such gave little support and was in some places resistant the press on the whole I would think somewhat favourable but not always they regarded the army as a flesh in the pan novelty the following comment by Julian Thomas in 1882 in a Melbourne paper is typical in America he said the Salvation Army has been a great failure and I prophesy it will be so

in the colonies it is a combination of vanity shams, hysteria and free and easy which controls the doings and forms the morale of the Salvation Army the Sydney Echo this paper that I quoted from tonight long since defunct on the 12th of April 1883 described us as vain glorious fanatics and riotous revivalists there were however exceptions and in some editorials the view was expressed that there is a large class in the Australian colonies to whom their appeals might be addressed and who would benefit greatly by their ministrations and probably they will find it advantageous to somewhat modify some of their modes of action that's the Brisbane Courier in November 1882 the same editorial went on to speak of the need of the bush townships where the voice of a preacher of the gospel is seldom

if ever heard I have read quite a lot of the Brisbane newspapers in those early days I've been quite surprised to see the space that was given in the Brisbane Courier to the work of the Salvation Army even before it began in Brisbane and long reports that have been sent out from London a column and a half or two columns at times about the Salvation Army in its early days in London may be a certain amount of curiosity behind that but on the whole the press were not very hostile and even favourable to us so you can see that by the end of 1882 the army had secured a foothold in three states then known as colonies South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales tomorrow night we have what I consider an exciting story of the way things went in 83 and 84 and I hope you'll all be able to come

tomorrow night it's really a thrilling story of the way the Salvation Army swept across the continent like a bushfire in those first two or three years so I hope you'll be able to come now we have a closing song one on this sheet

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