
“Giving Out the Line”: A Cross-Atlantic Comparison of Two Presbyterian Cultures

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For much of the three centuries following the Reformation, psalms (and later hymns) were sung in Protestant churches, with the precentor (praise leader) “giving out the line”. An examination of this tradition’s survival reveals how a once embedded worship practice can quickly be lost. This can be true even where the worship practice is carried over into a new language adopted by an ethnic group. This article briefly surveys lined-out psalmody and hymnody before turning to its attrition (after language shift) among two groups of Scottish Highlanders: Free Presbyterians in northern Scotland itself and the descendants of Highland emigrants to Prince Edward Island in Canada.¹

In the practice under discussion, the precentor/praise leader reads or chants or loudly announces the words of a line from a psalm or hymn; the congregation then sing that line. He then reads/chants/loudly announces the next line which in turn is sung by the congregation. The process goes on until the verses to be sung have been completed. “Reading the line” seems to have been the common British expression, including in Lowland Scotland. “Lining-out” is the most common expression in the USA, where “deaconing” and “clerking” and “Dr Watts” are also known. “Giving out the line” is the term common in the

¹ See *Reading the Line: an English-language lined-out Psalmody tradition in Presbyterian Scotland*; Norman Campbell; Stornoway, 2005. The present paper expands on certain aspects of this booklet.

Scottish Highlands in the English language and will be the one most used in this article. The literal translation of the Gaelic-language term, *cuir a-mach na loidhne*, would be putting out the line and this is also occasionally to be heard.

1. England and Europe

Reading the line seems to have gained status within Scottish Presbyterian life as a result of the British-wide movement for uniformity of worship that led to the establishment of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. This body met between 1643 and 1645 with occasional later sessions. It produced key documents such as the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Shorter Catechism* and *Larger Catechism*.² The Assembly's *Directory of Public Worship* of 1644 states, in its section entitled "Of Singing of Psalms":

That the whole congregation may join herein, every one that can read is to have a psalm book; and all others, not disabled by age or otherwise, are to be exhorted to learn to read. But for the present, where many in the congregation cannot read, it is convenient that the minister, or some other fit person appointed by him and the other ruling officers, do read the psalm, line by line, before the singing thereof.³

Following discussion of a draft on 19th December 1644, one account states that the Scots Commissioner Alexander Henderson "disliked our permission of any to read the psalms line by line" and that the Scots had been requested to make representations the next day. The inclusion of qualifying clauses, such as "for the present", appears to have been a compromise between the Scots, who had not been present at the initial discussion, and their English colleagues.⁴

² *The Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*; Edinburgh; 1993; pp. 862-865.

³ *Directory of Public Worship*, contained in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*; Free Presbyterian Publications; Glasgow, 1994; p. 393. See also *The Subordinate Standards and Other Authoritative Documents of the Free Church of Scotland*; Edinburgh; 1955; p. 166.

⁴ *Minutes of the Sessions of the West. Assembly of Divines*; Edinburgh 1874; edited Mitchell and Struthers; pp. 21-23. Quoted in *The Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland, Historically Treated*; C. G. McCrie; William Blackwood and Sons; Edinburgh and London; 1892; pp. 204-205.

Giving out the line was to be found in several other European countries. It is possible that the Hungarian praxis of lining-out may have been inspired by the *Directory of Public Worship*, as those wishing to further remodel the worship and preaching of the Hungarian Reformed Church were familiar with the volume. One writer in 1650 included material from it in a book on sermons.⁵ It is also possible that the many Calvinist students from Transylvania and Hungary who attended universities in Germany and Holland, and visited England in significant numbers, learned of reading the line while in Western Europe and took it home with them. Perhaps instead exposure to it in these countries encouraged them to persevere in an existing version of it in Hungarian-speaking areas.⁶

It is also found in the Hungarian Reformed Church tradition to the present day.⁷ In 1998, two Scottish Free Presbyterians visiting a Hungarian-speaking congregation in Nagydobrony, Sub-Carpathian Ukraine, witnessed the line being given out. The person leading the praise is reported to have read each line out loudly before the congregation sang it. One of the Scottish men also heard the line being given out in Hungary during a funeral. An American of Hungarian extraction was reduced to tears in Inverness, Scotland in the 1990s, when he heard a psalm sung in English with the line given out. This was at a gathering in the Associated Presbyterian Church manse where the precentor, William Byers, had been asked to sing the line. The American stated the practice was the same as that done by his late father in singing hymns.⁸

It is not clear to what extent the practice occurred in the German-speaking areas of Europe. Some German-speaking churches and traditions in North America still use the "line". A Pietist movement which emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century in Wurttemberg in

⁵ *Calvinism on the Frontier 1600-1660, International Calvinism and the Reformed Church in Hungary and Transylvania*; Graeme Murdock; Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2000; p. 163.

⁶ For a survey of Hungarian attendance at western European universities see Murdock, *ibid.*, pp. 46-76. For a glimpse of one student's friendships with Puritans in Somerset, England, see Murdock, pp. 69-71.

⁷ Margaret A. Mackay: "Folk Religion in a Calvinist Context: Hungarian Models and Scottish Examples" in *Folklore*; Vol. 113, Number 2/Oct 2002; pp. 144 and 148.

⁸ Rev D. Ross: "Eastern Europe Mission, Report of Winter Visit"; *Free Presbyterian Magazine*; Jan. 1999; p. 30. For the story of the American in Inverness I am indebted to William Byers of Fearn, Ross-shire. Dr Margaret Mackay of the School of Scottish Studies believes that lined-out praise may have survived more strongly in the Hungarian-speaking areas left outside the state of Hungary following the redistribution of national boundaries in the twentieth century.

what is now Southern Germany did use the line. Many, though not all, of its congregations do so to the present day.⁹ This was known as *Die Michael Hahnsche Gemeinschaft* (Michael Hahn's fellowship) and was formally organised following his death in 1819. Its members all belong to the former state church (Lutheran) and like many other Pietist groups, hold their own services at 2pm or 6pm, having attended the state church's morning service. There are said to be five or ten separate such Pietist groupings in some villages.

