

# **Sashes and Rosaries**

## **Scottish Sectarianism and the Old Firm**



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The picture on the frontpage shows the flags of Scotland and Great Britain, represented as the Union flag, the Red Hand of Ulster, representing Northern Ireland and the flag of the Republic of Ireland, the Irish tricolour

## **Preface**

First of all, I would like to thank all the informants who were willing to share their experiences, opinions and views on the subject of sectarianism in Scotland and Glasgow. I would also like to thank my sister and brother in-law who brought me into their home and provided valuable advice throughout my stay in Glasgow. Similarly, I would like to extend my gratitude to Professor Gerry Finn at the University of Strathclyde, who provided help and advice on how to navigate the vast amount of work that has been done in relation to the subject of Scottish sectarianism, anti-Catholicism and anti-Irishness. I would like to thank my parents, who has put up with me throughout my Masters degree. Also I would like to thank fellow student, Michael Hertzberg, who has not only provided stimulating conversation on the subject of religious conflict and advice on how to shape the thesis, but who has also helped me navigate some of the theoretical framework used in this thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Lisbeth Mikaelsson who has provided invaluable advice and guidance throughout, and without whom this thesis would not have been possible.

Sincerely, thank you.

## Abstract

Denne masteroppgaven tar for seg det religiøse motsetningsforholdet mellom katolikker og protestanter i Glasgow, med spesiell vekt på hvordan fotball-lagene Glasgow Rangers og Glasgow Celtic fungerer som identitetsbærere for dette motsetningsforholdet. Gjennom begrepet ”sektarianisme” kan vi se hvordan dette motsetningsforholdet kommer til uttrykk og blir forstått i Skottland.

Oppgaven fokuserer på hvordan forholdet mellom katolikker og protestanter er forstått i skotsk sammenheng, og hvilken rolle disse fotball-lagene spiller for de religiøse fiendebildene som uttrykkes i Skottland. Ved å gjennomgå religionshistorien i Skottland, har jeg sett på hvordan disse fiendebildene tidligere har kommet til uttrykk. Debatten om ”sektarianisme” blir også diskutert slik den fremkommer hos akademikere, samfunnet generelt og informantene jeg intervjuet under mitt tre måneders feltarbeid i Glasgow. Sektarianisme blir vanligvis knyttet til tre områder: Skole, arbeidsliv og fotball, og jeg vil se på hvilke tiltak som gjøres for å bekjempe fenomenet. Ved å fokusere på motsetningsforholdet mellom Rangers og Celtic (det såkalte ’Old Firm’), som mange mener er ”siste skanse” for sektarianisme i dagens Skottland, finner jeg opprinnelsen til hvordan lagene har blitt identitetsbærere for de to grupperingene. Jeg vil også se på hvordan nasjonale, politiske og religiøse skillelinjer blir uklare i sammenheng med skotsk ”sektarianisme”. Til slutt kommer jeg inn på fotball som offentlig uttrykk for sosial og kulturell identitet, hvordan identitetens rolle ofte kom opp i intervjuene med informantene og hvordan nasjonalitet, politikk ble blandet sammen i identitetsuttrykkene i skotsk fotball.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Upon visiting Scotland in 2007, I saw an example of what I would later come to see as the blurring of lines between politics, religion and football. On a train to Glasgow, a man of Asian descent sat in the seat opposite to me. A man walked over to him, clad in a Rangers shirt, and an Orange sash<sup>1</sup>. The man did an offensive Nazi-salute at the man of Asian descent. It was a disturbing first encounter with some of the symbolism associated with the Protestant/Catholic divide in Glasgow. The meaning of the Nazi salute was familiar to me and I am familiar with some of the background of the Orange Order in Scotland, but what does football have to do with any of it? Quite a lot, it turns out.

I was introduced to the Old Firm rivalry before my fieldwork began, when, visiting Glasgow in 2008. A friend brought me to a Rangers/Celtic match at Ibrox, and I was instructed to not wear any team colors (not just Rangers/Celtic tops but any form of green or blue, due to the strong link between these colors and the Old Firm rivalry). Even though we were sitting in the Celtic area<sup>2</sup>, my friend believed it wise to be able to deny affiliation with either team should we stumble upon an aggressive supporter demanding a declaration of allegiance. I had briefly heard of the intensity of the Old Firm rivalry before (like many others), but not being particularly interested in football, I had never seen a match on TV, or cared enough to read about it in the newspapers.

During the match there was much banter between the two crowds, mixed in with colorful language from both sides. Offensive gestures were made from both sides and various combinations with the word “Orange” shouted from the Celtic side. From Rangers you could clearly make out some of the same variations made with the word “Fenian”. I did not manage to pick up what songs were being sung, due to the match and talking amidst all the cheering proved to be difficult. At one point however, one of the people standing near us started singing a song my friend reacted to. He explained that the man had started singing a song, that had been banned, about the IRA. If the police or the stewards heard him he would be escorted from the ground.

When leaving the stadium, Celtic fans celebrated and Rangers fans were understandably deflated as the result turned out to be a 2-1 loss for Rangers. As we

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<sup>1</sup> The traditional symbol of the Orange Order, worn shoulder to hip.

<sup>2</sup> This being one of the two short-sides of the stadium, the remainder filled by Rangers fans.

were walking down the road, I was amazed by the number of police officers present. Police officers were standing shoulder to shoulder, effectively splitting the road we were walking on in half, keeping the supporters away from each other. There was a number of songs sung by people walking the way we were, both by Rangers supporters hoping to regain some self esteem, and by Celtic supporters wanting to rub it in. We started walking to find a cab, but after a while it turned out we were not really sure where we were. My friend called his father, who had extensive knowledge of the local area. My friend told me rather nervously that we “were in a bad neighbourhood”, meaning a Rangers neighbourhood, and one we did not want to be in after an Old Firm match where Rangers had lost. We got out of there in a hurry, not wanting to experience that particular part of the Old Firm rivalry.

## **1.1 Research Agenda**

In my thesis I will focus on the discussions surrounding “sectarianism” in Scottish society and in Scottish football, with particular focus on the two Glasgow clubs Celtic and Rangers.

In doing this my main questions will be: How is the Catholic-Protestant relationship seen and understood, and what role does the identity of the Old Firm play into the religious antagonism that allegedly exists in Scottish society?

To explore this area of interest I will:

- Explore the religious history of Scotland, obtaining relevant background information about any religious antagonism.
- Discuss the debate concerning the question of “sectarianism” in Scotland.
- Analyze what anti-sectarian work is being done, in order to gain an understanding of what areas “sectarianism” is thought to affect.
- Explore the relationship between religious antagonism, football and identity - as expressed in the Old Firm.

Questions that are relevant to these areas are:

- In what way(s) is religion a part of the phenomenon known as “sectarianism” in Scotland?
- How do religious elements show themselves in the football rivalry between Celtic and Rangers?
- How do the religious identities of either side differ from one another?



- What kind of religion is involved in the “sectarianism” connected to football in Scotland?

“Sectarianism” is derived from “sect”, a widely used concept in the scientific study of religion, referring to a religious organization characterized by having an exclusive self-understanding, meaning that members of the “sect” are the sole possessors of the “truth”. In Scotland’s case however, “sectarianism” will be shown to be tied to social and national opposition (Furseth and Repstad 2003: 164). When discussing “sectarianism” I will be using the term as it is commonly understood in Scottish society, meaning the religious antagonism between Catholics and Protestants.

Today the issue of “sectarianism” in Scotland is discussed by the government and often commented on in the media. The rivalry between the football clubs Glasgow Rangers and Glasgow Celtic plays an important role, as some accuse them of being the cause and main outlet for sectarianism in Scotland. This is part of why I wanted to explore this area, to explore how religion and sport has blended into something that is addressed as a social issue in Scotland today. This is the case, but what is the basis of it?

## **1.2 Research on the subject**

The relationship between Catholics and Protestants in Scotland has become a much discussed subject in relatively recent times. I say “relatively” because it is a topic that has been affected by different hindrances when written about. Anti-Catholicism became a problem early in Scottish history and was coupled with anti-Irishness. This led to the Irish Catholics’ effect on Scottish society being left out of earlier historical works. Since the 1980s and onwards this was remedied and several works about different aspects of the Catholic-Protestant relationship was published, among them Bill Murray’s *The Old Firm – Sectarianism, Sport and Society in Scotland* (1984) and later *The Old Firm in the New Age: Celtic and Rangers since the Souness Revolution* (1998), Steve Bruce’s *No Pope of Rome: Militant Protestantism in Modern Scotland* (1985), Tom Gallagher’s *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace* (1987) and several others. This interest in the subject of “sectarianism” is argued by some as being the result of Glasgow Rangers’ removal of their well-known practice of not signing Catholics to play for them (further explained in chapter 6). From then on there was a gradual decline of interest in the subject up until 1999 when a Scottish composer named

James MacMillan held a speech entitled “Scotland’s Shame”, where he spoke of what he felt was an endemically anti-Catholic Scottish society (explained further in chapter 3). That same year the Rangers deputy chairman was filmed while singing sectarian songs. After these events there has been a steady flow of works discussing the Catholic-Protestant relationship in Scotland. Some of these include Tom Devine’s *Scotland’s Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland* (2000), Steve Bruce et al’s *Sectarianism in Scotland* (2004), and Michael Rosie’s *The Sectarian Myth in Scotland* (2004). Psychologist Gerry Finn has also written extensively on the subject through the perspective of prejudice, some of these include “Racism, Religion and Social Prejudices: Irish Catholic Clubs, Soccer and Scottish Society – The Historical Roots of Prejudice” (1991), “Sporting Symbols, Sporting Identities: Soccer and Intergroup Conflict in Scotland and Northern Ireland” (1994) and “Scottish Myopia and Global Prejudices” (2000). Scholars involved in the subject of the Catholic-Protestant antagonism range from sociologists and psychologists to historians and sport historians, and display a wide range of opinions regarding the topic of “sectarianism” in Scotland.

### **1.3 Methodology and Sources**

To explore the relationship/antagonism between Catholics and Protestants in Glasgow I chose to do three months of fieldwork in the city, getting qualitative interviews with a number of informants and doing observation. I decided that I would put emphasis on the interviews in order to gain access to the local perception of the relationship and how people understood the issue.

Interviews involve conversations with people, varied in structure, from formal interviews to informal interviews, planned or random, but in which the researcher guides the direction of the interview.<sup>3</sup> (Kraft and Natvig 2006: 204)

Observation is described as:

Observation can vary from pure observation (a theoretical position that is virtually impossible to practice) to participating observation, where the researcher lives among those he or she is

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<sup>3</sup> My own translation: “Intervju inneber samtaler med folk, varierende frå planlagde og strukturerte, formelle intervju, til uhøgtidelige samtaler eller ordveksling, både planlagde og tilfeldige, men likevel føremålsretta frå forskaren si side” (Kraft and Natvig 2006: 204).

studying and takes part in their everyday life and actions, while at the same time gathering data through observation and, naturally, conversations.<sup>4</sup> (Kraft and Natvig 2006: 204)

Fieldwork is rarely based exclusively on either of these methods, but rather on a combination where emphasis is put on one or the other. There is a series of elements that play into whether one or the other is emphasized, for example, whether or not the researcher is allowed to attend the event in question at all. Fieldwork usually used by researchers of religious studies is traditionally built up in this way as a mix of typical anthropology fieldwork, characterized by a prolonged stay in the field and an emphasis on participating observation, and of typical ethnological fieldwork, characterized by repeated visits to the field with an emphasis on interview technique (Kraft and Natvig 2006: 204 and 207).

Before starting the fieldwork however, it is important to gain sufficient knowledge of the area in question's history. In my case the preparation consisted of studying Scottish history, resulting in chapter 2, which was written before I left for Scotland. It gave me valuable understanding of the religious background. This turned out to be important for understanding many of the references made by the informants I interviewed.

While there are no rules as to how many interviews one can do during fieldwork, I decided on six. These were extensive interviews. In addition, my chosen subject was a topic many people wanted to offer their opinions on when they found out what I was studying. Their thoughts and our discussions went a long way to form my understanding of the issue.

Before each interview I made an interview-guide to help me organize the subjects I wanted to discuss with each informant. This was adapted, shortened and added to, according to the informant in question.

A crucial aspect for achieving a good interview is “a feeling of mutual respect, closeness and sympathy between the researcher and the interview object”<sup>5</sup> (Kraft and Natvig 2006: 234). This is both what makes the qualitative method effective and what

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<sup>4</sup> My own translation: “Observasjon kan variera langs ei ubrotten line frå rein observasjon (ein teoretisk posisjon som knapt er praktisk gjennomførbar) til deltakande observasjon, der forskaren bur blant dei som han eller ho studerer og tek del i deira daglege liv og gjeremål, samtidig som han eller ho samler inn data gjennom observasjon og, sjølv sagt, samtalar med folk” (Kraft og Natvig 2006: 204).

<sup>5</sup> Own translation: “[...]ei oppleving av respekt, nærleik og sympati mellom forskaren og dei som vært utforska” (Kraft and Natvig 2006: 234).

makes it difficult, as a close relationship between interviewer and interviewee can result in the researcher becoming biased.

I had contacts in Scotland prior to my fieldwork. Getting an introduction to issues surrounding the Catholic-Protestant relationship was therefore made considerably easier for me.

When I arrived in Glasgow, I looked up the anti-sectarian organization Nil by Mouth hoping that it would be able to provide useful advice on where to start. I found Nil by Mouth on the Internet, often noticing their name in newspaper articles and the like. The organization turned out to be very helpful, and seemed happy that someone from another country took an interest in the issue of “sectarianism”. The interview with a Nil by Mouth representative was the first interview I arranged. As I had little knowledge of the literature about the issue (apart from the books I had acquired in Norway<sup>6</sup>), I queried Nil by Mouth for any significant authors who had written about the issue. As a result I was pointed in the direction of Professor Gerry Finn at the University of Strathclyde and some of the articles he had written. I decided to look up Dr. Finn in person, hoping that he would have time for a foreign student interested in his work. Dr. Finn was very forthcoming regarding this issue, and in addition to giving me access to some of his own articles, he also very kindly pointed me in the direction of other authors who had written about the subject. In addition he offered some of his views and knowledge of the subject during short conversations. I scheduled an in depth interview with Dr. Finn early on in my fieldwork, but due to hindrances of varying nature on Dr. Finn’s part, it regrettably did not come to pass.

After regular email correspondence Nil by Mouth also pointed me in the direction of Citizenship through Football, another organization that partly focuses on anti-sectarian work. This led to the interview I had with their representative. I was also able to come along when Nil by Mouth made an appearance at a “celebration event” hosted by the Scottish government in relation to their approach to sectarianism. At the event, I spoke to different anti-sectarian organizations. One of them, YouthLink Scotland, was kind enough to give me one of their resource packs which states that its aim is: “To raise awareness of sectarianism and the consequences that sectarian behaviour has on communities and individuals” (YouthLink Scotland 2009: 5). This gave me insight into how the issue is presented to young people and the way t

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<sup>6</sup> Steve Bruce et al *Sectarianism in Scotland* (2004) and Bill Murray *The Old Firm in the New Age* (1998) being the most significant of those.

this resource pack “helps many other young people gain a deeper understanding of this complex problem and to reflect upon the effect that their language and behaviour has on others” (YouthLink Scotland 2009: 1).

I had envisioned that I would interview both a Catholic priest and Protestant minister to get their point of view on the issue. I only managed to interview one local Catholic priest, even though I tried to make contact with local ministers. However, the interview with the Catholic priest seems to work as both a spokesman of the Catholic Church and for the other churches in Larkhall. The priest emphasizes the ecumenical work done between the churches, and the fact that the problem seemed not to be representative for the relationship between the churches. Even though it would have been interesting to hear the Protestant churches views on the issue, one can with certain restraints, assume that their views shine through in their ecumenical work.

The Celtic supporter that I decided to interview was one that did not have the stereotypical views usually associated with these. Finding a Rangers supporter to interview would prove more difficult, due to a variety of reasons. Via the Celtic fan informant, I was also able to get an interview with a Celtic player. The Celtic fan informant and the Celtic player were also willing to take me with them to one of the local Celtic pubs, to watch an Old Firm match<sup>7</sup>, although, they did not want to bring me to the roughest one. This was due both to the fact that these could sometimes be dangerous<sup>8</sup> and to a line of thought that the Celtic player perhaps should not be associated so early in his career with the “hardcore fans”.