In the services organised by the Michael Hahn's fellowship, men and women sit apart in the meeting room. Women do not wear trousers; they wear their hair long but do not use a head covering in worship as some Reformed and Pietist churches would expect. Five or ten men sit at the front and are the only ones to have hymn books, large volumes containing compositions by Michael Hahn and others. After singing and prayer, they read out one of Hahn's sermons. Each service lasts about an hour. This movement is said to have no pastors or missionary work. In many congregations, the hymn is lined out by one of the men *reading out* each line, then the congregation sings that line, accompanied by a harmonium. Part of the reason for lining out is the sheer scale of the Hahn tradition's hymnology: there are said to be around 10,000 compositions by various authors. A kind of concordance is used to choose ones suitable for the occasion. There are eight known editions of Hahn's hymns, according to the writer's source. A tunebook called the *Dolker* with popular tunes, many dating to the nineteenth century, is in use. Recently a new hymnal with tunes was published and this may affect the situation *vis-à-vis* lining-out in future. The exact number of people involved today is difficult to assess. In 1903 there were estimated to be about 15,000 people involved in the Hahn Fellowship in 440 groups; today it is thought they may number 6,000 people.

Another German-speaking tradition in which the line was used was the *Bruederschaft* strain of Pietism which developed in the ethnic German settlement by the Volga River in Russia. They took part in the Lutheran church services but organised their own prayer meetings four times a week. The shortage of German hymn books led to their lining out the revival hymns. The Volga Germans were deported to Siberia and elsewhere by Stalin. Many emigrated to the USA and seem to have lost

⁹ I am grateful for all the information on the Michael Hahn's Fellowship to Michael Lohrer, evangelical pastor in Luebeck.

the lined hymnody tradition after assimilation into the wider American culture.¹⁰ One Lutheran pastor in Manitoba who was born in Kazakhstan of Volga German parents used to give out each verse before it was sung, in family devotions in the late twentieth century.¹¹

In England, hymns were still lined out in the nineteenth century. The line was given out at a Sunday school in Rochdale, Yorkshire in 1836.¹² The use of a precentor was still current in the Chapel at Lincoln's Inn, London until 1820 – it is not clear whether the line was still given out there up until that point. The leader of worship there was known as the "Psalm-raiser". Worship in the Tabernacle in London, church building of the eminent English preacher C. H. Spurgeon, appears to have featured the line being given out, at least in the 1860s.¹³ Spurgeon criticised the "line" in an 1872 article, comparing it to interpreting a sermon line by line and describing it as being "deadly to all music". The practice still existed at a Wesleyan chapel at Porthleven, Cornwall, in 1886. The practice occurred in 1872 at a Primitive Methodist meeting in Norfolk, where an illiterate leader of praise memorised the words and then lined the hymns two lines a time, to what is said to have been an "equally illiterate congregation". A Wesleyan chapel in Nottingham voted to retain the line in 1860. Christmas Evans is said to have supported its retention in his Welsh chapels.¹⁴

The reading of each line before it was sung later developed into reading two lines at a time before they were sung, then two more, etc. This was true of the Strict Baptist tradition in England. Many of their chapels had initially been late to introduce congregational singing at all.

¹⁰ This information came from the Volga German heritage website and its co-ordinator Steven Schreiber. The site can be viewed at: www.volgagermans.net/norka/Norka-church-and-religious-life.htm

¹¹ I am grateful for this information to Pastor Hort W. Gutsche of St Matthew's Lutheran Church in San Francisco, USA.

¹² See *John Ashworth (1813-1875) His Life and Strange Tales*; Gospel Tidings Publications, 1972; pp. 12-13.

¹³ I am indebted to Margaret Campbell, Strasbourg, France for the publicity leaflet from the Lincoln's Inn Chapel. For Spurgeon's Tabernacle, see *Occupy Until I Come: A. T. Pierson and the Evangelisation of the World*; Dana L. Robert; Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003; p. 88.

¹⁴ See "A Sabbath in Rome" in *Sword and Trowel*; 1st Jan. 1872. A fascinating series of brief notes on these and other survivals of the tradition in England are found in *The Dissenters, Volume II: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity*; Michael R. Watts; Oxford; 1995; pp. 181-183. It is said to have survived in some Anglican congregations until the 1860s or 1870s. *The Oxford Companion to Music*; Fifth edition; London, 1944; Percy Alfred Scholes; p. 452.

This began to change around 1700 as a result of the activities of Benjamin Keach. By around 1800 all chapels would have sung. It is thought each line would have been given out at this time for various reasons. In a few cases pastors composed hymns on the spot after the sermon and would have given these out line by line. Then the hymns began to be sung with two lines given out. Eventually this reading of each couplet, prior to its being sung, itself came under pressure around the end of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth. Reading each verse, prior to it being sung, replaced it. One writer to the *Christian's Pathway* Strict Baptist magazine during World War One saw the emergence of reading and then singing a verse at a time, rather than two lines at a time, as a dangerous innovation and the "thin end of the wedge". The end of the 1930s probably saw the end of "giving out the verse" before singing it, among most Strict Baptist chapels.¹⁵

However, "reading the verse" did survive until the turn of the twenty-first century in a few southern pockets of the large constituency of Strict Baptist chapels which had clustered around the *Gospel Standard* magazine and the Articles of Faith of the Gospel Standard Societies. Hope Chapel in Blackboys, Sussex and the nearby Ebenezer Chapel in Pick Hill, Horam, Sussex, gave out their hymns verse by verse until the early 1980s. Salem Chapel in Carshalton, Surrey did so until around the autumn of 2004. It was fairly common in the post-war years among the Gospel Standard churches in the south, though not in the northern areas such as Manchester where the tradition's great pastors such as Gadsby and Kershaw had laboured. In the south of England, in the late twentieth century, it seems the practice usually ended when the person leading the singing reached an age when they could no longer do so, through blindness or deafness, etc. The singing was then changed to being done straight through, or led by an organ.¹⁶

¹⁵ I acknowledge the assistance of Strict Baptist historian Dr Kenneth Dix on this point: the letter appeared in the *Christian's Pathway*; 1917; p. 122. I also am indebted to David Woodruff of the Strict Baptist Historical Society Library and Marion Hyde of the Gospel Standard Library.

¹⁶ I am indebted to Mr B. A. Ramsbottom, editor of the *Gospel Standard* magazine and pastor of the "Bethel" Chapel in Luton for this information. He points out that Doddridge used to compose hymns and give out the line.

2. Scotland

Giving out the psalms line by line may have been reluctantly accepted as part of the Westminster *Directory of Public Worship* by the Scots commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, but became so ingrained that attempts to discontinue it met with regular and strong opposition. In 1746 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland recommended that psalms be sung in family worship without being lined out; in 1757 the Kirk Session of St Machar's in Aberdeen applied the new thinking to their stated public worship services. From then on adjacent east-coast parishes, churches in the city of Edinburgh and then the remainder of Lowland Scotland including Glasgow began to give up the "reading of the line". The same process began at the same time in the Secession churches.

By the 1850s giving out the line in English was becoming rare in the Lowlands, except at communion services. One English-speaking area which showed some greater retention of the line in psalmody was eastern Caithness. There, a general religious conservatism and the nearby linguistic boundary with Gaelic may have been crucial factors in the persistence of the praxis until the very last decades of the nineteenth century. The last English-speaking congregation in the south of Scotland to give up weekly use of "reading the line" was an Edinburgh group who took the step in 1912. They were descended through various splits from the Lauriston Street Original Secession Church, one of the fragments which refused to join the union of that denomination with the remnant "Burgher" Synod in 1842.¹⁷

2.1 The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

However, the practice did not completely end in 1912. There is a report of the line being given out in English at a Lochcarron, Wester Ross, funeral associated with the Free Church of Scotland in the early 1960s.¹⁸

Nevertheless, the main survival of giving out the line in English in Scotland into the late twentieth century was within the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This denomination was set up in 1893 to defend

¹⁷ See *Reading the Line: an English-language lined-out Psalmody tradition in Presbyterian Scotland*; Norman Campbell; p. 4.

¹⁸ *The Living Past*; Donald Macleod; Stornoway, 2006; p. 114. See also *Banner in the West: A Spiritual History of Lewis and Harris*; John Macleod; Birlinn, 2008; pp. 6-7, 288-290.

the Biblical Calvinism enshrined in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*; theological conservatism was matched by a principled resistance to change in worship, as seen in 2010 with its continued use of the Metrical Psalms and the King James version of the Bible as standard practice in public worship.

The line is given out in English psalmody to the present day in the twice-yearly communion services of most congregations in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. It was also practised on a weekly basis during the twentieth century in some Highland areas of the denomination. This seems to have evolved as the church, established in 1893, made the transition from Gaelic to English.

Giving out the line in English, in ordinary weekly services, survived in the denomination until the 1960s in mid and north-west Sutherland. There were survivals of weekly lined English psalmody into the 1970s, in Laide in Wester Ross congregation and Strathy in the far north of Sutherland. The line in English continued sporadically in Strathy in the 1980s. In 1989 the congregation joined the new denomination, the Associated Presbyterian Churches (APC). Giving out the line in English persisted on a very occasional basis in Strathy APC congregation, well into the early years of the twenty-first century. This occurred on some of the occasions when the Ross-shire-based lay preacher, William Byers, who had a fondness for the “line”, took the Strathy service.

The loss of men able to give out the line, a desire by some to end the practice and the failure of many non-Gaelic speakers at that time to learn the skill, probably led to its cessation apart from communion-Sabbath morning services during the 1960s and early 1970s in the scattered groups of Free Presbyterians in north-west Ross, west Caithness and Sutherland. The line had probably been passed down as an unbroken English-language tradition in Caithness, but when it ceased on a weekly basis in Wick and Thurso Free Presbyterian weekly public worship is not now clear. There is a story that men from north Sutherland were unhappy that the service to open the new Free Presbyterian church building in Thurso during the 1920s had not featured the line being sung. If this is true it would suggest the line was no longer frequently practised there.

The Helmsdale congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church was led, into the 1970s, by two elders who were brothers. It is recalled that they largely gave out the line in English at public worship there. James

Davidson died in September 1971. An obituary published the next year does not mention the "line" but does state that he was "a beautiful singer of God's praises" as well as being "one of the faithful of the land". As in other parts of the Free Presbyterian Church, giving out the line crossed over from Gaelic worship into English in Sutherland and north-west Ross as that language declined in public worship. This happened with sufficient momentum in the north-west to continue as a *weekly* practice in English, and in some cases at daily family worship, then as one confined to the communion service. The strong Free Presbyterian tradition of attending other congregations' communion seasons meant that there was a higher likelihood of a person able to sing the line being present.¹⁹

The line was given out in English, alongside Gaelic, at the weekly prayer meeting in Stornoway Free Presbyterian Church for several decades; this lasted until the late 1960s.²⁰ The transition to English in other Presbyterian churches in the town of Stornoway took a long time but did not seem to give rise to the line being given out in English. St Columba's congregation of the Church of Scotland was the original parish church of Stornoway. Up until the 1920s there was a weekly Gaelic service on the Sabbath. In 1966 Gaelic services during the communion season were discontinued. In February 1969 the Kirk session agreed to accept a reduction in the congregation's status from "Gaelic Essential" to "Gaelic desirable". The next minister, inducted later in 1969, was actually a Gaelic speaker and instituted the present monthly Gaelic service as well as maintaining a service in the language on the Thursday of the communion season.²¹

There was only one English service a month in the main Stornoway Free Church from 1843. More and more of the town inhabitants were finding it difficult to follow a Gaelic sermon, and there

¹⁹ See *Reading the Line: an English-language lined-out Psalmody tradition in Presbyterian Scotland*; Norman Campbell; p. 21. An obituary for James Davidson appeared in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 77, No. 5; May, 1972; pp. 153-155. A brief account of him is also given in *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Proceedings of Synod May 1972*; Inverness 1972; pp. 31-32. A tribute to A. J. Davidson was published in *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Proceedings of Synod May 1978*; Inverness, 1978; pp. 28-29. I am grateful to Alan M. Boyd of Liurbost, Lewis, and formerly of Grimsay, North Uist, for alerting me to the Davidsons of Caithness.

²⁰ I am grateful for the Stornoway material to Miss Sandra Gillanders of Achmore and Stornoway.

²¹ *St Columba's Old Parish Church*; W. A. J. Cunningham; Stornoway, 1993, pp. 11-12.

were large numbers of non-Gaelic speaking fishermen based there in summer. Between two and three hundred people, including communicants and adherents, signed a petition asking for an English preaching mission station to be opened. The 1875 Free Church General Assembly – on the motion of Dr Rainy and seconded by Dr Begg – agreed to open an English mission station in the town. (The Lewis Presbytery were opposed.) The next year the General Assembly raised it to being a sanctioned charge, which became known as Martin’s Memorial. The present church building was opened in 1878 and is now part of the Church of Scotland.²²

In Skye, in the Free Presbyterian Church, English lined-out psalms were to be heard on Sabbath evenings in Glendale in the late 1950s and 1960s. In the Flashadder congregation near Edinbane, lined-out English psalmody was in use in the late 1940s and 1950s. Other congregations in Skye made occasional use of this style of praise at funerals and other occasions in these decades into the 1960s.²³

Today, across the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, stanzas from Psalm 116 and Psalm 103 are usually lined out in English while the bread and wine are brought by the elders to the communion table, and during the approach and return from the Lord’s Table by communicant members. English lined psalmody is very occasionally heard at some funerals and wakes (pre-funeral worship services) in the Lewis and Harris congregations of the denomination.