My interview with the police turned out to be a matter of goodwill on their part, as I had almost given up trying to reach them after a series of emails and telephone calls had not resulted in anything concrete. However, I was contacted by the Operational Planning Unit, which among other things is in charge of the security of two different football clubs, Celtic and Partick Thistle, as well as the security surrounding marches and processions. This was very relevant. The inspector I interviewed was very helpful and answered every question asked openly. The interview with the police was interesting because it shows how the issue is handled by the law, and how the police work to handle it.

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<sup>7</sup> There was only one during my stay.

<sup>8</sup> Glasgow has a well-known problem of knife-crime (Kelbie 2003). During my stay I walked passed the City Central train station, and saw what I thought to be some sort of celebrity reception, due to the sheer number of police present. After asking what this was, it was made clear to me that this was not the case, and that it in fact was a random knife-search. The day after it became known that during this search somewhere around 1000 knives were confiscated.

All in all, the process of gaining access to informants and information, went reasonably well, the only draw-backs being the lack of informants from the Rangers side, and the lack of an interview with a minister. The priest I did manage to get an interview with put emphasis on the ecumenical work done between the churches, so in a way I managed to get their side of it through him.

I do believe that my choice of informants is representative enough to reach certain conclusions. Even though the Protestant minister and the Rangers supporter are absent, the rest of the informants have been carefully chosen.

I have also interviewed a Celtic player. This may appear problematic, as I was not able to do the same with a Rangers player, but I do not think this is relevant. The player is relatively new to the antagonism because he is from another country than Scotland, and therefore have not grown up with neither the football rivalry of the Old Firm or the religious antagonism of Catholics and Protestants in Glasgow. It would be difficult to get a corresponding interview with a Rangers player.

“Sectarianism” is an ingrained term in Scottish society that is used to describe the religious antagonism between Catholics and Protestants, and will therefore figure prominently in this thesis.

## **1.4 Structure**

Chapter 2 presents the religious history of Scotland, while emphasizing the events that are central to understanding the relationship between Catholics and Protestants today. Chapter 3 aims to highlight some of the ways the religious opposition is debated today, while emphasizing the understanding of “sectarianism” as a term and as a social issue today. This is done because understanding how “sectarianism” is viewed in Scotland is vital to understanding the Catholic-Protestant antagonism and the discourse that surrounds it today. Chapter 4 looks into the areas (other than football) that is linked to “sectarianism” and where, traditionally, this issue has manifested itself. Chapter 5 presents some of the anti-sectarian organizations and work that is being done in Scotland today. In chapter 6 the role of football in the Catholic-Protestant antagonism is presented, while focusing on the role of the Old Firm as carriers of opposing identities. In chapter 7 the issues relating to identity, football, nationalism and religion is discussed, as related to the Catholic-Protestant antagonism.

## 2.0 Religious Background of Scotland

In this chapter I will present the religious history of Scotland, emphasizing the events that are central to understanding the relationship between Protestants and Catholics today. In doing so, I will lay the groundwork for understanding the references that are still made to some of the events in contemporary discourse surrounding the antagonism between the two denominations.

The national church in Scotland today is the Church of Scotland, which is legally recognized as such. The Church of Scotland is the largest religious grouping in Scotland with 36% of Scottish population as members (Bruce et al. 2004: 64). “The Kirk” as it is commonly referred to, is completely independent from the state in Scotland. In the early years of Scottish church history however, this was a matter of much debate. The Church Patronage Act (Scotland) of 1711, started a series of events that produced the “voluntary principle”, the idea that the state should not be involved in churchly matters, culminating in the Disruption in 1843, the largest division of the Scottish church, explained later on in the chapter. The Irish immigration that rearranged the religious landscape of Scotland started in the first decades of the 1800s, and reached a peak around the 1840s.

The second largest religious grouping in Scotland is Roman Catholicism, with 16% of the Scottish population, most of which are of Irish descent (Mitchell 2008: I). Between two-thirds and three-quarters of the immigrants from Ireland were Roman Catholic. Prior to the arrival of Irish immigrants there were as little as 30,000 Catholics in Scotland, out of a population of 1.5 million. Today there are over 800,000 Catholics in the country.(Mitchell 2008: I).

However, in the Scottish Social Attitudes survey, the option “no religion” actually outstripped the national church, and claimed 37% of the population, which is a relatively new phenomenon in Scotland. From the 1960s, when almost everyone claimed a religious label, the “no religion” identity has grown considerably (Bruce et al. 2004: 64).

Anti-Catholicism and sectarianism has been a much discussed subject ever since immigration from Ireland, and has had many different outlets. The following historical review shows the background of the current religious situation in Scotland.

## **2.1 Pre-Reformation Church in Scotland**

Religion has always played an important role in Scottish identity, and for the most part, this has meant Christianity. We do not know exactly when Christianity made its entrance into Great Britain, but according to G. D. Henderson Christians in Britain are first mentioned by Tertullian when he mentions:

[...]the haunts of the Britons, inaccessible to Romans, but subjugated to Christ. (Henderson 1939: 8)

The first name that comes up when researching Christianity in Scotland is St. Ninian (ca. 350-432). What we today know as Scotland had in his time three different people inhabiting it. The great majority of these were the Picts, with the Britons in the south, and also the people coming from Northern Ireland, the Scots (Henderson 1939: 10). St. Ninian built a monastery in the south of Scotland to reach these “heathen” peoples, and after some time this became a center both for missionaries and for the education of monks (Henderson 1939: 12).

Ireland was to become an early influence on Scottish religion, and missionaries came from there as early as the 500s. The most important of these was St. Columba (Henderson 1939: 15). St. Columba built a monastery on the island of Iona, in 563 and worked from there for 30 years, converting the “heathen” Picts. After Columba’s death, the Celtic Christianity spread south in Britain, and after a while, came in contact with the Catholic missionaries.

The difference<sup>9</sup> in practice between Celtic Christianity and Roman Catholicism was quickly discovered. Henderson explains it: “In this case the differences were not great, but feeling was strong” (Henderson 1939: 20). They had to come to an agreement on whether to follow Celtic or Catholic practices. In 664 A.D. the local king was chosen to decide, and he came to the decision that the Catholic practice was the right one. This was based on the fact that Celtic Christianity could only refer to St. Columba as an authority, while the Catholic Church could use St. Peter.

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<sup>9</sup> Among these were a difference in the way of calculating the date of Easter, monks were in charge of religious ordinances, the chief Church authority in Celtic lands were the abbot of the monastery who also supplied the ecclesiastical ordinances, and lastly, among the monks there were bishops who were responsible for the ordination of clergy (Henderson 1939: 20-21).



After this the Celtic Christianity faded gradually away in Scotland. In 686 the monastery on Iona was convinced to follow Catholic practice, and in 717 the king of the Picts did the same (Henderson 1939: 21).

After this period little is known about religion in Scotland (Henderson 1939: 22). When Christianity in Scotland reappears in the source material, the church in Scotland seems both stronger and better organized. In 878 the term “the Scottish Kirk” is used for the first time. But according to Henderson sources also seem to say that religious practice in Scotland was still not completely the same as in mainland Europe (Henderson 1939: 23).

Scottish monarchs worked to unite the Celtic and Catholic practices (Henderson 1939: 25). They succeeded to such a degree that the Pope in Rome declared Scotland “Rome’s special daughter” where Rome would be “none intervening”. This seemed to have given the church in Scotland enough space to develop some rebellious tendencies, which manifested themselves during the Wars of Independence (First 1296-1328) (Second (1332-1371), when the Pope sided with England. As a response the church in Scotland decided not to listen to any orders from Rome until the independence of Scotland and the sovereignty of the then would-be king of an independent Scotland, Robert the Bruce, were formally recognized by the Pope. This happened in 1328 (Henderson 1939: 35).

## **2.2 The Reformation**

The Reformation in Scotland was part of the general movement in Europe, and Scotland formally broke from the Papacy in 1560. Scotland had its share of persecution, but not as much as many other countries during this time. The printing press naturally had an important effect on the Reformation in Scotland as well as in the rest of Europe, and writings by Luther were spreading fast. George Wishart (1512-1546) a schoolmaster in Montrose, studied the Greek New Testament, went to Switzerland, Germany, and eventually returned to Scotland where he started preaching. He was quickly arrested, and burned at the stake. But not before affecting the person who would turn out to be the most important person for the Scottish Reformation, John Knox.

John Knox influenced the Reformation in Scotland in many ways. He was a member of the Reformation party in Scotland in 1559, and one of the authors of the Confession of faith in Scotland. He was also a member of the commission who

nullified the Pope's authority in Scotland and made the Catholic mass illegal in the country. In addition Knox wrote the important works "The First book of Discipline" (1560), "Book of Common Order" (1556-64) and "History of the Reformation of Religion Within the Realm of Scotland" (1644) (Henderson 1939: 52).

When the Catholic Mary I became monarch in England in 1553 many Protestants found it necessary to flee the country, and Knox chose to go to Switzerland where he met John Calvin for the first time. With him, Knox found a church system he agreed with, and it was not long until he became a follower of Calvin's teachings (Henderson 1939: 49).

When Knox returned to Scotland in 1559 the Reformation movement had become much stronger. This was due to the fact that the Catholic Mary of Guise had become the regent on behalf of her daughter, Mary of Scots. Mary of Guise had lived in France for a long time, and it was believed that she would rule the country from there. This had frightened the Scottish population, because it was believed that French hegemony was a real possibility. This fear was so real that the Scots now turned to their earlier enemies, the English, rather than continue to follow their monarch. When Knox arrived in Scotland, the country was more or less in a civil war (Henderson 1939:49).

The French, who had been in Scotland since the beginning of the "Auld Alliance" in 1295, was in the end forced to withdraw from Scotland, when England sent in troops to support the Protestants. Scotland was now to be ruled by what was called "the Lords of the Congregation", in other words, the Protestant leaders in the country (Henderson 1939: 49 and 55). These were men who had sworn to: "Maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed Word of God and His congregation," (Henderson 1939: 50). And who had:

[...]renounced Romish superstition and had declared their resolve that in every parish Protestant services should be held, and that 'doctrine, preaching, and interpretation of Scriptures be had and used privately in quiet houses, without great conventions of the people thereto, till God move the prince to grant public preaching by faithful and true ministers. (Henderson 1939: 50)

### ***2.3 After the Reformation***

One of the reasons the Reformation was as effective as it had been in Scotland, was that the population in Scotland had a general distrust of bishops and the episcopate in

general. With Episcopalianism, it is meant the church system that places the highest ecclesiastic power with the country's highest bishop (Episkopalisme 2010). There were many reasons for this general feeling of dissatisfaction, but one of the main reasons was that Episcopalianism did not leave room for the laymen in church. Presbyterianism, which governs the church through assemblies and values the parity of the ministers, however, did exactly that, and this seemed to be preferred by the Scots (Leith 1987: 7390). In Presbyterianism, the minister along with the elected elders administered the church.

This all led to disagreement over what kind of church system to have in Scotland. One of the staunchest adversaries to Episcopalianism in Scotland was Andrew Melville (1545-1622). Melville was also a support of the "two kingdoms" theory, going back to Martin Luther, which said that the spiritual domain was the churches responsibility, while the state had responsibility for the worldly-domain, while neither had authority over the other (Henderson 1939: 64). This disagreement over the state's role in church matters was the start of a long tradition of division and opposition in the church in Scotland, and it would culminate in 1843 in what would become known as "the Disruption".

When King James, a Catholic, inherited the throne in 1603, he wanted to make his two kingdoms, England and Scotland, one in both in political and churchly matters. He chose Episcopalianism as church system, much to the dismay of Scottish Protestants. Episcopalianism and James' "Five articles of Perth"<sup>10</sup> played into the fear of Catholicism of the time, and there emerged a large resistance, based mainly around the feeling that these practices resembled the practices of Catholicism too closely (Henderson 1939: 64-65).

To understand what was so disturbing about practices close to the Catholic ones, one must understand how Catholicism was seen in this time. Catholicism was not seen as just another form of Christianity, but rather not as Christianity at all. The Pope was thought to be Anti-Christ himself, and Catholicism was therefore seen as a blasphemous movement, of which many were afraid of (Henderson 1939: 65).

In 1638 the National Covenant was drawn up as a reaction to the "Five Articles of Perth". This was a document containing laws and declarations which

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<sup>10</sup> The Five articles of Perth consisted of: "kneeling at Communion, permission to have Communion privately, permission of private Baptism, Confirmation by bishops, and the observance of Christmas, Easter and other similar Church occasions" (Henderson 1939: 65).

rejected “all Roman error issued by James” and which would “recover the purity and liberty of the Gospel” (Henderson 1939: 68). That same year there was held a General Assembly<sup>11</sup> that resulted in the abolishment of Episcopalism and a rejection of the “Five Articles of Perth”. Charles I (James I’s successor) tried to suppress the resistance by force, but a Scottish army was raised and after some struggle, Charles I surrendered in 1646. He was delivered to the English who executed him in 1649, paving the way for Oliver Cromwell’s rise to power and the English Commonwealth (Henderson 1939: 69).

After Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) came to power in England, he invaded Scotland. Cromwell saw how troubling the General Assembly had been for the past ruler in Scotland, and decided to dissolve it, and reinstated Episcopalism in Scotland (Henderson 1939: 75). As seen earlier, Episcopalism was not the popular choice in Scotland. When the ministers in the country were faced with the ultimatum of either accepting Episcopalism or giving up their parishes, many ministers chose to give up their parishes. This became a real problem because of a lack of ministers to replace them (Henderson 1939: 77).

Upon Cromwell’s death the monarchy was restored. When James II, a Catholic, came to power some of the restrictions on Presbyterianism was lifted, as an aftereffect of James’ efforts to give his Catholic friends more rights. This caused another resurgence of the fear of Catholicism, which resulted in William of Orange being called in to challenge James. After driving James from the country, William was offered the throne, in exchange for Episcopalism being abolished and Presbyterianism being restored in Scotland (Henderson 1939: 83). This came true in 1690.

In 1707 the union between England and Scotland became a reality, and the Parliament passed a law that led to “Patronage”, the practice of the landowner choosing the minister in the church, being reinstated. Many in the Church of Scotland were opposed to this and “Patronage” became one of the reasons for the Secession, a division within the Church of Scotland.<sup>12</sup> As membership rose in the dissenting churches the “Voluntary principle”, the idea that religion was a personal matter and that the state therefore should not get involved, evolved (Henderson 1939: 126). This

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<sup>11</sup> The name of the church assembly in the Church of Scotland.

<sup>12</sup> Other reasons included disagreements surrounding the relationship between church and state and the “relation of the Church’s authority over the individual conscience” (Henderson 1939: 107).

became reinforced by the fear of Catholicism that accompanied the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1778, which would relieve some of the political restrictions on Catholics in Britain. Because of this act, the population started to fear the emergence of a Catholic state church in Ireland, which was much too close to home for many Protestants of the day. Voluntarism was supported because it was thought that no state church would be better than a Catholic state church (Henderson 1939: 128).

## **2.4 The Disruption and Reunification**

The next big division in the Church of Scotland was about the “Patronage” question as well. The apparent turmoil within the church was brought up during a General Assembly in 1843, and the demands of a group of ministers were read. This was the “Claim of Right”, which among other things<sup>13</sup>, stated that “Patronage” was a breach of the conditions of the union that Scotland had entered in 1707. The result was that 474 of the 1203 clergymen present left in protest, and with these a third of the members of the Church of Scotland dissented, forming the Free Church of Scotland (Henderson 1939: 140-141).

In 1874 an act was passed that made “Patronage” void. As a result, the Church of Scotland, United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland were equal in relation to the state (Henderson 1939: 156). After this, nothing stood in the way of reunification between the churches. In 1900 the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland came together and formed the United Free Church of Scotland (Henderson 1939: 150). In 1907 the Church of Scotland also started to look at reunion with the other Presbyterian churches, and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1929, the union between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church became a reality, under the name Church of Scotland (Henderson 1939: 176). There were many reasons why it happened at that particular time, not just the “Patronage” question, but also economic reasons, and less church attendance.

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<sup>13</sup> The Claim of Right insisted upon Christ’s headship of the Church, declared that that had always been the claim of the Church, that the Church’s privileges were guaranteed at the Union of 1707, that the Parliament were encroaching upon the sphere of jurisdiction of the Church, that the Church was determined not to submit, and held that all Acts affecting the government and discipline of the Church, but passed without its consent, were null and void (Henderson 1939: 140).

### **2.4.1 Ireland and Irish Immigration**

Ireland and the Irish also played an important role in Scottish history in the 1800s. The reason for huge immigration from Ireland can be traced back to the invention of the steamboat and that the trip from Ireland to Scotland became much cheaper as a result of it. In 1778 there is supposed to have been merely 20 Catholics in Glasgow, but after this invention the number rose to 10 000 in 1820 and to 27 000 in 1831. The Irish immigration can be said to be one of the most important events in the modern history of the nation. Between 1810 and 1850 there is supposed to have come as many as 25 000 workers to the west coast of Scotland, and of these two thirds were Catholic (Brown 2007: 32). In addition, the Great Irish Famine of the 1840s struck, which was perhaps the greatest human disaster in nineteenth-century Europe. It was responsible for killing one-eighth of the entire Irish population, a little over a million people. This horrible tragedy resulted in a great acceleration of the emigration from Ireland. As many as 2,1 million people left Ireland in the period between 1845 and 1855, heading for places such as USA, Canada, and Great Britain (Mitchell 2008: 20). The Irish who came to Scotland was generally from the lower classes and usually ended up in industrial work (Brown 2007: 32).

According to historian Tom Devine, there is also reason to believe that the Irish that came to Scotland during the Famine years, were of even poorer stature than what had been the case before. It seems that those with some means left for America, while the poorer opted for the British mainland, because of cheaper fares. To make the impression of the Irish worse, because of repeated shortfalls until 1852, the Irish brought with them what was known as the “famine fever” (typhus), dysentery and diarrhea, which again aggravated the already present epidemic in the urban areas in Scotland. Death rates in the west of Scotland rose to spectacular heights during the immigration. Even with all these problems, Glasgow and the west of Scotland, was not even the place with the most immigration. Liverpool handled more than twice the immigrants Glasgow handled during this time (Mitchell 2008: 22-24). All these immigrants did not spread across the country, but instead concentrated in particular areas. In 1851, nearly a fifth of the populations in Dundee and Glasgow had been born in Ireland (Mitchell 2008: 22).

This turned out to be the beginning of a large influence from Ireland on the Scottish religious landscape, although the Irish was not always well received. This was not just from the Protestants. The Catholic Church<sup>14</sup> in Scotland also had problems relating to the new arrivals. It seemed reluctant to hire Irish priests, something that was not popular with the Irish layman. This problem was hoped solved in 1869, when a “neutral” English archbishop took over the diocese of Glasgow. The main headache for Scottish Catholic affairs was then, and to an extent remains so up until today, Irish republican politics. In the 1880s Catholic priests were disciplined for supporting Irish Home Rule, but the Catholic Church’s attempt at remaining neutral in this issue, did not stop the Church of Scotland and other Protestant churches from approving anti-Catholic agitation. Throughout history the Catholic Church in Scotland has however tried to have a policy regarding these issues that involves “keeping a low profile” (Brown 2007: 33). At the same time the remaining third of immigrants were the Protestant Irish. They brought with them their own culture and heritage, part of which was Orangeism (Mitchell 2008: I). Orangeism and the Orange Order is today still part of tens of thousands of Scots’ lives.

#### **2.4.2 The Orange Order and its place in Scotland**

The Orange Order and its entrance into Scotland is another example of the shared religious history of Scotland and Ireland. In the words of Steve Bruce:

Scotland got its early Christianity from Ireland. When the north and east of Ireland was settled by Scots, Scotland returned the compliment by exporting its Presbyterianism and, for almost half a century, the Presbyterian churches in Ireland were under the General Assembly of the Scottish Church. In the next turn of the screw, Ireland gave Orangeism to Scotland. (Bruce 1985: 147)

The Orange Order has its origin in Ireland, where in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Protestant and Catholic farmers banded together in defense of each other in secret societies and informal militias (Bruce 1985: 147). The structure of the Order was modeled after the Freemasons, and the name was chosen to show support for William of Orange, the man who had replaced James II in 1690.

Early in their history, the Order was mostly an agrarian movement, and was not very popular with the gentry. They were seen as a problem, even though they

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<sup>14</sup> The Catholic Church in Scotland first had its civil rights returned in 1779 by the Catholic Emancipation Act, and the hierarchy restored in 1878.

were of the right religion. It was feared that they would turn on the aristocracy. This changed when the United Irishmen entered the scene in Ireland in the 1780s, with their revolutionary ideas<sup>15</sup>, and posed an even greater threat to the gentry (Bruce 1985: 147).

In the peaceful period of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the movement declined. The Order was banned in 1825, because the British government in Dublin Castle did not like the idea of another armed presence that was not under their control. There were occasions when the Orangemen organized resistance to certain events, such as when Daniel O’Connell organized a march in favor of Catholic Emancipation to Belfast, but for most of the period from 1860 to 1886, the Order had little significance (Bruce 1985: 148).

That changed in 1886 when fear of the Home Rule Bill became a factor. Henry Cooke, the leading voice for the conservative Presbyterian Church in Ireland, managed to lie to rest a series of intra-Protestant problems between the Presbyterians and the Church of Ireland. The Presbyterians joined the Orange Order and it became the popular voice of Irish Protestantism (Bruce 1985: 148). From here on, the Order was spread throughout the British Empire, and was brought to Scotland by soldiers who had been posted to Ireland to help out against the 1798 rebellion. Today the Orange Order is mostly an “ethnic identity” organization, which offers its members social, cultural and charitable activities. But members must still swear to:

Having sincere love and veneration of his heavenly Father, and a humble and steadfast faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of Mankind, believing in Him as the only mediator between God and man. (Bruce 1985: 149)

Members of the Orange Order also have to go through ceremonies that involve the Bible, which is carried at the head of the Orders marches. However, according to Steve Bruce, the majority of Orangemen are no longer committed evangelical Protestants. There is not much time spent on religious belief or rituals, and looking at the resolutions passed by the Grand Lodge in Ireland, less than 6% deals with religious belief. The Scottish Order is thought to have an even smaller theological element. This is thought to be because there never was a Henry Cooke in Scotland to unify the Presbyterian churches, no threat to the middle class in Scotland, and the working class was generally unchurched in nature (Bruce 1985: 149).

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<sup>15</sup> Ending British rule in Ireland.



In other words, despite having the religious basis for anti-Catholicism, Scotland, according to Bruce, lacked the political reason for engaging in anti-Catholic politics, and those who felt threatened by the Irish immigrants (i.e. the working class), did not have the religious background. Therefore Scottish Orangeism was always less “seriously religious than its counterpart in Ireland” (Bruce 1985: 150).

Evangelical Protestantism still provides the logic and rhetoric for the modern Orangeman, which is the basic set of reasons for being anti-Catholic, namely, the idea that Catholicism is not the true faith. The Orange rhetoric focuses on the system of “Romanism”, all the while being careful to stipulate that it is not the individual Catholic that is to blame, for they are, after all, the “victims of an evil institution”. Bruce however, points out that if anyone has spent any time in the company of “working-class Orangemen”, especially if alcohol is involved, they would know that the practical attitude held towards Catholics will go far beyond the “uncharitable words, actions and sentiments” that are warned against in most Orange institutions (Bruce 1985: 150).

One example Bruce uses to show how some Orangemen simply hate Catholics, comes from a broadsheet produced by young Orangemen associated with the Scottish Loyalists:

Coatbridge youth Sean O’Brien (16) died recently whilst doing a YOP course at a factory. Sean (a good British name) went to dry himself at a heater unaware that his boilersuit was soaked in paraffin. He immediately turned into a human torch and died in agony in hospital five days later. Everybody say Aah. Sean’s father Dennis said it was a pity this had happened as Sean was just warming to the job. The company involved was fined £800 for the incident which is outrageous as Sean was only an RC and no friend of the Protestant Community. Sean disproved the old theory that Shite does not burn and it is thought that his parents are keeping his ashes for Ash Wednesday. We can safely assume that Sean is still feeling the heat where he is now but cannot confirm that his favorite record was “Great Balls of Fire”. (Bruce 1985: 151)

Beyond this basic anti-Catholicism, there is according to Bruce, little shared religion within the Orange Order. This is because the Order has clergymen as chaplains, and to be able to allow the presence of different protestant denominations, the religion in the Order needs to be that of the lowest common denominator. Therefore the only other “religious” elements in Orangeism are sabbatarianism<sup>16</sup> and temperance (Bruce

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<sup>16</sup> Sabbatarian: A person who adheres to or favours a strict observance of Sunday (Sabbatarianism 2010)

1985: 151). The political ideology of Orangeism consists for the most part of loyalty to the Crown and a strident imperialism (Bruce 1985: 151).

## **2.5 The Kirk's Disgrace**

As stated earlier, there has been a general anti-Catholic feeling in Scotland since the Reformation, something that showed itself particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1922 an official Presbyterian campaign against Irish immigration not only demonstrated the anti-Catholicism present in the Presbyterian churches at this time, but emphasized the language of race, and tried to portray the grievance as national, rather than religious (Rosie 2004: 100). This campaign has later become known as “the Kirk's Disgrace”. This was:

A new departure aimed not so much at converting individual Roman Catholics, as at marginalizing, and even eliminating, an ethnic minority whose presence was regarded as an evil, polluting the purity of Scottish race and culture. (Rosie 2004: 100)

The campaign started in 1922 at the General Assembly, where it was complained that Catholics had “most abominably abused the privileges which the Scottish people had given them”. Restrictions on immigration from Ireland, and the revision of the Education Act was proposed and passed. At the same General Assembly, it was warned that the presence of “Irish Catholic aliens ... would soon bring racial and sectarian warfare to Scotland” (Rosie 2004: 100).

As the campaign was adopted by more senior church figures, more emphasis was put on what was meant to be “respectable” arguments surrounding race and national character. In 1928 the churches presented their case to Home Secretary William Joynson-Hicks and Scottish Secretary Sir John Gilmour. They complained that Scotland had become a “dumping ground” for Irish immigrants after the USA had reduced their quota, and that 70% of parish and other relief funds, were spent on the Catholic Irish, all the while insisting that their views was based “solely on racial, economic, educational, and civic considerations” (Rosie 2004: 100-101).

This attempt by the Presbyterian churches to get government support reached a sudden end, when first the Glasgow Herald demonstrated that the immigration was not at all as high as was claimed, and when the government refused to have anything more to do with this campaign, after an investigation of their own. The campaigners then decided to redirect their efforts. In the 1930 General Assembly it was decided that instead the church were to focus its attention on businesses and have them

“employ Scottish labour where such is available” (Rosie 2004: 102). In other words, they now understood that:

No Government would undertake to stop the immigration. Their appeal was not to the Government, but to the patriotism of their Scottish labour employers. (Rosie 2004: 102)

This new approach did not have a very successful beginning, showcased when in the late 1930s, it was alleged that some Catholic Irish foremen discriminated in favour of their countrymen at Peterhead’s harbour works. However, after a government investigation into this, it was found that there were no Irish foremen at the works, and only two men in the sizeable workforce were Irish-born (Rosie 2004: 102).

In 2001 the General Assembly formally apologized for its actions and statements. But the problem of Protestant-Catholic antagonism is still widely discussed in Scotland.

## **2.6 Summary**

Out of this background the issue of sectarianism and its place in Scottish society emerges. The complex issue of sectarianism rises out of a religious history, which includes two countries, several denominations and the shared history of these countries.

As seen in this chapter, Scotland has a long history of religious opposition. The Presbyterian churches spent some time figuring out their identities, but all the while shared a common fear of Catholicism, which ultimately resulted in the dethroning of James II and the emergence of William Orange as ruler, who restored Presbyterianism in Scotland. This is still commemorated to this day through the Orange Order. Episcopalians have been seen as just a step short of Catholicism, and have therefore largely been looked at with suspicion. The Catholic Church in Scotland almost disappeared after the Reformation, but because of immigration from Ireland made its return in the 1800s. Anti-Catholicism reached its peak in the 1920s and 1930s, and had an outlet in the church in the 1920s, through what would later become known as the “Kirk’s disgrace”. The relationship between Protestants and Catholics in Scotland has since been a much discussed topic.

### **3.0 Sectarianism – A suitable term for the religious situation in Scotland?**

This chapter will highlight some of the ways the religious opposition is debated in Scotland today. While discussing religious opposition in Scotland the term “sectarianism” is central, and this chapter will concentrate on some of the debate surrounding the issue. It will also explain how the term “sectarianism” is seen and understood, by the general public and by scholars. Scholars are discussing whether or not the term itself is a part of the problem, and whether or not it makes the situation seem worse than it actually is, a theme that seems to be reflected in the anti-sectarian organizations that are working against the social issue of “sectarianism”.

#### **3.1 Definition(s) of “sectarianism”**

When discussing religious opposition in Scotland today, as previously mentioned, the first word that comes to mind is “sectarianism”. According to the dictionary the word “sectarian” means:

1. of or pertaining to sectaries or sects.
2. narrowly confined or devoted to a particular sect.
3. narrowly confined or limited in interest, purpose, scope, etc
4. a member of a sect
5. a bigoted or narrow-minded adherent of a sect. (Sectarian 2010)

When discussed in Scotland however, “sectarianism” relates to the opposition between Protestants and Catholics.

Many different words have been used to describe the behaviour and attitudes exemplified by the different sides, such as “bigoted” and “racist”, but “sectarian” is the one that seems to stick. However, the term has grown to be a bit confusing, as there does not seem to be agreement of what exactly the word entails. By “sectarianism” Steve Bruce understands: “A widespread and shared culture of improperly treating people in terms of their religion” (Bruce et al. 2004: 4). Bruce et al.’s use of the term focuses solely on the religious aspect of the term. Michael Rosie, in his book *The Sectarian Myth In Scotland: Of Bitter Memory and Bigotry*, uses John Brewer’s definition:

Behaviour, policies and types of treatment that are informed by religious difference; where sectarianism describes a set of social relations that are codified into a stratification system which religion causes or comes to represent. Thus sectarianism involves recognizable social patterns of inequality, some of which are predicated on discrimination. (Rosie 2004: 24)

Brewer seemed to understand how confusing the term could be when he described it as being “more nebulous” than racism, its “social markers are more opaque and less deterministic, and are much more context-bound to the beliefs of the people involved” (Rosie 2004: 23). What many of the scholars who discuss the topic of ‘sectarianism’ in Scotland do have in common, is a skepticism to the term itself. Gerry Finn writes:

‘Sectarianism’ is capable of so many interpretations as to be unhelpful. If the confusion is to be cleared then it must be recognized that the most common usage in Scotland concerns anti-Protestant prejudice and anti-Catholic prejudice. However they are not simply equivalent phenomena [...] the distinction is important if serious efforts are to be made to address them. Anti-Catholic prejudice can be intertwined with anti-Irish racism – which remains a Britain-wide phenomenon to this day. (Finn 2003: 904)

Finn points to the dual meaning of sectarianism, in the sense that it refers to “anti-Protestant prejudice” and “anti-Catholic prejudice”, but emphasizes that the two is not equally prevalent in Scotland. According to Finn, Anti-Catholicism and anti-Irish racism is the most prevalent of the dual meaning, up until today. Michael Rosie writes about the use of ‘sectarianism’ and ‘sectarian’:

There is also a fundamental problem with the terminology with which the debate is conducted. Terms such as ‘Protestant’, ‘Catholic’ and ‘sectarian’ are used without precision, taken as self-evident. Sectarianism in particular is loosely used as a casual, often superfluous, prefix. (Rosie 2004: 3)

Finn also presents another view on the debate surrounding the term ‘sectarianism’ when commenting that its usage “disguises the reality of the nature of this societal prejudice, which is more correctly identified as the continuation in a more acceptable form of anti-Irish racism” (Finn 1999: 55).