Another area of the Highlands which underwent linguistic transition similar to that experienced in Ross-shire and Sutherland was Argyllshire. However, Reformed Calvinism was severely weakened in the county after 1900. There is some evidence that in a few districts of Argyllshire, the line had even been dropped from *Gaelic* psalmody where that persisted in the county, by 1900. This is said to have happened in the Church of Scotland in Tiree. However, the Baptist churches in Tiree seem to have maintained the line in Gaelic psalm-singing, possibly until the 1930s. They then began to sing the psalms straight through until public worship in the language effectively ceased in 1965. In the early 1970s a Gaelic service was recorded in the Church of Scotland, Lochaline, in what was then north Argyll, but the psalms were sung

²² *1875-1975 Martin’s Memorial Stornoway*; n.p., n.d., pp. 7-10.

²³ The Skye material was kindly provided by the late Duncan R. MacSween, elder at St Jude’s FP Church in Glasgow, who died in January 2010.

straight through. It seems the line was not given out at public worship in the language by that time in the parish church.²⁴

Humorous situations sometimes arose in both the use of the line, and its discontinuance, over the centuries in various denominations. There is folklore from Caithness, Harris and the Isle of Jura to the effect that soot, dripping from the thatched roof of a church building, obscured the line next to be given out; the precentor is reputed to have improvised a line making clear what the problem was and the congregation repeated that after him. The Caithness version is in English and is to the effect that the precentor lined out the words: "There's sheet (soot) on the line, I canna see." The Gaelic versions of the story allege the precentor sang: "*Tha suidhe dubh air an loidhne's cha leir dhomh e.*"²⁵ A precentor at the Infirmary Street congregation of the Original Secession in Edinburgh tried to compromise with the innovating movement by reading out two lines at a time instead of the customary one. He found himself physically rebuked: "Dr Paxton, who was then officiating, leaning over the pulpit, chastised the insubordinate official by striking him on the head with the psalm-book." According to Scott, at least two breakaway sections of this congregation were still reading the line in 1886. One of these was the South Clerk Street group, who, as mentioned earlier, only discontinued the tradition in 1912 and thus may have been the last indigenous Lowland congregation to give out the line in public worship.²⁶ The Free Church founding father, Thomas Chalmers, debated the issue with a supporter of the line who reputedly cited Isaiah as warrant for its retention.²⁷ In Forres it appears that when a precentor continued on without the line, a number of people snapped their Bibles shut in protest. The minister, who had instructed the precentor to attempt the innovation, relented under protest.²⁸ As we saw,

²⁴ *Social and Religious Life in the Highlands*; Rev Kenneth MacDonald; Edinburgh; 1902; p. 205. For Tیره see *Island Harvest: A History of Tیره Baptist Church 1838-1988*; Donald E. Meek; pp. 49-50. The book contains a detailed account of the Gaelic hymnody of Tیره. The writer wishes to thank Alan Boyd for drawing his attention to this detail. The writer is grateful to his colleague, Kenneth A. Maciver, of Upper Coll, Back, Isle of Lewis, for the Lochaline information.

²⁵ *Gleanings in the North*; n.d.; David Stephen; p. 61.

²⁶ *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church*; Edinburgh; 1886; Rev David Scott; p. 129.

²⁷ *The Auld Scotch Precentor*; Glasgow; 1894; p. 34.

²⁸ The Biblical quotation, "Line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little", was allegedly also used in an argument over the matter; it is from Isaiah 28 v10. *The Auld Scotch Precentor*; Glasgow; 1894; p. 36.

the line was also sung in England; later it developed into two lines at a time being given out by the leader of praise. One of these had difficulty seeing the hymn book one evening. He said (in sentiments not dissimilar to the Caithness, Harris and Jura precentors): “The light is getting very dim, I cannot see to read the hymn.” The congregation duly sang these words.²⁹

Recent years have seen a renewed awareness among Free Presbyterians of their having maintained a “unique” worship style by giving out the line in English. Aficionados of Gaelic lined-out psalmody in the wider Presbyterian sub-culture associated with the Scottish Highlands are also now more likely to have heard of it. A privately compiled, non-commercial CD of English lined-out psalmody has begun to circulate. Whether this will result in its ongoing survival is too early to say, but in the last five years, several younger men have begun to present the lined-out English section of communion services.

3. Prince Edward Island, Canada

Psalm-singing in English, with the line given out, was also to be found in the Canadian province of Prince Edward Island (PEI) in the twentieth century. This was primarily among descendants of Scottish Highlanders, from places similar and sometimes identical to, areas in Scotland where Free Presbyterians persisted with the practice. The existence and persistence of English-language lined-out psalmody in daily family worship, weekly church services and annual “Sacrament” services varied from place to place within the 140-mile long province, east of Cape Breton Island and north of New Brunswick. Before describing the practice as found there in detail, the context is worth studying.³⁰

The religious life of PEI was rich and varied but much of it reflected the Scottish contribution. A list of heads of families compiled in 1798 showed that 350 out of 750 resident there bore Scottish names.³¹

²⁹ I am grateful for this to Mr B. A. Ramsbottom, Luton, who believes the story might have been American in origin.

³⁰ The writer acknowledges the role of John Clugston, New South Wales, Australia, in first alerting him to the existence of this tradition in PEI. The assistance of Harold S. Macleod, Rev. Bill Underhay and Rev J. Harvey Bishop on the island has been invaluable, as has that of the former PEI minister, the Rev Jim Abernethy in Burghead, Scotland.

³¹ *The Scotsman in Canada*, Vol. 1; Wilfred Campbell; London, 1912; p. 122.

Britain had acquired PEI in 1763. A massive settlement of Gaelic-speaking Catholics from Uist and west Inverness-shire in Scotland was matched by a large number of Protestants from four main areas of Scotland: Skye and Wester Ross, north-west Sutherland, Argyllshire, Highland Perthshire and Dumfries. In 1803, a large contingent came from Skye, as part of an emigration movement masterminded by Thomas Douglas, Fifth Earl of Selkirk. Many of their fellow-islanders followed them to PEI from 1829 to the 1840s.³² The links with Skye were celebrated by a series of events in May 2003 in Skye and Raasay, and in Belfast, PEI during August of that year.³³ Dumfries was the only one of the Scottish areas sending emigrants to PEI where local native Gaelic speakers were not to be found. The Skye Baptist preacher, Rev Samuel Macleod, gained support in PEI through using a version of the Gaelic psalter approved by the Church of Scotland.³⁴

3.1 The "MacDonaldite" church

One of the church groups which emerged in PEI during the nineteenth century arose from the two religious revivals associated with the Rev Donald MacDonald. He was born in Perthshire in 1783 and arrived in PEI in 1826. The church became known colloquially as "Mr MacDonald's Unattached Church" or the "MacDonaldites". He experienced evangelical conversion in 1827 and went on to itinerate across PEI. He died in 1867, having been involved with religious revivals in 1830 and 1860.³⁵ He left behind a denomination numbering between five and ten thousand people. Part of it refused to join the Canadian church union in 1875. The grouping seems to have remained somewhat

³² See especially *"A Very Fine Class of Immigrants" Prince Edward Island's Scottish Pioneers 1770-1850*; Lucille H. Campey; Toronto, 2001; pp. 33, 80-89.