Bradley argues that ‘sectarianism’ is a problematic term when discussing religious identity in Scotland, claiming that due to a focus on this term, many authors “ignore the multi-faceted nature of religious identity in Scotland” (Bradley 1995: 1). The usage of the term ‘sectarianism’ in a Scottish context has, according to Bradley, become so common that it has become “the only terminology to interpret and define religious identity”, but it is “inadequate”, and one that is “carelessly used”. This carelessness manifests itself in that the term somehow has “become a catch-all and

evasive phrase to describe many aspects of religious, national, political and cultural identity in Scottish society”. He further criticizes the term on the basis that it makes an identity rooted in religion and/or ethnic background, appear wrong (Bradley 1995: 2). Clearly the term itself is at best seen as imprecise, at worst, harmful and misleading. Still, it is a widely used term both in the media and more generally in everyday speech, understood by most people in the west of Scotland as describing the antagonism between Catholics and Protestants. But what about the issue itself?

### **3.1.1 Is there a problem?**

If the issue of opposition or antagonism between Protestants and Catholics is brought up with a Scot (particularly one from Glasgow) you can be sure the term ‘sectarianism’ will be mentioned. It is not often that you can pick up a Glaswegian newspaper without reading some reference to sectarianism in Scottish society. Football (which will be dealt with in a separate chapter), education, and employment seem to be the main areas where sectarianism is thought to be found. A debate began in 1999 about whether Scotland can be described as a “sectarian” society or not. There are definitively strong opinions, Professor Patrick Reilly wrote: “To ask if there is anti-Catholicism in Scotland is like asking if there are Frenchmen in Paris” (Devine 2000: 29). Religious opposition is certainly treated as a social problem by Scottish authorities, and in 2003 a law was passed that dealt with offences that are aggravated by religious prejudice. This law would make any crime that is deemed to be aggravated by religious prejudice sentenced more firmly. Section 74 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 specifies that an offence is aggravated by religious prejudice if:

At the time of committing the offence or immediately before or after doing so, the offender evinces towards the victim (if any) of the offence malice and ill-will based on the victim’s membership (or presumed membership) of a religious group<sup>17</sup>, or of a social or cultural group with a perceived religious affiliation; or the offence is motivated (wholly or partly) by malice and ill-will towards members of a religious group, or of a social or cultural group with a

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<sup>17</sup> A ‘religious group’ is defined as such in Section 74 as:

- A group of persons defined by their –
- a) religious belief or lack of religious belief;
  - b) membership of or adherence to a church or religious organization;
  - c) support for the culture and traditions of a church or religious organization;
  - d) participation in activities associated with such a culture or such traditions. (Interview with police)

perceived religious affiliation, based on their membership of that group.<sup>18</sup> (Interview with police)

30 January 2006 the Scottish government published their “Action Plan on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland” where the government put forward their goal of eradicating the problem of “intra-Christian sectarianism” (Action on Sectarianism 2010), which they describe as a “very specific problem in Scottish society”. In the foreword Jack McConnell, the now former First Minister of Scotland, wrote:

The bigoted sectarian attitudes and behaviours of a minority have scarred Scottish life for far too long. I have seen this bigotry throughout my life and I still see it today in some parts of Scotland. Manifestations of sectarian bigotry may change, but the divisions, anger and resentment that they cause remain firmly entrenched in Scottish life. It doesn't have to be like this. (Sectarianism: Action plan on sectarianism in Scotland 2010)

The Scottish government cooperated with several organizations on this action plan, some of which will be described more thoroughly in the next chapter. Some of the organizations are Nil by Mouth (NBM), Sense over Sectarianism, YouthLink Scotland and the Scottish Football Association (Action on Sectarianism 2010). However, the issue of religious antagonism has been argued to not be as big a problem as it is usually made out to be in the discussions featuring sectarianism. A heated debate started after the Donald Findlay “scandal” (see chapter 6) and the James MacMillan speech of 1999. The issue of sectarianism has got a lot of attention in Scottish media. The debate quickly garnered “spokespersons” on either side. It is an issue that most Glaswegians have an opinion about. Steve Bruce et al. writes in the introduction of his book *Sectarianism in Scotland* (2004):

[...] We believe that sectarianism has been much exaggerated; that Scotland's Catholics, most of whom are the descendants of Irish immigrants, now enjoy social, political and economic parity with non-Catholics; and that religion (or the ethnicity of one's ancestors) is no longer a major consideration in the lives of most Scots. (Bruce et al. 2004: 4)

Michael Rosie seems to agree with Bruce et al. and writes in the introduction of his book *The Sectarian Myth in Scotland: Of Bitter Memory and Bigotry* (2004):

[...] ‘sectarian’ is not a sustainable description of contemporary Scotland. Scotland is an increasingly secular society where religious differences are diminishing in social significance. (Rosie 2004: 3)

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<sup>18</sup> Provided by the informant.

And as the title of his book suggests, Rosie claims that “in the absence of hard evidence” sectarian Scotland can be said to operate as a myth. ‘Myth’, here means a “selective understanding of the past”, “something impervious to falsification” and something that represents “a truth (or truths) held to be self-evident” (Rosie 2004: 9-10). The disagreement surrounding sectarianism in Scotland also includes a disagreement on how to research the subject, and what way to approach it. Bruce et al. state that:

If we want to assert that Catholics suffer discrimination, we would first of all have to show that they are disadvantaged and the only way to do that is to collect and compare evidence about the socio-economic status of large numbers of Catholics and non-Catholics. (Bruce et al. 2004: 3)

Finn however, sees a need to “evaluate the potentially different experiences and evaluations of Catholics and Protestants” when investigating this phenomenon (Finn and Uygun 2008: 7). Finn criticizes Bruce’s approach and argues many of the studies Bruce and Bruce et al. rely on in their interpretations, “are not truly large-scale samples, and that the interpretations of these results have been disputed” and that “even when truly pursued, this approach can only examine certain forms of the expression of prejudice” (Finn and Uygun 2008: 8).

What is often maintained to have started the current debate surrounding sectarianism was a speech by Catholic composer James MacMillan in August 1999 at the Edinburgh International Festival, entitled “Scotland’s Shame”. MacMillan tackled what he felt was a country of “sleep-walking bigotry”, that was permeated with anti-Catholicism. As Tom Devine phrased it: “Pandora’s box had been opened in spectacular fashion” (Devine 2000: 8). In this speech MacMillan talks of how Scotland has gone through a “forgetting of the past”, and of the Reformation becoming a “year zero” in a cultural revolution. He argues that most Catholics in Scotland are taught to “not attract attention to the fact that you are a Catholic”, and that there still is “a palpable sense of some threat and hostility to all things Catholic in this country”. MacMillan mentions the Glasgow-based press who at the time were, as he put it, “going into campaign mode for the abolition of Catholic schools”, and the recent controversy surrounding Donald Findlay, and his singing of sectarian songs. He describes the football team Rangers and what he calls its “totemic significance”. The theme of football brings him to the anti-Catholic songs that are sung by football



supporters. He touches on anti-Catholicism in the workplace, and in politics. Further, MacMillan talks of Catholic schooling. In short, he touches on most, if not all, of the issues that today are commonplace to talk about when discussing sectarianism (Devine 2000: 13-24). The reaction to the speech was very strong, both in the media and among scholars, but the reaction was divided. Professor Patrick Reilly claims there were three “routine responses” to MacMillan’s speech:

The first is to deny that there is or ever has been any significant discrimination, to insist that the only enemies Catholics have ever had exist within their own fevered skulls, figments of their own morbid creating – paranoia is a once clinical term that even football commentators now use with an easy familiarity. The second is to concede that once upon a time there was discrimination, although, as in all good fairy tales, the ending is a happy one, because discrimination no longer exists and need not concern us except as a historical curiosity. The third admits the continued existence of discrimination but warns against publicly discussing it, since this can do no good and may well do harm, worsening the very situation to which it calls such injudicious attention. Let sleeping dogs lie. The less talk about anti-Catholicism, the sooner it will die away altogether. (Devine 2000: 30)

Steve Bruce et al. in the preface of *Sectarianism in Scotland* (2004), exemplifies the second response mentioned by Reilly when they commented on James MacMillan, his speech and the reaction:

James MacMillan is a Catholic and he may be an excellent composer, but neither fact means that his views about the salience of sectarianism are well founded; yet, when he delivered his famous August 1999 speech, his claims that Catholics were still the victims of serious discrimination were given enormous prominence in the mass media. They were presented, not as the grumblings of one prominent musician, but as the case that must be answered (Bruce et al. 2004: vii).

Admitting the lack of agreement both concerning the term sectarianism and the issues covered by the term, my position is that it seems obvious that there exists at least some sort of opposition between Catholics and Protestants in Scotland, and a denial of it seems to be in conflict with what is reported both in the media and by popular opinion. “Sectarianism” seems to be the term preferred by most Scots to describe the problem this opposition creates, and will therefore be the basis for the discussion here.

### **3.2 Conceptions of “sectarianism” among informants**

As the scholars I have mentioned argues, the term “sectarian” can seem to be confusing and even, as Finn puts it, “unhelpful”. So what exactly is understood by “sectarian” and “sectarianism” by my informants? One informant puts it:

I think there's probably a few terms that kind of have grown to mean the same thing, to me. It's bigotry, it's discrimination, it's disliking someone because of what they are. So, in this country, or this part of the country, sectarianism, it's so closely associated with Celtic and Rangers, and with Ireland and Britain, and with Catholicism and Protestants. So for me [...]the first thing you think about is our part of the world, and the Catholic-Protestant thing, the Celtic-Rangers thing, the Ireland-Britain thing, and any behaviour that's influenced by that, any negative behaviour, I would say is sectarian. A practical example could be the chanting of inappropriate songs, violence, general misbehaviour, you know, in this case, football matches, or before and after football matches, these are all things that you would tend to call sectarian. (Interview with Celtic Fan)

The same informant believes that this is the way that most other Scots understand the term as well. Looking at this interpretation, one can clearly see the same areas that this thesis will focus on. It is the religious sphere, the sports sphere, and the national sphere. One remarkable aspect of the interpretation is the lack of a Scottish aspect. It is not an Irish-Scottish issue, but an Irish-British issue, in that the identities associated with the two opposites are seen as an Ireland versus Great Britain issue. However, the informant did feel that the term had, to a certain degree, been "hijacked" by a "sensationalist media" phrasing it: "I'm not saying there are no sectarian incidents that should be reported on, [because] clearly there are, but I definitely think that the problem is highlighted and perhaps exaggerated on occasion by a tabloid press" (Interview with Celtic fan).

The anti-sectarian organization Nil by Mouth has its own definition of "sectarianism":

Narrow-minded beliefs that lead to prejudice, discrimination, malice and ill-will towards other members, or presumed members, or a religious denomination. (Nil by Mouth 2010)

To explain the added "or presumed members" the NBM informant goes on:

We have an issue with that. If I turn up at a social event in Glasgow wearing a certain football strip, I'm generalizing, but generally people will make an assumption of my religious belief. Whereas Britain's not a particularly religious country anymore. That might be a controversial thing to say, but people are not as religious in Scotland, practicing, as they were in the past<sup>19</sup>. [...] So it's not about religion the whole time, but it's this perceived notion of religion and it's

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<sup>19</sup> This point found opposition in another informant who argued the complete opposite view. When talking of religion's role in Scottish society he stated: "There are more people who go to church in Scotland every Sunday, than go to football. That's a statistic that most people find quite unbelievable when they hear it at first. [...] The media will have you believe that football is the big thing, but there are actually more people who go to church across the board. Taking in all the Christian denominations, there are more people, twice as many in fact, that go to church, as go to football" (Interview with priest). I do not know what statistics the informant is referring to here, and I have found no statistics comparing football attendance to church attendance in Scotland. Bruce et al. however, claim in *Sectarianism in Scotland* (2004) that 15 per cent of the Scottish population go to church once a week, and that a clear majority of Scots have no active church commitment (Bruce et al. 2004: 64-65).

the historical background. So that makes it a social issue. It's about social conduct. (Interview with NBM representative)

The “presumed members” is added due to a claim from the informant that “sectarianism” is not necessarily about religion anymore, it is a social issue in Scotland, but one where the social identities are equated with “presumed” religious identities. On whether or not their definition of “sectarianism” is the same as most Scots’, the informant claimed that most people that NBM talks to do not need a definition. Although, as stated, NBM focuses on sectarianism not as a religious issue, and seeing as this is a social issue that is largely prevalent in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, they find that people from there often know of the term, and might even have heard of the charity, while the rest of Scotland “may or may not be familiar” with it (Interview with NBM representative). NBM also uses the term to describe ill-will towards any religion:

We’re particularly focusing on Christianity, but the social ill-will coming either way. The sort of break down of what sectarianism is and can be, I guess some will say it’s an anti-Irish sentiment or an anti-Catholic sentiment. So if you’re talking about being anti-Irish, well, the Irish can be seen to be a race of people, so it’s a race issue. (Interview with NBM representative)

A similar understanding of the term became evident when talking to the Citizenship through Football (CtF)<sup>20</sup> representative:

There’s the general dictionary definition of sectarianism, which is about any sort of hatred or dislike of anyone because of religious persuasion regardless of what it is, and then there is a very specific anti-Christian sectarianism which is in the west of Scotland specifically, or Catholic/Protestant, and then within the subset of that, Rangers/Celtic. Which is basically the language people use around that. You can get into discussions about sectarianism against bigotry, or all the rest of it. But in terms of the political language when people are talking about sectarianism, they’re specifically talking about the west of Scotland problem, and Rangers/Celtic, Catholic/Protestant. And it’s not just Rangers/Celtic, because it’s not just through football, it’s all the marches and all the rest of it as well. That’s definitely the public perception. (Interview with CtF representative)

This informant goes on to call it “almost an intra-sectarianism” stemming from different societal issues, naming the school system as a possible source of friction. The police officer interviewed also believed that most Scots would understand “sectarianism” as something involving football, religion and national identities:

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<sup>20</sup> Presented in chapter 5.

I think it's a big issue in the west of Scotland. Something perhaps we grow up with. In terms of people will support either Rangers or Celtic, depending on what part of the divide they come from. Celtic have a lot of connections from the Irish side of things. They're seen as a club that are kind of formed in Ireland. A lot of people associate with that. Perhaps the trouble they've had in Ireland over the years, some people have jumped on the back of that, and seen that as a part of their culture. It is something that people grow up with. (Interview with police)

While there is an agreement as to the relevance of the Catholic-Protestant antagonism, there also seems to be several other aspects that play into the issue. Football, in the shape of the Old Firm rivalry, becomes a carrier of the Catholic-Protestant antagonism, and the national identity of Ireland and Britain becomes entangled in the mix. This is part of what Bradley criticizes the term for, when he calls it a “catch all and evasive phrase”. Nil by Mouth has tried to resolve this by focusing on the “ill-will” towards others, on the basis of membership or a perceived membership in a religious denomination, in effect excluding the ethnic element of it, which for some is the essential basis of the “ill-will”.<sup>21</sup>

The problem surrounding the term is not just a problem for academics and scholars, but a practical one, as illustrated when discussing the term with the Citizenship through Football representative. He explained how they were actively stepping away from definitions of “sectarianism” due to all the problems surrounding it:

What we want to do as a group and what we're taking forward, is more about getting away from that “don't do that because that's sectarian”, we're going to a more basic level. It's right or it's wrong. And it's about taking responsibility for your own actions, and having respect for other people. We're trying to step back a wee bit from getting into the specifics of sectarianism and what it is, but actually getting into a more personal thing about individuals and individual activity, because generally a lot of times people [who] are involved in sectarian activity, will potentially be also involved in [things like] homophobic abuse and racial abuse, because a lot of the motivators are the same. It's all about the whole thing about rivalry, that's where it all comes from. It doesn't matter where you are, you'll have rivalry between your local teams, and you'll find something to pin that rivalry on. And it just so happens that Glasgow pins it on religion, and have done so for decades and decades. So that becomes the defining part of that rivalry, [while] different places will [have] different things, but it's just about generating that hatred for the other team. The message we're trying to preach is [to] just think about what you're doing, and know the difference between right and wrong. Just have a bit of respect for the other side. (Interview with CtF representative)

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<sup>21</sup> In practice this exclusion of the ethnic element may not be the case however, due to the blurring of lines between religious affiliation and ethnic background in Scotland. Section 74 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 has a similar definition of the religious prejudice to that of Nil by Mouth, although they make the issue of ethnicity clear in their adding of the sentence “or of social or cultural group with a perceived religious affiliation”.