³³ See Mike Kennedy: "A Part of Canada that is forever Skye"; *West Highland Free Press*; Friday, 23rd May, 2003.

³⁴ *"A Very Fine Class of Immigrants" Prince Edward Island's Scottish Pioneers 1770-1850*; Lucille H. Campey; p. 84. See also *The Macleods of Prince Edward Island*; Harold S. Macleod; Montague, PEI, 1987; this includes Cemetery transcriptions from the files at Beaconsfield, Charolottetown, compiled by Tilly Macleod. See also: *Skye Pioneers and "the island"*; Malcolm A. MacQueen; Winnipeg, 1929.

³⁵ See article by Prof. Donald E. Meek in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*; Edinburgh, 1993; p. 509.

aloof from the main Church of Scotland of the time.³⁶ MacDonald seems to have caused problems for the famous PEI Church of Scotland minister, Rev John MacLennan, when assisting him at communion services in Belfast: he argued that he would not administer the Sacrament to anyone whom he had not personally examined for the privilege.³⁷ MacDonald was described as having a humorous personality in old age and that people flocked to hear him preach. He built fourteen churches and baptised over four thousand children. His preaching had been compared to that of Wesley, Whitefield and Edward Irving. Nevertheless one biographer said he was “humble as a child” and gave God the glory for his success. Although he had preached in houses, barns and the open field, his main base of operations latterly had been at Orwell Head.³⁸

A third revival broke out in Georgetown in 1874, seven years after his death. The leaders of the church there had sent for two of MacDonald’s elders at Orwell head, Ewen Lamont and William MacPhail, to assist in prayer meetings.³⁹ Donald MacDonald’s legacy to church life in PEI included several books on topics such as Baptism and the Millennium. He also wrote a large number of hymns, which were published in 1835 and 1840 under the title *Spiritual Hymns*. Ewen Lamont was also a hymn-writer: a compilation of work by both men was published in Charlottetown in 1887.⁴⁰ MacDonald’s life and hymnology was the subject of a lecture given to the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Scotland, in Gaelic, in March 1981.⁴¹

³⁶ Professor Meek stresses that Canadian circumstances often created ecclesiastical trajectories different to those back in Scotland; see D. E. Meek: “Canada” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*; Edinburgh, 1993; pp. 131-133.

³⁷ *From Shore to Shore*; Jean MacLennan; Knox Press, Edinburgh, 1977; pp. 48-49.

³⁸ *The Lamonts of Lyndale*; Harold S. Macleod. See also *The History of Prince Edward Island*; Duncan Campbell; 1875.

³⁹ *The Lamonts of Lyndale*; Harold S. Macleod. Mr Macleod quoted from the March 1875 edition of the *Church of Scotland Monthly Record*.

⁴⁰ *Laoidhean Spioradail: feumail ri n seinn am measg nan Gael, cumtadh ri teagaisgean Eglais na h-alba*; le Donull Donullach agus le Ewen MacLaomuinn.

⁴¹ Domhnull C. Friseal: “Ministear agus Bard: Domhnull Domhnullach”; *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness; Vol. LII 1980-1982*; Inverness, 1983; pp. 90-101.

3.2 The Gaelic Language in PEI

The early decades of the nineteenth century saw Gaelic-speaking family groups arrive in sufficient numbers in PEI to form communities where the language took root and persisted to the turn of the twentieth century. Rev Hugh Dunbar (1792-1857) served as Presbyterian minister in Cape Breton and then in two charges in PEI: Cavendish and New London. He and his contemporaries, Rev Hugh Ross of Georgetown and Murray Harbour in the island, as well as Rev Angus Galbraith, all served in congregations which required Gaelic as well as English services.⁴²

A fascinating picture of the Highland settlers and MacDonalddites in Orwell Head in the 1860s and 1870s was presented by Sir Andrew MacPhail in his classic autobiographical work, *The Master's Wife*, first published in 1939. His father, William MacPhail, had accompanied Ewen Lamont in assisting at Georgetown. Sir Andrew recalled that each line in the Gaelic psalmody he heard in his youth was "declaimed" by the precentor. Precentors were chosen because they were elders, not for any great musical ability, he felt. There were six tunes in common use in Gaelic church worship in Orwell Head: Coleshill, Bangor, Walsall, St David, Martyrdom and another he could not recall.⁴³

In 1871 a new Gaelic publication appeared from Toronto, Ontario: *An Gaidheal*. Its centre of publication shifted to Scotland soon after, as the editor's employment took him there. A list of agents purchasing the periodical shows three in PEI: in Charlottetown, Orwell and Wood Island.⁴⁴ However, the late nineteenth century and early twentieth saw the break-up of the last pockets of strength of the language in PEI. This became clear in subsequent surveys which dealt with the last remaining speakers of the language.

A 1932 survey by the renowned Gaelic scholar, John Lorne Campbell, suggested that there were perhaps 250 native Gaelic speakers left in PEI at the time, scattered across eight parishes. Campbell had sent a questionnaire to both Catholic and Protestant clergy in Nova Scotia,

⁴² The writer acknowledges the kindness of Rob Dunbar, Research Professor for the national Gaelic research project *Soillse*; formerly lecturer in law and Celtic Studies at Aberdeen University. Prof. Dunbar is an expert on Canada's Gaelic heritage and a descendant of Rev Hugh Dunbar.

⁴³ *The Masters' Wife*; Sir Andrew MacPhail; second edition, New Canadian Library No. 138; Toronto, 1977; pp. 91-92.

⁴⁴ *Highland Settler*; Charles W. Dunn; University of Toronto Press, 1971 edition; p. 71.

Cape Breton and PEI which suggested at least 15,000 speakers were to be found between the three areas, the greatest number of which were to be found in Cape Breton. Campbell felt that the total number could perhaps be doubled, but it is not clear if this also applied to the figure for PEI, which seems small enough to allow for some degree of accuracy.