The organization Show Racism the Red Card has also discussed the use of the term “sectarianism” internally. According to the Citizenship through Football representative “bigotry is probably a more appropriate phrase. To be honest it’s used in the same kind of way, they’re almost interchangeable”.

The point raised by the Nil by Mouth representative about race is an aspect Finn has brought up when discussing the issue of sectarianism in Scotland and Scottish football. As previously seen, Finn finds the term ‘sectarianism’ lacking and argues that it is Irish-racism encapsulates the issue more firmly.

### **3.3 Summary**

As shown in this chapter the topic of sectarianism is currently debated in Scotland, with strong opinions on all sides. The discussion surrounding the term sectarianism seems to agree on the fact that it is a difficult, sometimes misleading, term to use when talking of antagonism between Protestants and Catholics and that the discourse about sectarianism is part of the problem. There is some confusion regarding whether or not ‘sectarianism’ means anti-Protestantism and anti-Catholicism, or simply anti-Catholicism. Add to that the confusion, the blurring of lines between religious identity and national identity, and a complex issue appears.

## **4.0 Expressions of sectarianism**

Sectarianism is usually discussed in relation to football, the Scottish education system and employment. The relation of sectarianism to football will be discussed in chapter 6, while the discussion surrounding education and employment will be briefly explained here. The discussion about education in Scotland seems to be of more importance, for the simple fact that it is a palpable issue, when compared to discrimination in employment. Discrimination within employment is hard to detect, while Catholic schools represent an official and easily discerned issue.

### **4.1 Education**

Whenever “sectarianism” is discussed the issue of the Catholic school system and whether or not it creates division in Scottish society comes up. The earlier form of the Scottish education system was tied to the local church, which for most Scots, was the Church of Scotland. By 1750 most Church of Scotland parishes had a school of some sort attached to the church. The growth of the seceding churches after the First Secession in 1732, started a trend in which it became increasingly difficult for the national church to provide education. In 1843, the second and decisive blow came in the form of the Disruption and the forming of the Free Church of Scotland (see chapter 2), and in the end the government had to step in to help with the funding of education.

Catholics in Scotland provided their own schools throughout this time, and in 1817 the Catholic Schools Society was formed. The government in Scotland started to get involved with education in the nineteenth century, and started what would become a national system of education. The government’s reaction to the Church of Scotland’s struggles came in the form of the 1872 Education Act. As a part of this each parish and burgh would elect a school board, which would have the power to manage the schools that were transferred to it and it would be able to create new schools as needed.

The first problem that emerged was a difference of opinion between the Church of Scotland, which was for religious instruction as a legal requirement, and the United Presbyterian Church, which was against state support for religious instruction. The government solved this through a ‘conscience clause’, which allowed parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction if needed. The

Presbyterian churches agreed and handed over the control of their schools to the government. The Catholic schools however, did not.

When discussing why the Catholic Church declined, there exists a bit of dispute. In Rosie's explanation of why the Catholic Church declined, he emphasizes the trend of Catholic separatism, motivated by Catholic Canon Law, and how the Catholic Church developed a complex system of parallel institutions throughout Europe, and thereby rejecting what he calls the "simplistic" explanation that Catholic schools were borne out of hostility from Protestants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finn argues to the contrary, that the government controlled schools were run by "locally elected, *seemingly* secular, school boards, which would be dominated by candidates elected on religious tickets" (emphasis added). And this was not enough for some. Later on, the preamble was amended in a way that made it explicitly recognized that Presbyterian religious instruction would take place in these schools, but children could be withdrawn from these classes if necessary (Finn 1999: 11)<sup>22</sup>.

While Rosie emphasizes that the government offered deals that would aid the Catholic schools, Finn points out that even if these schools received public grants, both Episcopalian and Catholic schools were subjected to paying rates that supported Presbyterian religious instruction in public schools, but did not help maintain Episcopalian or Catholic schools.

As economic demands increased, the Catholic Church found it increasingly difficult to keep up with the expected educational standards. After the First World War, a new education bill was proposed, and after negotiations, Catholic and Episcopalian schools were transferred from Church control and became part of the public school system. However, because of the stipulations presented by the Catholic Church the Scottish educational system became divided, into what is today known as non-denominational schools and Catholic schools. In these Catholic schools, religious instruction are guaranteed by statute and the Catholic Church enjoys a religious veto when it comes to staffing. Robert Munro, the Scottish secretary at the time, stressed throughout the process that "...the proposal sought to end an injustice. Pupils should not suffer as a result of their parents religious beliefs" (Finn 1999: 12). In other words, the government was trying to make amends for the past treatment of the Catholic schools through this proposal. By 1921 the process was complete.

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<sup>22</sup> I received a copy of "Sectarianism and Scottish Education" (1999) from G. P. T. Finn, and the numbered pages may not correspond to that in the actual publication.

The Catholic schools have for a long time been subject to debate, but in the 1920s and 1930s, they were especially targeted. Public funding of Catholic schools was the subject of many conspiracy theories, and was presented as “the central element in bringing Scotland under Irish and Catholic domination” (Finn 1999: 14). In 1935 Rev. F. E. Watson wrote in the Glasgow Herald:

The indignant opposition to the provision of section 18 of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1918 is that public money is being expended in educating an increasing section of the population, in the main Free Staters of their offspring, in a faith and a loyalty hostile to the tradition and religion accepted by the vast majority of the Scottish nation ... Why should we feed, clothe, and educate these people who everywhere plot and plan for the downfall of Britain? Opposition to the public funding of Catholic schools was justified because they had been found guilty of un-Scottish activities, ensuring that ‘these people’ would remain faithful to anti-British conspiracies. And support for their very existence could be opposed on the self-same grounds too. (as quoted in Finn 1999: 16)

Perhaps the best known anti-Catholic figure in Scotland, Alexander Ratcliffe, the leader of the political party Scottish Protestant League, openly manipulated the issue of public support for Catholic schools to further his divisive plans. He proclaimed the 1918 Act to be an anti-Protestant plot and the financial support for Catholic schools meant that children were educated in “biblical error”. There are more contemporary examples of prejudicial attitudes against Catholic schooling as well, as demonstrated in 1986 when the moderator of the Free Church of Scotland addressed its annual assembly, where he commented on the Irish Catholic community in Scotland:

In 1755 there were no Roman Catholics in Glasgow, our largest city today. In 1786 there were about seventy and by 1830, they numbered 30,000, with 14,000 in Edinburgh ... Today the Roman Catholic system is virtually triumphant in Scotland. Being allowed by its constitution to lie and cheat as long as its own ends are realized, its close organization and its intelligence set-up has enabled it to infiltrate the whole educational framework of the land. (as quoted in Bradley 1996: 41)

Today, the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland is still against Catholic schooling, although they are more concerned with secularization. The Orange Order however, has opposition to Catholic schools as their top priority. The main differences between a Catholic school and a non-denominational school in today’s Scottish society were explained to me during an interview:

In the new high school here [Larkhall], which is non-denominational, there’s no apparent nod to religion at all, as when you go to a Catholic school there’ll be a room set aside as a prayer room, there would be a chapel, and religious education would be mandatory in the time table. That’s not specifically Catholic religious education, it covers all world religions, but it’s very



much part of the time-table, and there's also a much a much stronger emphasis on social awareness, reaching out to the needy people of the world. You'll find in the Catholic schools [...] projects designed to raise children's awareness of children in Malawi and places like that. [...] They would also be actively involved in some sort of help program, whether it'd be raising funds or collecting items or goods to send out to people. (Interview with priest)

Finn claimed that one of the most important issues that James MacMillan brought up in his lecture in 1999, was the “persistent criticism directed against the existence of Catholic schools”, and that the strong criticism of these schools in many of the responses to his lecture confirmed his fears (Finn 2003: 902). Finn states that MacMillan and other Catholics have a “strong case for concern”, when schools where pupil exam performance exceeds statistical predictions, gather as much criticism and demands that they should no longer exist (Finn 2003: 903). The fact that Catholic schools get funding while other faiths do not, is often critiqued. Steve Bruce et al. comments:

For the state to fund church schools (especially when it does not offer to fund schools for all faiths) is to give legitimacy to one particular religion. Especially when so few Scots are involved in the Catholic Church, state subsidies for its activities seems inappropriate. (Bruce et al. 2004: 114)

In discussions of Catholic schooling in Scotland, the “dividing” effect of the current school system often comes up as well. When it comes to specific numbers Bruce et al. comment that even the Catholic attitudes have changed. In 1992 47% of Catholics in Scotland were in favour of phasing out separate schools, while in 2001 59% were in favour. However, in Glasgow, the area most affected by the issue of “sectarianism”, Catholics generally think of denominational schools as a good thing, while Protestants do not. As many as 40% of Protestants believe that these schools create intolerance, while 50% of Catholics disagree. Professor Lindsay Paterson, however, concluded that “there be no evidence at all” that Catholic schools create bigotry, division or exclusive communities (Finn 2003: 902). One of my informants shared his thoughts on the school as a dividing force:

The big thing I think societally, that really keeps the whole sectarian issue going [...] is the schooling system. It goes back to that core idea about rivalry. If it's football, you develop rivalry, and local schools develop rivalry with each other. And if you have a Catholic school and a Protestant school, there's one clearly defining issue, and that becomes the focal point of the rivalry. And I think without that integration, if people don't talk to each other, Protestant people and Catholic people aren't different, they're not different people you know? If you get that at a young age, you get away from that problem. I just think that because it is the way it is, it sets the stage from an early age. [Thoughts like:] “These people are different, they go to

different schools”. They do a lot today, twin campuses and stuff like that, have a joint campus between Catholic schools and Protestant schools. They come to the same area, but they’re still different.

[...] I don’t think religion should have any part of education. I think you should be educated without religion, there should be a part where you’re told about different kinds of religions, different belief systems, but I don’t think, for me, that education itself should have a religious basis. I’d like to see that taken out of the school system, and that would go a long way to change the cultural views of Scotland. It comes down to vested interest, the power of the churches over the developing body. Just a lack of political will to take that kind of thing on, it’s just such a difficult, difficult issue to face.<sup>23</sup>

Finn acknowledges that Scotland has made progress and that discrimination has diminished, but he sees the current debate surrounding Catholic schooling as “testimony to this sad legacy from the past”. In reaction to many people’s claim that the very existence of a Catholic school system is socially dividing, Finn feels that it is actually the content of the debate itself that promotes social division in Scotland, rather than the Catholic schools. And while Bruce et al. warn against confusing Scotland with Northern Ireland, Finn points to Professor Frank Wright and his argument that “in both Northern Ireland and Scotland, it had been minority schooling that had helped Catholics begin to equal the status and achievements of Protestants” (Finn 1999: 20).

Recently the Pope commented on the issue of Catholic schools in Scotland by saying that they help combat sectarianism and promotes good community relations. The Pope urged the country’s 11 bishops to protect Catholic education in Scotland, and promote it as a tool for tackling sectarianism (Sweeney 2010).

## **4.2 Employment**

Employment is another area where sectarianism has been much discussed. With the Irish Protestants came the Orange Order and, some would argue, a culture of anti-Catholicism. The Catholic Irish faced accusations of being strike-breakers and worse. The Irish were seen as poor, ill-educated and lacking industrial skills, and therefore entered the Scottish labour market at the very bottom.

It is maintained that Scottish Protestants benefited from the Irish staying at the bottom, and used their networks and influence to exclude the Catholic Irish. Although it is important to emphasize that the Catholic Irish did not have a monopoly on

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<sup>23</sup> The informant is not named here on the request of the informant.

unskilled work, nor did they work completely separated from other Scottish workers (Bruce et al. 2004: 12).

In 1999 most Scottish social scientists largely accepted the view that anti-Catholic sectarianism was a thing of the past, and based this belief on tables showing social class by religion (Walls and Williams 2005: 760). However, when analyzing data further, prompted by the revival of this issue in 1999, it was found sharp and significant differences in social class between Catholics and others. Professor Lindsay Paterson established that even though Catholics were achieving higher education, this did not translate into jobs (Walls and Williams 2005: 760). Walls and Williams suggested that part of the explanation for the occupational disadvantage Catholics have in the West of Scotland lies in discrimination (Walls and Williams 2005: 763). They concluded that there is no longer any doubt about whether or not discrimination against Catholics in Glasgow in the 1950-2000 period existed, although they refrain from making any claims as to the extent (Walls and Williams 2005: 759).

It is clear that Catholic schools are educationally successful, but there are also findings that this success has not translated over to the labour market. Catholics are judged to have been more commonly employed in the public sector, rather than the private, because of the discrimination present in the private sector. In the public sector there seems to be a more open and meritocratic recruitment procedure (Finn and Uygun 2008: 9). Regarding the remaining differences in employment between Catholics and Protestants in Scotland, Finn comments:

Research over the last thirty years has continued to show employment and health disparities between Catholic and Protestant workers, but there is certainly a closing of this gap, aided indirectly by the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation which, although not initially directed against religious discrimination, has stopped many general discriminatory practices (Finn and Uygun 2008: 9)

The growth of the welfare state in Scotland turned out to be important for the Scottish Catholics, because it allowed them to escape some of the discrimination that the private sector displayed against them. With the growth of the public sector, the role of credentials and the role of political power grew (Bruce et al. 2004: 75). Also with the takeovers from international companies of most of the industries in Scotland (especially in Glasgow) the role of credentials was further emphasized.

The Nil by Mouth representative commented on the issue of sectarianism in the workplace:

Prior to my time here, there's certainly been some enquiries from employers in Scotland for sectarian issues, and [who] don't have a vehicle to deal with it. They have policies and procedures about race and disability and all that stuff, but not for sectarianism. Sectarianism in the workplace, I think one of the main frustrations is that there is no vehicle to deal with it. I'm sure it exists because it exists in the general society. (Interview with NBM representative)

But in the same way as mentioned, she emphasizes that the problem is not as bad as it used to be, because:

[...] employment legislation is such that you're breaking the law if you're discriminating in that way. If it still exists it's not as overt as it was. In the past they would just say "if you're a Catholic you can't come and work here", which is illegal today. That doesn't mean that it doesn't happen in an underhand way. (Interview with NBM representative)

The Citizenship through Football representative offers a slightly more pessimistic view of the issue:

I would like to think it wasn't. I think a lot of it, just like any kind of discrimination in the workplace, comes down to individuals, [as] most, if not all employers obviously have to have equality legislation in place. It's a legal requirement for them to behave in an equal manner. So to a certain extent it should be completely eradicated, because you're not allowed to do that kind of thing (Interview with CtF representative).

But if an employer sees two individuals getting interviewed, then look in the school section. You would never be explicit in these kind of things, but in the same way that people can be victims of racism, nobody's ever going to say that "I'm not giving you a job because of that [anti-Catholicism]". It's very difficult to prove, it all comes down to individuals. It's these guys that are the dangerous ones, the ones that are sitting there with these views, but are smart enough not to display them openly, so I'm not naïve enough to say that it's not happening, or has happened. Because I'm pretty sure that it will be instances where it does go on. To me most employers are smart enough and have procedures to stick to (Interview with CtF representative).

But even though there is evidence showing that discriminatory behaviour towards Catholics were practiced in relation to employment, it does seem that it has gotten better, even if it has not ended completely (Finn 2008: 11).

### **4.3 Summary**

The national school system in Scotland did not include Catholic schools at first, due to the question of religious education. The Catholic schools were incorporated after conditions were stipulated and granted, resulting in the division between non-denominational and Catholic schools in the school system. However, this did not happen without attracting a significant amount of negative reactions.

The school system still figures prominently in the discussion surrounding sectarianism, and arguments include the “dividing effect” this has on children, although this has been argued against by several researchers. Some of my informants shared this view of the divided school system.

Employment is another area where “sectarianism” has traditionally been thought to manifest itself, but now there is agreement that this has declined. However, some research suggests that discrimination still occurs. Some of my informants shared the sentiment that discrimination has declined, but suggested that the attitudes linger under the surface, although hidden.

## **5.0 Anti-Sectarian Work**

Several anti-sectarian organizations have been established to handle the problems associated with sectarianism. The following information is gathered through their respective Internet sites and interviews with representatives of the different organizations.

### ***5.1 Nil by Mouth***

Nil by Mouth is a charity, and perhaps the best known anti-sectarian organization in Scotland. It is the only charity in Scotland that deals exclusively with the issue of sectarianism, and was founded in 2000. It was established as a response to the murder of Mark Scott in 1995, who was stabbed when walking home after a football match, wearing his Celtic shirt. The motive of the murder was later found out was religious and political intolerance. Nil by Mouth gradually grew into a campaigning organization, working for social change and legislative change. Early on it started to get involved with education and with student workshops. It is also a voluntary organization, with only one paid employee on the staff. One of their key achievements, according to themselves, is previously mentioned Section 74, the change in legislation that gives longer sentences to crimes that are aggravated by sectarian motives. Currently Nil by Mouth is working on bringing an anti-sectarian model into the workplace for the first time. At the same time they are working with different organizations that ask for their help. Nil by Mouth is also a non-religious organization, not connected to any church or religion (Nil by Mouth 2010 and Interview with NBM representative).

### ***5.2 Citizenship through Football***

Citizenship through Football is a project within the Scottish Football Association (SFA) that is looking at how football bodies and the government can work together more closely to take forward different areas of social policy. A part of this is about what is understood by sectarianism in Scotland, but it deals with racial and religious intolerance in general in football. Its mission statement looks into how football can be used as a positive influence and gets people away from violent and anti-social behaviour. Another part of this is helping people to get jobs by helping them get back

in the system, writing CVs and general knowledge that will help people to get a job. Citizenship through Football also works with the Scottish Football League (SFL) and the Scottish Premier League (SPL) on community projects. Their role amongst the other anti-sectarian organizations is explained to me as:

We're getting them together to talk about sharing information, removing duplication work, and to get a better understanding of how they evaluate and how successful their programs are. (Interview with CtF representative)

One of the reasons behind this organizing and the thought process behind the campaign the Citizenship through Football representative explains as:

[...]a couple of years ago there was a campaign called Kick Out Bigotry, which was very high profile and was very much based on the Show Racism the Red Card Model, and we started to think that a lot of these messages are very negative because they're about "don't do this, don't do this", which is what we want to turn around with this campaign, and actually encourage people to have a positive behaviour. So a subtle change and approach, but an important one. Rather than preaching to people not to do things, but actually encourage positive alternatives, which may or may not work, but you know of the psychological evidence [that] shows that when you're preaching to people not to do things people tend to switch off to these messages, whereas a more positive approach might keep you engaged. (Interview with CtF representative)

The part that relates directly to the sectarianism issue is about coordinating the efforts by different anti-sectarian organizations. Citizenship through football is at the moment working with Nil by Mouth on their workplace project, which is about writing Human Relations policies for firms that address sectarianism as a specific issue in the workplace. In addition, they are working on an awareness raising campaign to get the profile of the issue back up again (Interview with CtF representative).

Other anti-sectarian organizations include Sense over Sectarianism, a funding body, meaning that they get money from the government to distribute to projects that come along and organize these; Show Racism the Red Card, which recently started an anti-sectarian campaign in Scotland, and both Glasgow Celtic and Glasgow Rangers have parts of their organization involved in anti-sectarian work.

### **5.3 Other Anti-Sectarian Initiatives**

#### **5.3.1 Police Initiatives**

The police have put several campaigns in motion to work against sectarianism and the effects on youths in Glasgow. Operation Reclaim is one of these, situated in the North

side of Glasgow, which set out to organize football leagues for youths in order to keep them off the streets. Football is supervised by the police officers and community workers, while SFA coaches come in to work with the young people. The campaign is seen as a major success (Interview with police).

In the Parkhead area<sup>24</sup>, an area which has problems with youth disorder and gang violence, the police officers started a similar practice, where they engaged with children and got them engaged in activities of a similar nature to that of Operation Reclaim. In addition there were dance classes for girls and boys, “where they get an opportunity to mix and get them off the street” (Interview with police). The initiative is funded partly by the government, and partly by the police themselves. One thing the police officers will do, to break down the barriers between police and local youths is to participate in these events themselves (Interview with police).

### **5.3.1.1 Football Banning Orders**

To combat what is termed “religiously aggravated offences” in relation to football, the Football Banning Orders were put in place. These are penalties that are received after applications by the police to the courts, where it is asked for as a part of the sentence. There are different ways this would work in practice, and different levels of restriction. If an offender is arrested and convicted of a football related offence, the offender can be banned from the every football ground in Scotland. In addition the offender may have their activity on the match day restricted to a particular area of the map, for example not being allowed to enter the city center during a specific time of day. This will in practice restrict the offender’s possibilities to go to pubs to watch the game, or other similar venues. Harsher sentences may require the offender to report to a police office during the match, ensuring that they would not go to the ground in question or any other place related to the football match. Further restrictions may include having to turn in one’s passport when the team in question is playing international games to make sure the offender stays away from these as well.

These Banning Orders is upheld by the police through the use of CCTV<sup>25</sup>, and handheld CCTV cameras. These cameras makes sure the police knows what the offender looks like, and should any incidents occur, they can compare the footage of the offender with any description of potential criminals. This would in turn work as

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<sup>24</sup> The area surrounding the Celtic stadium.

<sup>25</sup> Closed Circuit Television.



evidence for the courts. This added to other means<sup>26</sup> of policing the football matches has led to behaviour within the football grounds to have improved dramatically. In the past it was expected to be a large amount of arrests in relation to a Celtic/Rangers match, for example, but today the number is insignificant. A problem with this practice of Football Banning Orders has been that the judges that give these out have not been as aware of the problem in Scottish football. Now, however, there is a new initiative put in place in order to raise awareness of this problem. The judges are now being educated about the issue and the problems the police face, making sure that they can make informed decisions when dealing out sentences (Interview with police and CtF representative).

### **5.3.2 Ecumenical Initiatives**

In Larkhall, often referred to as “the most sectarian town in Scotland”, the different churches have decided to come together and show a joint front against the sectarian elements in the town. Larkhall is home to one of the largest Orange marches in Scotland. In response to this, churches decided to start what they hope will become an annual event involving a procession on Easter where they walk quietly through the town to each of the churches where they hold prayer services.

We hope it's going to be annual. We got about 300 [people] this year, I would hope to get up to at least 500 next year. And I'm confident we can do that. The bigger the crowd, the stronger the message we send out to people. We weren't marching down the street singing hymns or saying prayers, it was very quiet. We just walked down, had a short service, and then headed back out to the next church, so every church in town was visited. (Interview with priest)

The churches also try to have the priests and ministers show up to events together in order to show that they do not condone “sectarian” behaviour, as they did on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December at the lighting of the Christmas tree where the city council asked for a prayer service and the churches decided to hold it together (Interview with priest).

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<sup>26</sup> These include banning of alcohol from the football grounds, the football clubs putting out a message before every game with expected conduct, a smoking ban, and information sharing between police offices. Due to the rise in domestic violence incidents during the Old Firm matches, the police have also taken to visit repeat offenders to remind them “that they shouldn't be engaging in that sort of behaviour” (Interview with police).

## 6.0 Scottish Football, Sectarianism and the ‘Old Firm’ Rivalry

In this chapter I will look into how Scottish football plays into Catholic-Protestant antagonism, while focusing on the Old Firm as carriers of opposing identities. This will be done through first explaining the background of the rivalry and presenting the debate surrounding the two clubs’ origins and the ramifications of these. Then I will contextualize the Catholic-Protestant antagonism in Scottish football, through presenting the corresponding antagonism in Irish sport. To show how the “sign no Catholic” policy was eliminated I will present what would later become known as the “Souness revolution”. Moving on, I will explain how security is handled by the police before and during these games, before presenting one of the more recent “scandals” connected to the “sectarianism” between the two Old Firm clubs. Lastly I will reflect on how the Old Firm is seen today, drawing on some of my informants’ statements and the impression I got during my fieldwork in Glasgow.

As previously showed in chapter 2, the Irish in Scotland transformed the religious landscape in the country. Anti-Catholicism was prevalent before the Irish immigration, but was accelerated by the arrival of the Irish Catholics. The Irish Protestants brought with them traditions of anti-Catholicism, in the form of the previously mentioned Orange Order:

As early as 1857 trouble in Coatbridge was recorded around the occasion of the 12<sup>th</sup> of July Orange Parades, and this appears to have been a regular occurrence. During the summer months of 1883, many serious outbreaks of related fighting are chronicled. The weeks prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> July celebrations, as well as events around the annual ‘Home Rule for Ireland’ procession in mid-August, resulted in skirmishes, police charges and violence. Such things persist; some outbreaks were also witnessed in Coatbridge during the 1980s and 1990s. (Bradley 1995: 14)

The Irish population in Scotland was later to become the basis for the Glasgow Celtic football club, and, as some academics would claim<sup>27</sup>, Rangers was to rise up to the challenge of the new Irish team, thereby creating one of fiercest rivalries in sport today, that of the ‘Old Firm’.

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<sup>27</sup> Others argue that Rangers were already antagonistic to the Irish before the arrival of Celtic, due to their already-present anti-Catholicism. I will get to this later on in this chapter.

## **6.1 Foundations of a Rivalry**

Glasgow Rangers is the older of the two Glasgow teams and was founded in 1872, having a relatively successful first decade, and challenged Queen's Park as the most popular team in Glasgow (Murray 1988: 17).

When Celtic entered the Scottish football scene in 1888, they were seen as “just one more Scottish team with Irish-Catholic backing” (Murray 1988: 17). There had been earlier teams that came from Irish roots, and successful ones, such as Edinburgh Hibernian who in 1887 had taken the Scottish Cup away from the west coast for the first time (Murray 1988: 17). Dundee Harps were another successful team with Irish backing, and other teams with traditional Irish names, such as Shamrock and Emmet, were turning up regularly. The Edinburgh and Dundee teams were however, by far the most successful of these (Murray 1988: 18). This success was, by no means, always welcomed by the native Scots (Finn 1994: 47). These clubs were often judged to be alien to Scotland, and as some examples show, when ownership of these clubs (who were focused in their pride of their Irish ancestry) changed into the Scottish majority's hands, this “Irishness” was often removed or diminished.<sup>28</sup> A strange fact during this time was that the area in Scotland with by far the highest concentration of Irish immigrants, Glasgow, had not produced any “Irish” teams of national renown. With the foundation of Celtic this was to change (Murray 1988: 18). Celtic played Rangers in their first match, and reached the Scottish Cup Final their first year. Celtic was in fact so successful during their first couple of years that they tended to ignore Rangers, in favour of more successful teams (Murray 1988: 19).

The success of Celtic affected the other “Irish” teams in Scotland, not always in a positive manner, as was the case with Edinburgh who as a result went out of business in 1891. This was due to players choosing to play for Celtic rather than other teams. The Edinburgh team had had a policy of players having to be members of the Catholic Young Men's Society, in practice ensuring that the players were Catholic. This practice was scrapped in 1892 when the team came back (Murray 1988: 19). Dundee Harp was also affected and went out of business in 1906. Three years later Dundee Hibernian was formed, again as a team with “Irish” roots, but struggled to

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<sup>28</sup> As happened with Dundee Hibernian, who lost their colours (green) and name in the 1920s, afterwards being named Dundee United. Edinburgh Hibernian came close to losing its name, and had its Harp removed from its ground (Finn 1994: 48).

garner support and it was not until 1923, when new directors with no Irish (or Catholic) associations took over the club, that the team managed to “rise above the mediocre”. These new directors changed the name to Dundee United, changed the colours of the team, and severed all connections to Ireland (Murray 1988: 19-20). Murray sums it up;

By the 1893-94 season Celtic were carrying the hopes and pride of the dispersed sons of Erin wherever they were to be found: in England where their games were fanatically supported by local Catholics, in Ireland where in 1891 Belfast Celtic were founded in conscious imitation of their Glasgow co-religionists, but above all in Scotland. (Murray 1988: 20)

Celtic was “carrying the hopes and pride” of the Irish in a time where complaints about Irish Catholics were increasingly frequent. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the Irish Catholics were seen to be a drain on the Scottish economy, accused of being strike-breakers and thereby taking jobs away from Scottish workers. Football was, however, one area where the Irish Catholics were very successful during this time. But as Irish Catholics were gathering around their newly found favorite team, Scottish Protestants were also gathering around Rangers, and the emergence of railways and trams enabled fans from surrounding clubs to now support Rangers instead (Murray 1988: 24). This added dimension, along with the economical potential in this rivalry, were quickly noticed by the committees of both teams. Usually the teams would travel to England each Christmas/New Year to face teams there, but now it was decided that this should be dropped in favour of facing each other. This tradition is known today as the ‘Ne’erday’ games, which, for many Scots, are more important “than mere birthdays, Saints’ days or other trivial commemorations” (Murray 1988: 24).

As the commercial aspect of this rivalry became increasingly obvious to the public, the two teams were quite often depicted sarcastically in cartoons. In an issue of the Scottish Referee, on 15 April 1904, the “Old Firm of Rangers, Celtic Ltd” was depicted, giving the rivalry their well-known label. By 1912 a Rangers-Celtic game was guaranteed a sell-out crowd, even if one or the other was out of contention for the title (Murray 1988: 27). Bruce et al. also emphasizes the point that Rangers and Celtic had good relations when the two teams came into being, claiming that: “The relationship between the two teams was friendly by all accounts”. Saying that this was due to “sound financial reasons” (Bruce et al. 2004: 128). Although Bruce et al. makes sure not to extend these “good relations” to the supporters themselves: “Conviviality between the club management did not extend out to the supporters. Fan

violence, though not exactly common place, was not unknown” (Bruce et al. 2004: 129). Finn disagrees with this point saying that one should not overestimate the fact that the two clubs co-operated to create football competition earlier in their history. In fact he claims:

Co-operation between Rangers and Celtic has been a much misunderstood factor in analyzing the relations and political significance attached to the various clubs. Claims of good sporting relationships between the clubs does not mean that Rangers had then no special or specific political associations. (Finn 2000: 60)

Finn points to the fact that football clubs *had* to co-operate to create football competition. Any “claimed good relationship” does not mean that the two clubs had no early political differences.<sup>29</sup>

The First World War was a period of growth for football in Scotland. Due to the Troubles in Ireland however, Celtic’s position in Scottish society was delicate. The Irish-origin of the team was clearly visible in their emblem and team colours, and, seeing as the conflict in Ireland continued after WWI, this was a continued association Celtic struggled with. There were few actual repercussions of the Troubles in Scotland, although in May 1921 a police van that were transporting an IRA prisoner was fired upon, and the investigation that followed resulted in arrests of Celtic supporters (Murray 1988: 39).

The hooliganism of the early years of football returned after the war, as football drew huge crowds. Celtic supporters were prominent in several of these incidents, one of which occurred in 1922 when there was an altercation between Orangemen and Celtic supporters (Murray 1988: 30).

After the First World War, when the rest of the western world was occupied with the question of communism, Scotland was more focused on the Irish question. Here Celtic became a focus-point of the argument, as they drew the critique of Scottish society, which feared that Home Rule in Ireland would put an end to their civil liberties. A fear that Murray argues was:

[...] a well founded fear that was later to be given full credence with the creation of Eire as one of the most clerically controlled countries in the western world. (Murray 1988: 32)

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<sup>29</sup> A point I will return to shortly.

There is disagreement as to whether or not this is the period of time where Rangers' Protestant identity resulted in their "sign no Catholic" practice, but what is clear is that during the inter-war period, anti-Catholicism became increasingly prevalent in other areas in Scottish society. Murray points to the heavy industry, where Protestant bosses told their foremen to give jobs to Protestants first. In the 1920s and 1930s this got to a point where Catholics knew that if Protestants were competing for jobs, they did not even need to apply (Murray 1988: 36).