In PEI the language was still preached once a month in two parishes in 1932. The Valleyfield district was seen as a relative stronghold. The Presbyterian minister there, the Rev D. MacLean Sinclair, estimated there were 100 native speakers in the parish, about a quarter of its total population. A small number of children were reported as being bilingual, but the language was not used in the local school. Sinclair reported that Gaelic services were held in Valleyfield once a month and at the Communion time in July; he said the 30 people who attended Gaelic public worship were of an older generation, “many of whom cannot speak English”.⁴⁵ The Valleyfield people had come from Skye to PEI after 1840 and were originally Free Church in their loyalty; this did not prevent them joining the Presbyterian church union in Canada in 1875.⁴⁶ Gaelic services ceased in the Valleyfield congregation of the United Church of Canada in 1936. The building itself was broken into sections and reassembled in Montague, six miles away, in the 1960s.⁴⁷ A monoglot Gaelic speaker, Mrs Mackenzie (née Stewart), died in 1935 there and her funeral service was conducted in Gaelic. The congregation called a non-Gaelic-speaking minister, the Rev A. J. Ebbutt, in 1937 which would have precluded the possibility of continued usage of the language. However, between 1950 and 1955, the minister of Valleyfield United Church was Rev A. C. Fraser. A native of Cape Breton, he conducted occasional Gaelic services.⁴⁸

By way of comparison, occasional Gaelic services lasted until the 1970s in Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia at North Shore. An early 1950s writer said Gaelic precenting was to be found in the North River Bridge

⁴⁵ *Songs Remembered in Exile*; Ed. John L. Campbell; Aberdeen University Press; 1990; pp. 32-35. I am grateful to Rob Dunbar for pointing me to this reference. Maclean Sinclair's father, Dr Alexander Maclean Sinclair, was one of the main collectors of Gaelic poetry in the New World, both of material carried by emigrants and that composed in North America. See *Highland Settler*; Charles W. Dunn; pp. 80-83.

⁴⁶ PEI elder and historian Harold S. MacLeod, email to writer, 16th Feb. 2006.

⁴⁷ See *A Brief History of the Valleyfield United Church*. Harold S. MacLeod kindly pointed out this reference.

⁴⁸ Source: Harold S. MacLeod.

church in Cape Breton and in homes there too, while he also remarked that Prince Edward Island people were said to join Cape Breton exiles at Gaelic services in two Boston Presbyterian churches.⁴⁹ Over in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, Gaelic services survived on a weekly basis until 1933 in the St Paul's Presbyterian church in the Scotstown settlement, an equally fragile area for the culture. Monthly Gaelic worship then continued in St Paul's until the mid-1950s.⁵⁰ Another wave of Gaelic services unconnected with Nova Scotia and PEI began during the twentieth century in Canadian and US cities such as Vancouver, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Detroit. These were mainly to serve exiles from the island of Lewis in Scotland who had emigrated during the economic slump of the 1920s and 1930s.

In PEI some Gaelic services were held in congregations of the MacDonalдите church in 1935, by Principal John Macleod of the Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh. He was there to discuss co-operation between the two bodies.⁵¹ He was to repeat this during visits to the province in 1939. Rev Donald MacDonald of the Free Church of Scotland, later to minister in Urray and Greyfriars, Inverness, gave supply in PEI during the summers of 1939 and 1940 and also held some services in the language.⁵² One of the congregations to which Principal Macleod preached in Gaelic was Kinross.⁵³ The growing co-operation between the two churches saw the PEI congregations received into the Free Church of Scotland as a presbytery, in 1954.⁵⁴

In 1987 Dr John Shaw conducted a survey of the surviving Gaelic traditions of PEI for the Institute of Island Studies and the Celtic Studies Committee at the University of Prince Edward Island. He found one native speaker in the whole island, John Maclelland of Caledonia, who was 88 years old at the time. A small number of semi-speakers who remembered verses, proverbs and phrases of Gaelic, despite having lost

⁴⁹ *Highland Settler*; Charles W. Dunn; p. 134, p. 140.

⁵⁰ See www.etr.ca/holdings/fonds.php?docid=191.

⁵¹ See *John Macleod D.D.*; GNM Collins; Edinburgh, 1951; p. 163.

⁵² This was recalled in March 2006 by the Rev Harvey Bishop, Andrews Lodge, Charlottetown, PEI, in a phone conversation with the writer. The visit is briefly mentioned in the Biographical Introduction to Rev Donald Macdonald's volume of sermons: *Christian Experience*; Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1988; p. ix.

⁵³ Source: Harold S. Macleod.

⁵⁴ See frequent references in *Church of Scotland in Prince Edward Island (MacDonalдите Section)*; J. H. Bishop; n.p., n.d.; see also *From Shore to Shore*; Jean Maclelland; p. 48.

their youthful fluency, were also interviewed by Dr Shaw. Two of these were able to sing a Gaelic psalm with the line given out. Dr Shaw also found a vibrant fiddle-music tradition. Several natives of the island from the Caledonia area remembered family worship in Gaelic in the first two decades of the twentieth century; that area seems to have been one of the last pockets to switch to English. One informant from Iris, near Caledonia, said the language was not being used much from the late 1920s onwards and that the last Gaelic-only speakers were dying out in the following decade. In the Hartsville, Strathalbyn area the transition to English was well under way by the beginning of the twentieth century but one semi-speaker remained at the time of Dr Shaw's survey.⁵⁵

3.3. English lined psalmody in PEI

It is impossible to say with certainty, but it does seem likely, that giving out the line in public worship was taken to PEI by English-speakers as well as Gaels. Presbyterian ministers labouring there among both language groups were moved by the levels of illiteracy among the various settlers.⁵⁶ It seems logical that reading the line would have been maintained in this situation. Large congregations were organised by the General Associate (Anti-Burgher) Synod in PEI, to the extent that three ministers formed a presbytery for the island in 1821.⁵⁷ As we have seen, the issue of the line was causing controversy within the various branches of the Secession back in Scotland in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. The three clergy from the General Associate (Anti-Burgher) Synod's new presbytery in PEI would have been aware of the emerging trend to drop the tradition back in Scotland, but may have resisted it if they still found the practice useful. Further research in this field would prove interesting.

The *twentieth-century* English lining-out tradition in PEI appears to have been largely confined to the "MacDonaldite" group of churches. Many, but not all, of their congregations were originally formed in

⁵⁵ *Gaelic in Prince Edward Island: A Cultural Remnant (Gaelic Field Recording Project)*; John Shaw, 1987; edited by Dr Michael Kennedy, in 2000 for the Institute and the Special Collections section, Robertson Library, UPEI.

⁵⁶ The illiteracy levels in Cape Breton Island, with similar sources of settlement from Scotland, caused concern too. See *The Well-Watered Garden: The Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton, 1798-1860*; Laurie Stanley; Sydney, Nova Scotia, 1983; p. 103.