According to Murray, it was also during this time that the games between Rangers and Celtic became "overlain with quasi-religious overtones and supercharged with the politics of Ulster" (Murray 1998: 35). The inter-war period was a period in which anti-Catholicism thrived, and the football team with the Catholic identity, Celtic, suffered under this as well. Rangers had a virtual stranglehold on the league in this period, although Celtic did have their fair share of success in the Cup. Another factor in the Protestant-Catholic relationship in the 1930s were the street gangs in Glasgow. The most known of these are the "Billy Boys", "Billy" being a reference to king William of Orange<sup>30</sup> (Murray 1988: 38). As Murray puts it:

The world of the 1930s was one of the most violent outside of the two world wars, but in Scotland the worst violence was usually sectarian and not necessarily involving the Old Firm. (Murray 1988: 38)

Most commonly the violence during the 1930s were in relation to the Orange walks, but the worst acts of sectarian violence in Scotland in the 1930s took place in Edinburgh where riots were instigated by Protestant Action, an extreme Protestant group led by John Cormack, that gathered some followers during this time. In Glasgow a similar Protestant extremist group, the Scottish Protestant League (SPL), managed to gather support, but was never able to equal the success that was achieved in Edinburgh (Murray 1988: 38-39). Cormack and Alexander Ratcliffe<sup>31</sup> is pointed out as reminders that anti-Catholicism "is not restricted to one part of Scotland or to matches between Celtic and Rangers" (Murray 1988: 40). Together these two gained the temporary support of around one third of the electorate in Scotland's two most important cities (Finn 1991: 386). When WWII began, football in Scotland was completely disrupted. Although, football itself was encouraged and games between

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<sup>30</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>31</sup> An overt admirer of Hitler and member of the Scottish Democratic Fascist Party, a party described by Finn as "more overtly anti-Irish than anti-Semitic" (Finn 1991: 386).

Celtic and Rangers were played throughout this time. Violence at these games reached completely new levels (Murray 1988: 47).

The 1940s was perhaps some of the worst years result-wise for Celtic, and it was repeatedly pointed to anti-Catholicism as the cause by the Celtic board. During this time Celtic Park was used by the Catholic Young Men's Society to hold Mass, at the centenary celebration of the organization attracting as many as 27,000 people. The Rangers stadium was likewise used by the Orange Order or "non-Catholic Christian organizations" like the Boy's Brigade, demonstrating the close connection between the two clubs and their respective associated religious denominations during this time. During the 1950s, the best example of partiality of the "the press, the public, and above all the Scottish Football authorities" against Celtic is demonstrated in what is called the "great flag flutter" of 1952. Here Celtic was blamed for most of the problems surrounding the Old Firm, and most of the problems were suggested to come from flying the Irish tri-colour over the stadium. The chairman from Celtic believed there to be "a plot to put Celtic out of existence", but was ultimately prepared to take down the tri-colour. Other members of the Celtic administration were not as willing and one blamed the entire incident on the secretary of the SFA at the time, George Graham, pointing out that he was High Mason and Grand Master of the Orange Lodge (Murray 1988: 49).

The chairman of Edinburgh Hibernian, Harry Swan, was also implicated in the issue. Swan was the first non-Catholic to hold shares in Hibernians, and wanted to get the club away from the associations with Ireland and Catholicism. Swan replaced the Harp<sup>32</sup> at the main entrance of the stadium of the Hibernians, and replaced it with a thistle. In addition he introduced bureaucratic procedures that made it increasingly difficult for clergymen to enter the ground free of charge, in effect reducing the number of Catholic priests that attended its matches (Finn 1991b: 385). Swan was also a freemason, but the club history describes him as "not overtly anti-Catholic" (Murray 1988: 49-52). Murray sums it up:

It is likely that there was a lobby prepared to see the end of Celtic, but there was equally certainly a majority who saw not only the consequences in regard to lost revenue if Celtic ceased to exist, but a majority who saw the injustice of the whole situation. (Murray 1988: 52)

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<sup>32</sup> The historic flag of pre-partition Ireland. According to Finn this was followed by a common belief that the Hibs had been taken over by the freemasons, a rumour based on Swan's Masonic membership (Finn 1991: 385).

With the support of Celtic supporters Kelly did not comply and protected the identity of the club, as Bradley puts it “the Irish flag would remain or Celtic would indeed stop playing” (Bradley 1996: 38). Celtic solved the issue by erecting other flagpoles “so that their various allegiances could dilute that of Great Britain’s antagonism south of the Ulster border” (Murray 1988: 52). In effect negating the argument about where their loyalties lay.

During this period when Celtic was criticized for their connection to Ireland, Rangers managed to avoid criticism for their “sign no Catholic” policy, perhaps due to the general exclusion of Catholics in both the workplace and Scottish society in general in the 1950s. This general exclusion may have resulted in a feeling of this particular area as irrelevant.

In the 1960s Celtic took over the league, not only dominating in Scottish football, but also enjoying success abroad, winning the European Cup in 1967 (Murray 1988: 60). One important element of this success was the manager at the time, Jock Stein. Stein was the first Protestant manager of Celtic and the man responsible for Celtic’s nine consecutive Scottish Championships and for Celtic’s win in the 1967 European Cup Final over Inter Milan. This was a period in which violence repeatedly followed the Rangers supporters.<sup>33</sup> It was also during this period that the Rangers practice of not signing Catholics came into the media spotlight. Prior to 1969 Rangers had been “sheltered in their anti-Catholicism”, but now, with a Celtic team dominating Scottish football, Rangers became the object of a “hostile press campaign”. One perhaps curious element of this media-debate is that throughout this discussion of Rangers’ presumed anti-Catholic practice, the SFA never got involved, and Rangers for the most part got away with statements claiming that they were no worse than other teams, and that they did not discriminate against Catholics. However, there has been a few “slip ups” where former or present members of the Rangers organization have commented on the issue (Murray 1988: 62-68).<sup>34</sup>

In the 1980s, a “New Firm” was said to appear in the Scottish league, consisting of Aberdeen, who won 3 League Championships, 3 consecutive Scottish

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<sup>33</sup> In 1965 Rangers stormed the field when Celtic was doing a lap of honour after winning the League Cup (Murray 1988: 63). In 1972, Rangers rioted against police present at the European Cup Winners Cup in Barcelona (Murray 1988: 64).

<sup>34</sup> In 1965 a former Rangers player wrote a series of articles where he criticized Rangers for their “100% Protestantism” policy. In 1967 the Rangers director commented on the issue and admitted to it when he was in Canada, and in 1972 two directors made similar statements, but were later forced to retract (Murray 1988: 67-68).



Cups and a European trophy, and of Dundee United, who won the league in 1983 and came close to European success. However, this would not turn out to be a lasting threat to the dominance of the Old Firm as it became clear that it was not just the quality of football that drew the crowds to Glasgow. Both Aberdeen and Dundee United struggled with attendance, and thereby effectively put an end to the challenge from this “New Firm” (Murray 1988: 14-15).

Seeing as Rangers’ alleged anti-Catholic recruitment policy were increasingly challenged in the media during this time, the question of what was to blame for it also arose. The popular opinion has been that Rangers became focused in their Protestant identity, as a response to the success of Celtic. This view of the origins of the two major Scottish clubs, Glasgow Rangers and Celtic have, like so many other topics related to the antagonism between Protestants and Catholics in Scotland, been the subject of much debate.

## **6.2 Origins of the Old Firm**

Celtic has always emphasized its Irish-Catholic roots, which has led some to argue that Celtic’s beginning was the start of the sectarian divide in Scotland. There can be little doubt that Celtic was founded as a Catholic charity for the poor in the east end of Glasgow, but it is the motivation behind this that is contested. The question regarding Rangers religious origins works as a sub-category of the debate surrounding where the start of the sectarian divide can be located. Popular opinion states that Rangers did not have a religious beginning, but some scholars argue that it did.<sup>35</sup> Brother Walfrid’s<sup>36</sup> founding of Celtic is interpreted by Murray as being motivated by a wish to “keep the poor free from the temptations of Protestant soup kitchens” and as a way to keep Catholic youth occupied in order to “save them from apostasy” (Murray 1998: 33). Bradley similarly attributes Celtic’s origins to Brother Walfrid “and some of his Irish-Catholic compatriots” and goes on to interpret the motivation behind Celtic to be rooted in religious protectionism as well (Bradley 1995: 35).

However, Gerry Finn has argued against this presentation of Celtic originating in the Irish Catholic community as something arising from a fear of integration and/or out of a fear of proselytism. Instead, he adds another, and as he sees it, a more important reason:

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<sup>35</sup> Finn being one of them (Finn 2000).

<sup>36</sup> The Marist monk who founded Celtic as a charity for the poor.

Certainly there was a sense of protection to be gained from having clubs that were within the Irish-Scottish community, especially as many of the clubs of the majority were not exactly welcoming to members from the minority. But the Irish-Scots also saw soccer as a means of making contact with the wider community, believing that through sporting exchanges social prejudices could be broken down. The clubs represented a community that intended to participate in and contribute to Scottish society. Success by Irish-Scottish clubs would win the respect of the Protestant Scottish majority. (Finn 1994: 46)

Finn argues that Celtic was set up as a means to “participate in and contribute to Scottish society”, and while the gate-money earned through Celtic would go to charitable causes aimed at the Irish-Scots (mostly Catholics), this was in fact a way to “demonstrate that their community was not, as many alleged, a drain on Scottish society’s resources, but one that could look after its own, and help the majority too” (Finn 1994: 47-47). Through Celtic the Irish Catholic community would show that “they were determined to play its full part in Scottish life” (Finn 1994: 47). The Irish Catholic community would, through football in Scotland, choose to not follow the example of the GAA<sup>37</sup> who saw football (and English sport in general) as socially exclusive and banned members taking part in these events, but rather participate, and “prove themselves on grounds of the majority’s choosing” (Finn 1994: 47).

Bradley points out that: “All the club’s founders were expatriate Irishmen or of Irish stock and the new club’s support was drawn largely from the swelling Irish community in Glasgow” (Bradley 1995: 35). And as such, many of its members were interested in Irish nationalist politics. The question of Irish Home Rule was a recurring theme, and one that inspired both fear and anger from large parts of the Protestant population. Further Catholic connections can be presented in Celtic’s first patron (other than Brother Walfred) Archbishop Charles Eyre of Glasgow (Bradley 1995: 36).

When it comes to Rangers origins, the debate surrounds whether or not Rangers had a Protestant origin. Murray states:

There was nothing religious in the origins of Rangers and they were Protestant only in the sense that the vast majority of clubs in Scotland at this time was made up of Protestants. (Murray 1998:34)

Being Protestant at this time did not necessarily mean being anti-Catholic, but it frequently was the case, and when this was linked to opposition to Irish Home Rule, then the two could come together in a potent mix. Rangers were no more anti-Catholic than most clubs in

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<sup>37</sup> The Irish based Gaelic Athletic Association, explained later in the chapter.

Scotland in their early days, although some of their more prominent directors were freemasons and Unionists.<sup>38</sup> (Murray 1998: 34)

Bradley seems to agree with Murray in his assertion that Rangers were “Protestant only in the sense that the vast majority of clubs” were Protestant when claiming:

Rangers were a Protestant team in the way in which all senior clubs in Scotland, other than Celtic and Hibernian, were Protestant. However, a combinations of factors enabled Rangers to encapsulate, or become the main focus of, a particular Protestant identity which had a strong political, cultural and social character and which was infused with a number of anti-Catholic features. (Bradley 1995: 37)

Similarly, Bradley seems to agree with Murray’s assessment of Rangers’ origins compared to Celtic’s, when commenting “In contrast, Glasgow Rangers origins were more typical; they began as a purely sporting and athletic institution.” And “Unlike the beginnings of their great rivals Celtic, around fifteen years later, none of these Rangers’ historians refer to any political, religious or ethnic stimulus” (Bradley 1995: 36). This has long been the conventional presentation of Rangers’ origins. As Giulianotti and Gerrard put it: “The view of Rangers as a *response*, as a sporting and social defence mechanism, to the rise of Celtic, permeates academic and journalistic accounts of the Old Firm’s origins” (Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001: 24). Finn however, finds Murray’s statements particularly perplexing, and comments on his claims:

In the case of Rangers, he [Murray] now acknowledges that ‘some of their most prominent directors were freemasons and Unionists’. Yet like the effect of this new evidence on Murray, the Unionism of these ‘prominent’ directors has somehow failed to have had any real impact. Elsewhere opposition to Irish Home Rule could contribute to a potent mix, but not apparently at Rangers. And although the issue of Masonic membership can be neutral, in Scotland it has for too many freemasons been closely aligned with anti-Catholic attitudes. Consequently, in the case of Rangers, links with freemasons offer further pointers to the club’s core values. (Finn 2000: 59)<sup>39</sup>

On the issue of Rangers religious origins Finn is especially critical of Murray and located his “crucial failure” in that he “failed to examine the socio-political evolution of Rangers” (Finn 2000: 57). Another issue is Murray’s claim concerning the origins of sectarianism in Scottish football. Murray argues that the main reason for the

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<sup>38</sup> The last part of this statement is also challenged by Finn, in saying that there has not been enough research done on the backgrounds of Scotland’s football teams to say anything about “most clubs in Scotland” and calls it “speculation in the guise of an assertion” (Finn 2000: 59).

<sup>39</sup> For a further examination of freemasonry and its connection to anti-Catholicism see Finn “In the grip? A psychological and historical exploration of the social significance of freemasonry in Scotland” (1990).

existence of sectarianism in Scottish football lies in the formation of Celtic and their “unprecedented success”. This success came in a time when “catholic militancy” was prevalent in both local and Irish national affairs, which gave it a political backdrop (Murray in Finn 2000:56<sup>40</sup>). Finn, however, emphasizes the importance of the socio-political background of Rangers to the point that:

Without this essential knowledge about the socio-political complexion of Rangers and its membership, there can be no informed evaluation of the dynamic evolution of the complex interrelationships between Celtic, Rangers, and Scottish society. There cannot even be any valid assessment of Rangers alone. (Finn 2000: 58)

As we shall see in the following section the question regarding the religious origins of either club is linked to the question of when the “sign no Catholic” policy at Ibrox became the “tradition” some Rangers fans were so attached to.

### **6.3 Sign no Catholics**

The Protestant identity that Rangers took on early in their history seems to have culminated in their tradition of “sign no Catholic”. This practice became increasingly clear, but when exactly Rangers took on their identity as a Protestant club for Protestants is debated. Murray points to the inter-war period as the period where anti-Catholicism truly showed its face in Scotland; calling Protestants and Catholics parallel development in this period a “cultural apartheid”, while simultaneously pointing to the Scottish school system as its most obvious manifestation (Murray 1988: 35).<sup>41</sup> The divide between Catholics and Protestants is argued to have been built up systematically by the Catholic Church, and that the same church is to blame for what Murray calls “barriers to normal social interaction in Scotland”. This is seen as the background of what the Old Firm clubs came to represent, thereby becoming the “sporting standard bearers” for this “cultural apartheid”. As the political situation in Ireland became tense, anti-Catholicism became intensified in Scotland. Murray sees this as the reason for the Rangers practice of “sign no Catholic”, and thereby places its origin here, saying that in the 1920s the “last flickering of possibility that Rangers might knowingly play a Catholic was snuffed” (Murray 1988: 36). Finn challenges Murray’s assertion that this policy originated in this time period, and looks back to

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<sup>40</sup> However while looking for this quote in my copy of *Glasgow’s Giants: 100 Years of the Old Firm* I could not find the quote in question.

<sup>41</sup> Explained in chapter 4.

Rangers history of leading members and/or patronage of Conservative politicians to substantiate his claim. Finn points to Alexander Whitelaw, an early Rangers president and “a prominent figure in Protestant Conservative circles”, as an example. Whitelaw had been a leading member of the Glasgow Conservative Working Men’s Association, an organization that “married politics to Protestantism and received considerable support from the Orange Order” and “was particularly exercised by the perceived threat to the privileged position of Presbyterianism in the overwhelming majority of Scotland’s school”. In the 1872 Education Act<sup>42</sup> there was a “conscience clause”, which allowed withdrawal from religious instruction. For the Glasgow Conservative Working Men’s Association this was not good enough, and they organized a nationwide political protest which resulted in an Amendment to the Act, which allowed “the maintenance of religious instruction in new State-funded schools for as long as the local community wished it”, this in turn meant that the “supposedly national system of education” was in fact confirmed to be “non-denominational Presbyterianism” (Finn 2000: 61).