⁵⁷ *From Shore to Shore*; Jean MacLennan; p. 47.

what were Gaelic-speaking communities on the island. However, the MacDonalдите church in Cape Traverse also had the English line. Cape Traverse had originally been settled by non-Gaels, from Dumfries in Scotland. This raises the tantalising possibility that here at least, the English lining tradition passed directly down through the generations from these parishes in south-east Scotland, rather than possibly being a relic of older Gaelic psalmody style retained despite the transition to English on PEI. That said, the Highland influence was so strong and inter-congregational co-operation so pervasive that it is just possible the line may have emerged there as the result of being part of a largely "Highland" denomination.

Rev J. H. Bishop stated in the early 1990s that he believed the English line in PEI psalmody to be a legacy of the Gaelic practice:

The singing of the Psalms in the early days in the Church of Scotland (MacDonalдите Section) was in Gaelic, and where the people understood English, or when they understood English well enough, it was then in English. The Gaelic style of the singing of the psalms, "the giving out of the line", was carried over into the English singing. . . . In my younger days that was the only way I heard the psalms sung . . . to those who were accustomed to this style of singing and by the same received spiritual nourishment, it is most sweet, inspiring and soul-stirring.⁵⁸

By the 1870s, the MacDonalдites were being ministered to by a Nova Scotia minister, Rev John Goodwell, who had learned Gaelic as an adult. He was said to be difficult to follow in that language and it is thought that may have been one reason why the MacDonalдites were mostly using English in services.⁵⁹ The denomination had developed the practice of singing Gaelic and English hymns by the Rev Donald MacDonald and others, as the people gathered before the minister entered the pulpit and the service began, but these were thought to have never been lined out.⁶⁰

A book quoted by Bishop stated of the MacDonalдites' public worship:

⁵⁸ *Church of Scotland in Prince Edward Island (MacDonalдите Section)*; J. H. Bishop; p. 30.

⁵⁹ Source: Harold S. Macleod.

⁶⁰ Rev Bill Underhay, email to writer, 19th Jan. 2006.

The elders generally sat upon an elevated platform. They followed the old system of chanting and then singing one line at a time. . . . Though they made no pretensions to artistic music there was a simplicity, a solemnity and a grandeur in this part of their worship which we would wish to see restored in all our churches.⁶¹

In 1938, when Rev J. Harvey Bishop began his ministry among the MacDonalldites, giving out the line in English psalm-singing was common.⁶² He believed it was then to be found on a weekly basis in at least the following congregations: Desable, Argyll Shore, Murray River, Birch Hill, and Kinross. Bishop recalled that at this time it was not practised at all in Milo, but was found during Communion services (“Sacrament” as it is known there) in Stanchel, Coleman, and other areas. It appears to have been done occasionally in Cape Traverse then too. Indeed it appears to have been known in Charlottetown, Belle River, Bangor, Brooklyn and Iris in the late 1930s.

Bishop gave an account of the psalms usually sung at communion services, which were lined out in his younger days. The first would be Psalm 84 v1-5, the second would be Psalm 122, the third, Psalm 102 v17-21 (in later years the second version, long-metre, would be sung). After fencing the table (when the people were urged to not take communion if they did not perceive the signs of evangelical conversion), verses would be sung from Psalm 118 v15 onwards, until the elders had prepared the bread and wine and the communicants had seated themselves at the “table”. Psalm 116 and Psalm 103 would be sung in the rest of the service.⁶³ This selection of psalms differs somewhat from traditional twentieth-century practice in the Scottish Highlands where Psalm 22 or Psalm 69 would feature during the pre-table part of the service. Psalms 116 and 103 would usually be sung from then onwards.

In the Kinross “MacDonalldite” congregation, the line was given out in English until the denomination formally joined the Free Church of Scotland in 1954. The practice was regular there until 1950. Three elders

⁶¹ *History of the Presbyterians on Prince Edward Island*, p. 157, quoted in *Church of Scotland in Prince Edward Island (MacDonalldite Section)*; J. H. Bishop; p. 74.

⁶² Telephone conversation with writer, 16th March 2006. Rev J. H. Bishop, a very alert ninety-six year old, told the writer that he still sang the lined tunes in English to himself and spoke of how it “stirred” him.

⁶³ *Church of Scotland in Prince Edward Island (MacDonalldite Section)*; J. H. Bishop; n.p., n.d.; pp. 51-53.

are recalled as having led the praise in this way: John Sam Martin, Sam Hume and Calvin Bishop. None of these three men were Gaelic speakers. They always lined out unless a paraphrase or long metre psalm was being sung. Coleshill was the favourite tune but they are recalled as taking Dundee, and Mr Hume would occasionally lead with Montrose. It is felt that more grace notes were sung than in lined English singing in PEI than are to be heard in present-day Scottish lined-out English psalmody recordings.⁶⁴ Bishop recalled the following tunes as being lined in English in the 1930s: Coleshill, Bangor, Montrose, St David, St Paul and Walsall. He had no memory of the tune Martyrdom being among those lined out.⁶⁵

The line continued in a number of homes, and occasionally at the annual Sacrament, after it ceased on a regular basis in public worship. Sam Hume continued to give out the line in English at family worship until his death in 1967. Around 1973, at the Desable Sacrament, William Jenkins lined in English. He was an elder from the PEI diaspora congregation of Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Cambridge congregation had formed in 1895.⁶⁶ It declined and the building was sold in the mid-1990s.⁶⁷ Principal John Macleod of the Free Church of Scotland College visited the Cambridge, Massachusetts congregation in 1935, but no information is available now as to the preceding style or language used at that time.⁶⁸ However, the line was given out in the Cambridge "satellite" congregation in the 1920s.⁶⁹ Many of the families worshipping there were from psalm-singing churches in PEI.⁷⁰ Harold S. Macleod lined in English at an anniversary service in the Mermaid Presbyterian Church, PEI around 1975. At the request of Rev. E. E. MacDougall, he lined in the 1970s at Sacraments: on two occasions at Desable and once in Coleman. The last occasion at which the line is thought to have been

⁶⁴ Harold S. MacLeod. *Gaelic* paraphrases were sung with the line given out in church services on Cape Breton Island. Perhaps the reason for English ones in PEI not being lined was to differentiate them from the formal church service, a distinction which may have been important for a denomination which wished to retain exclusive psalmody in public worship.

⁶⁵ *Church of Scotland in Prince Edward Island (MacDonaldite Section)*; J. H. Bishop; p. 30.

⁶⁶ *Church of Scotland in Prince Edward Island (MacDonaldite Section)*; J. H. Bishop; pp. 15-18.

⁶⁷ Source: Harold S. Macleod.

⁶⁸ See *John Macleod D.D.*; GNM Collins; p. 164.

⁶⁹ Source: Harold S. Macleod.

⁷⁰ Source: Rev Bill Underhay.

sung in English at public worship was in 1985 at the Murray River Sacrament, where Mr Macleod was asked by Rev J. H. Bishop to lead the singing in that manner.

The 1954 union with the Free Church of Scotland seems to have been the point at which the English line in PEI began to fade away. Rev J. Harvey Bishop thought that the lack of familiarity with the practice among the students and ministers who came over from the Free Church of Scotland to help with supply, contributed to the process. It is possible that if people only knew how to line out six tunes that this may have been felt to restrict the number of choices open to the precentor. Post-war “modernisation” in Canada may also have played a part in affecting attitudes locally. Structural ecclesiastical change did take place within what was now the Prince Edward Island presbytery of the Free Church of Scotland. In the Eastern “charge”, services stopped in Brooklyn, Peter’s Road, Belle River, Dundas, Kinross, Point Prim and Iris, leaving only Birchhill and Murray River. Since then however, a congregation was established in Montague and is now part of this “charge”. At the present day, the English line is not forgotten in the Province and there is continued interest in it. It would be difficult to judge from the Scottish side of the Atlantic whether this will result in a revival or continuation of the practice in PEI.

4. A brief US case study

One ecclesiastical grouping among whom lined-out hymnody survives to some extent is that of the Primitive Baptists in the USA. Lined-out hymnody is most strongly preserved in the USA among “old-time Baptist” traditions in the Appalachian mountains, most notably the Old Regular Baptists, for whom the practice is mandatory, as well as United, Union and other varieties of the Baptist faith.

Among Primitive Baptists it is also stronger in the Appalachian mountains than elsewhere; but lining out hymns is known among them, if not practised frequently, across large areas of the USA. One traditional area of strength for them was the south-east. Black Primitive Baptist Associations there, such as the Sipsey River in Alabama, line out regularly.

However, in the Georgia-Florida border area, where several pockets of conservative Primitive Baptists are to be found, the practice among whites has been in retreat over the twentieth century. One

association in which the tradition has faded out in the last two decades is the Alabama River Association, known locally as the "Bennettites". Lining-out as anything resembling a weekly practice is now (2010) largely confined to two associations. These are the tiny Original Union Association and the small but robust association known locally as the "Crawfordites" who claim the title of the *Original* Alabama River Association.

The Crawfordites line out their hymns two lines at a time and are now the main locus for its continuance in the region. They are known for strong conservatism in practice. This may be the key to "giving out the line" remaining a vital, living usage anywhere.

Professor John Crowley of Valdosta State University described them recently:

The Crawfordites line out their hymns, and use the 700 (pre-1900) edition of the *Primitive Hymns*. Ministers and members carry their own hymnbooks, there are none to be handed out to the congregation. They do not paint, ceil, heat, or light their meeting houses, most of which are unpainted frame buildings of the utmost simplicity. . . .

Their services are characterized by a great solemnity and quiet, quite unlike most PBs (Primitive Baptists), where some deaf as a dog iron old brother or sister is bound to be yakking through anything that is going on. Their preachers chant or sing their sermons, and often pace back and forth in the stand for quite some time waiting for an impression to speak.

In dress, they eschew short sleeves, neckties, pants for women, makeup, jewellery, etc. The women wear their hair long and plainly balled, and wear hats or scarves while at worship. The men usually wear hats which they remove during time of service. At one time they looked askance at wristwatches and belts as worldliness, but have since relaxed on those points.

They disapprove of radio, TV, and secular entertainments generally.

They will not attend any gathering where one not of their faith prays or preaches, etc., including funerals and school commencements. While they are hospitable to visitors, a guest not

of their faith will not be asked to pray at a meal. They do not “spread dinner” at church, but will invite visitors to their homes after services.

They have not communed with another body of PBs since 1869. In their preaching, their gospel means doctrine manifests in their frequently “warning poor careless sinners” of their dangerous state, but they do not preach in a manner calculated to give the impression that the sinner has any power to effect their own salvation.⁷¹

Conservatism and self-imposed ecclesiastical isolation also partly helped the preservation of a unique regional style of Sacred Harp hymn-singing among the Crawfordites. Sacred Harp involves a special system of “shape notes” for reading music and has a haunting musical beauty all of its own. In the 1990s, some Crawfordites engaged with the wider renaissance of Sacred Harp singing; concerns about this involvement led to a division in which a number of Crawfordite people joined other local Primitive Baptist associations.⁷² The regional style has been somewhat diluted among those who have interacted with the wider movement but those involved believe there has been great benefit at many levels.

5. Conclusion

Attempts to suppress “giving out the line” aroused great passions over the centuries since 1644. The experience of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and the Free Church of Scotland Presbytery of

⁷¹ Prof. John G. Crowley posting on Predestinarian Yahoo Group email list, 20th Aug. 2008; reproduced by kind permission. Prof. Crowley is author of *Primitive Baptists in the Wiregrass South, 1815 to Present*; University Press of Florida, 1998. A full-scale analysis of the Crawfordites is to be found in: *The “Gold Standard” of the Wiregrass Primitive Baptists of Georgia: A History of the Crawford Faction of the Alabama River Primitive Baptist Association, 1842-2007*; A Thesis submitted to the Graduate School, Valdosta State University; Michael Otis Holt; July 2008.

⁷² See John G. Crowley: “The Sacred Harp Controversy in the Original Alabama Primitive Baptist Association”; *The Baptist Studies Bulletin* (Mercer University), Vol. 3, No. 7 (July 2004). See also the internet essay by Laurie Kay Sommers; “Hoboken Style: Meaning and Change in Okefenokee Sacred Harp Singing”; Southern Spaces; 17th Aug. 2010. This can be viewed at: <http://www.southernspaces.org/2010/hoboken-style-meaning-and-change-okefenokee-sacred-harp-singing#section9>

Prince Edward Island is instructive. As far as can be ascertained, no serious attempt was made in either communion to make it a point of orthodoxy, fellowship or church discipline. The *Directory of Public Worship* was not followed in its every suggestion. The principle of exclusive psalmody did not depend on giving out the line.

The survival of the line (in an albeit truncated role) and its probable future continuance in Scotland, by no means obscure the fact that a common worship practice like this can fade away very quickly. One lesson may be that substantial change in practice can happen within one generation or lifetime. Another is that rapid change may occur if the reason for holding to it is not clearly understood to be robustly Biblical. Justification of a practice (or loyalty to it) on the basis of convenience or aesthetic beauty or tradition, will not guarantee its continuance.