Whitelaw’s affinity with the Orange Order became evident in his political career where he represented a Conservative party with “very strong Orange associations”, although he himself never joined the Order (Finn 2000: 61). His son, however, who also went on to become a Conservative MP, became an Orange Lodge Grand Master. Further connections between Rangers and political Unionism and Protestantism was demonstrated by Sir John Primrose, who was another prominent Rangers figure who was “associated with the most virulent anti-Catholic and anti-Irish sentiments, and was openly allied with the Orange Order” (Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001: 25). Primrose had strong opinions regarding Irish Home Rule and left the Liberal Party because of them. Taken together with other examples of associations with anti-Irish attitudes, Finn “locates Rangers within a tradition of Scottish clubs, formed with distinct religious and political affiliations, and predating Irish-Scots clubs”, thereby negating Murray’s argument that the issue of sectarianism in Scottish football arose as a result of Celtic and their success (Finn in Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001: 25). Anti-Irish sentiments and anti-Catholicism was already present in Rangers prior to the establishment of Celtic in 1888. Finn concludes:

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<sup>42</sup> Explained in chapter 4.

The associations between Rangers and political Protestantism and anti-Catholic and anti-Irish sentiments in the 1870s, long before the appearance of Celtic in 1888, are made very clear in the club's selection of its presidents. (Finn 2000: 62)

As seen in this section, the “socio-political complexion” that Finn finds vital to understanding the sectarian divide between the Old Firm clubs, consists of several Unionists and Orange Order affiliates who played key roles in the shaping of Rangers. When examining this socio-political background it seems that Rangers had, if not a religious origin, a Unionist background, with clear associations with political Protestantism.

## **6.4 Scottish Football**

So far I have presented the background of the rivalry and the debate surrounding the origins of the two clubs. But why focus on these two clubs? Bill Murray describes the Old Firm rivalry in his book *Glasgow's Giants* as “probably the most complicated and interesting in the history of sport at club level” (Murray 1988: 7). The first Rangers-Celtic game was played on 28 May 1888, which means that on 28 May 2010, they have been playing each other for 122 years, making it one of the longest rivalries in the recorded history of sport (Murray 1988: 17). To understand the intensity of the ‘Old Firm’ rivalry, one must look to its extensive history, and in understanding the intensity one is provided with clues to understanding Scottish society. Bradley claims:

Scottish football provides a link between historical developments, and more contemporary religious and political phenomena in Scottish society. In particular the role of two great Scottish institutions, Glasgow Rangers and Celtic football clubs, can be seen as central to this understanding. (Bradley 1995: 34)

Bradley continues to say that: “As in a number of other countries, there exists in Scotland symbolic connections between sport, wider social phenomenon and politics” (Bradley 1995: 34). G. P. T. Finn offers a further argument: “Sport and society are inextricably interlinked. Although sport can selectively emphasize certain societal values, it can only reflect that wider society itself” (Finn 1991a: 72).

I have in the previous sections tried to show how Glasgow Rangers and Celtic embodies the progression of the antagonism between Protestants and Catholics in Scotland. Seeing how the two clubs have evolved (and the debate regarding their origins and nature) has hopefully gone some way to express what the Catholic-

Protestant relations have gone through up until recent times, and how religious identity, national identity and political identity play key roles in this rivalry.

Scottish football has been dominated by the two Glasgow clubs almost since their foundation. They have by far the largest support in Scotland, due in part to the geographic placement of Glasgow, which makes them easily accessible to almost 4/5ths of the population. As one informant phrases it:

[...] Rangers and Celtic have that national pull, where they get fans from all over the country. A lot of that is perpetuated by the whole religious thing. Otherwise why are people coming from Aberdeen, Paisley, or Edinburgh to Glasgow every second week to watch these clubs? [...] Partly it is their success[...] But there's also that other element that drives it. (Interview with CtF representative)

This difference between the teams in Scottish football shows itself in the attendance numbers as well. Celtic Park has room for 60,000 supporters, while for example Motherwell has room for 6000-7000. Celtic's average attendance is between 40-45,000, while Aberdeen is the perhaps the best supported club other than the Old Firm clubs, with an average attendance of 16-17,000. The difference between the Old Firm clubs and the other Scottish teams is explained by one informant:

[There's a] major difference in that Celtic and Rangers has a world-wide following, and the other teams are definitely seen as more local, and only have local support, plus the local teams will argue that they are losing supporters to Rangers and Celtic. Again, that could be from cultural background right from the start. (Interview with police)

What sets them apart from other successful teams in the world, is that their support is not only based on this success, but "it is the specific origins, subsequent developments, and the very nature of the two big Scottish clubs (and of the Scottish game more generally), which make Glasgow Rangers and Celtic important in terms of cultural, ethno-religious, social and political interpretation" (Bradley 1995: 35).

Although the Old Firm rivalry is unique in its sheer scope, they are not unique in their respective Catholic and Protestant identities. In Northern Ireland, sport also developed rivalries in teams of different identities, which present another way of looking at the role of football in the Catholic/Protestant, Unionist/Republican identities of Irish Catholics and Protestants. Sugden and Bairner sum up the Northern Irish political/religious annotations when it comes to football by establishing that "the development and character of Northern Irish football in general cannot be understood without reference to its political context" (Bradley 1995: 28).

The two countries have however, developed different views of what the sport can do for this antagonism. In Northern Ireland sport in general, is seen as something that brings the different sides together<sup>43</sup>, while in Scotland, the rivalry between Celtic and Rangers is “believed by some to keep people apart, or by others to provide a cathartic outlet, which restricts intergroup conflict to the football ground, and allows Catholic and Protestant to come together outside” (Finn 1994: 33). By others still, it is seen as the last remainder of what used to be an all-encompassing sectarianism that now only exist in Scotland through the Old Firm.<sup>44</sup> To show how some of the history of Irish sport correlates with elements in Scottish football and to show how the two differs, I will here present a brief history of Irish sport and the effect Scottish football had on it.

### **6.5 Irish Sport**

Sport itself seemed divided in Ireland in its beginning. Due to England’s view of sport as “a means of cultural socialization”, the Irish developed a mindset that resulted in the formation of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), and, along with its founder, Michael Cusack, it hoped to counter the “socially exclusive, imperialist nature of Anglicised sports” (Finn 1994: 33).

The London-based Amateur Athletics Association (AAA) was “socially exclusive” in that it refused to incorporate Irish events and suspended anyone who took part in these. It was as an answer to this that GAA was founded in 1884. In a similar way to what the AAA was doing for the English, the GAA sought to do for Irish identity:

Gaelic athletic events would assist the Gaelic cultural revival that was necessary to de-Anglicise Ireland, strengthen Irishness and the sense of an Irish identity, and so increase the likelihood of Irish self-government. (Finn 1994: 34)

In the same way that AAA suspended members who took part in Irish events, the GAA would ban members who took part in English events. Cricket and rugby was condemned, but when it came to football, the enforcement was less vigorous (Finn 1994: 34). However, there were some high profile bans, for example in 1938 when the

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<sup>43</sup> But, as Finn points out, it has been demonstrated that this is something that should be revised (Finn 1994: 33).

<sup>44</sup> A point some of the people I discussed the topic with during my fieldwork was adamant in maintaining.



GAA decided to remove as its patron the first Irish President and founder of the Gaelic League, Douglas Hyde, because he chose to attend an international football match between Ireland and Poland (Finn 1994: 34). When it comes to Irish football it has a close Scottish connection, in that it is the result of missionary work in the Belfast area by Scottish clubs (Finn 1994: 35). The first match in Ireland was an exhibition match in 1878 between Queen's Park<sup>45</sup> and the Caledonians<sup>46</sup>. As a result of this several clubs sprang up in the surrounding area, but Scottish influence was high, in that many teams relied heavily on Scottish players (Finn 1994: 35).<sup>47</sup> Another area, in which Scotland was part of the Irish football culture, was through players becoming part of the international team. A player was originally qualified to play for Ireland if he was born in Ireland, or if he had lived there for seven years, although this was reduced in 1885 to three months (Finn 1994: 35-36). Ireland still to this day attracts Scottish players to play for their international team, one of which is Aiden McGeady, a Glasgow-born Celtic player, who decided to play for the Republic of Ireland.<sup>48</sup>

While Irish football was originally seen to be “a Protestant game”, this changed in 1891 when a team with the patronage of, and that was modeled after, Glasgow Celtic, arrived at the scene in the form of Belfast Celtic (Finn 1994: 36). In Ireland, as well as in Scotland and England, violence was a significant part of football's beginnings. Belfast Celtic was however to be plagued by a differently motivated violence when playing clubs with Protestant and Unionist identities. Though Belfast Celtic had an open recruitment policy and never claimed to be representing Irish nationalism, their fans were for the most part Catholic and “nationalist in outlook” (Bradley 1995: 28). As tensions rose in Ireland as a whole, so too did violence on the football field. In 1920 Belfast Celtic supporters “waved banners and sang songs in favour of an independent and united Ireland” and “were met by shots fired by the security forces” (Bradley 1995: 28). Due to the war in 1914, the Irish League was suspended until 1919 when it was reconstituted. As tensions

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<sup>45</sup> A Scottish club.

<sup>46</sup> An Irish club with mostly Scottish players.

<sup>47</sup> When Queen's Island won the Irish Cup in 1882, ten players on the team were Scots (Finn 1994: 35).

<sup>48</sup> Attracting a fair share of negative (and positive) reactions.

once again rose, two different regional leagues appeared, but Belfast Celtic decided to withdraw after a serious incident at one of their games (Finn 1994: 37).<sup>49</sup>

None of the Irish teams with Unionist, Protestant, Catholic or Republican identities originally had discriminating practices when it came to players or staff. Even players switching between the different teams were accepted. This did not mean that the rivalries were not violent. After a Linfield-Belfast Celtic match, Linfield fans invaded the field and attacked the players, and Jimmy Jones, a Belfast Celtic player who at the time was in “prolific goal-scoring form” ended up with a broken leg and severe bruising (Finn 1994: 39). This became one of the contributing factors that resulted in Belfast Celtic withdrawing from the league after realizing that “there was no future for the minority community in Belfast football”, and in addition, this seems to have “marked the beginning of an intensification of the Unionist, Protestant image of Linfield” (Finn 1994: 39-40). Linfield became known as the “wee Rangers”, and “having a close relationship with the Glasgow team, Linfield had always been seen to be the main standard-bearer for the majority community” (Finn 1994: 40). As a result of this intensification of their Protestant identity, Linfield decided to stray from their open signing policy, becoming exclusively Protestant, and “took sole possession of an aggressively anti-Catholic image in Northern Irish football” (Finn 1994: 40).<sup>50</sup>

The inter-group conflict of the 1960s was felt in Irish football as well. Glentoran became an exclusively Protestant club for a period in the 1970s, and in the 1990s Donegal Celtic’s experience in the Irish Cup can serve as an example of how the Nationalist/Catholic and Unionist/Protestant identities attributed to clubs sometimes ended in violence (Finn 1994: 40-41). Donegal Celtic were to play Linfield at home, but ended up having to play them at Linfield’s home ground, following security advice from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). Donegal tried to have the decision overturned, but the RUC argued that this was a crucial adjustment in order to guarantee the safety of the teams. An interesting detail about the supporters during the game was that “amongst all the paraphernalia that was displayed and the songs that were being sung” there was an overwhelming degree of support shown for the two Old Firm clubs. The outcome was that the Donegal Celtic players were assaulted by fans invading the ground, and a “running battle between the

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<sup>49</sup> In a match against Glentoran a player on Belfast Celtic was sent off, which led to a full-scale riot and guns being fired (Finn 1994: 37).

<sup>50</sup> However, Linfield have since gone back on this policy change, and is now “strenuously and very publicly reversing its practice” (Finn 1994: 49).

Celtic supporters and the RUC, which involved plastic bullets being fired and rioting in Nationalist areas of Belfast” (Finn 1994: 41). The following year Donegal Celtic again was drawn to play at home, this time against a team not usually identified with Unionism. The RUC and IFA still decided to hold the game at Donegal Celtic’s opponents ground, resulting in Donegal withdrawing from the competition, and leaving the league, only to join the League of Ireland (the league in the Republic of Ireland (Finn 1994: 41).

The Catholic and Protestant identities that became increasingly prevalent in Irish football show us a different outlook on how religious identities can become a part of sporting culture. Bradley sums up footballs’ role in Northern Ireland:

Clearly, football in Northern Ireland reflects the cleavage that exists within society there. The identities with which that societies people have and maintain throughout their general lives, permeate aspects of the community’s activities which at first sight, to the impartial and untutored observer, may appear to be what is considered normal. In Northern Ireland, sporting activity is simply another level of social interaction where these identities can become manifest, and where national, religious and cultural affiliations are often a determining factor. (Bradley 1995: 31-32)

## **6.6 The Souness Revolution**

With the signing of Graeme Souness on 7 April 1986, Rangers took an important step away from their usual choice of managers. In the previous two decades Rangers had had five managers, of whom all but one<sup>51</sup> had come from what was described as “traditional backgrounds”, meaning “committed to the clubs’ Protestant past and prepared to maintain old values”. Souness on the other hand was a man who was a self-proclaimed “football mercenary, interested only in winning” (Murray 1998: 13-14). One of the informants interviewed during my fieldwork places the beginning of the disappearance of anti-Catholicism to this period:

A football club that was a major social institution as well as an employer, who basically openly, maybe never said it explicitly, but effectively, had a no-employing of Catholics. [...] That had always been there, not really being challenged or pressured [...] That was such a massive thing. A guy [referring to Souness] coming in and saying, “This doesn’t make any sense. I want to have the best players on my team”. (Interview with CtF representative)

The importance of this change of leadership and a belief in his ability to revolutionize the club was backed up by funding, as Souness was given more money to spend than all the previous managers combined (Murray 1998: 32). However, the eagerness of

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<sup>51</sup> David White.

the owner of Rangers was not always shared by the Rangers supporters. There were worries from these “traditionalists” that perhaps Souness was *too* focused on winning. Previous managers had of course proclaimed their willingness to sign Catholics, and explaining their reluctance to do so away by blaming it on not finding Catholic players good enough, but this was known by the Rangers support to largely be examples of “playing to the masses”. However, when Souness came along, and his expressed opinions regarding how he was only interested in winning, it caused worry among the supporters. Souness was to experience some problems when approaching Catholics however, because Rangers reputation preceded them. Glasgow-born Ray Houghton was the first Catholic to receive an offer, but as he was all too aware of the situation in Glasgow he chose to sign for Liverpool instead. During this period the supporters often voiced their outrage about Souness’ attitude towards Catholic players, something that frustrated Souness and is supposed to have led to him commenting on the Rangers fans: “Do they want a sectarian team or a successful one?” Souness put the large transfer fund to good use in his time and signed several English players. These often had to go through close inspection from the fans to make sure they were not Catholics. After being signed, Terry Butcher reassured the Rangers fans by making a public statement where he informed them that he was a Conservative, definitely opposed to the IRA and anything that had to do with “Southern Ireland”.<sup>52</sup> Some of these English players embraced the “traditions” of Rangers wholeheartedly, and in the process became endeared to the fans. Graham Roberts “won undying fame when, deputizing in goal for a sent off goal keeper, conducted the crowd behind the goal in a few verses of ‘The Sash’<sup>53</sup>” (Murray 1998: 40-41).

On the 10 July 1989 Rangers supporters got their answer to how far Souness would take them outside their comfort-zone, in Maurice ‘Mo’ Johnston, the first Catholic player signed since the First World War (Murray 1998: 31). Another aspect of Souness’ signing of Johnston is that he was a Scottish-born Catholic, and in addition to this, he had played for Celtic and had proclaimed himself “to be a true Tim, a Bhoys to his bootstraps”<sup>54</sup> (Murray 1998: 44). This has led some academics to

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<sup>52</sup> Butcher supposedly also refused to listen to U2 for the same reasons, and according to himself, when he found out that Jim Kerr of Simple Minds was a Celtic supporter he threw his collection of the band’s tapes out of the window (Murray 1998: 40).

<sup>53</sup> A song that is about the traditions of the Orange Order.

<sup>54</sup> “Tim” being slang for Catholic, and Celtic’s team are known as “the Bhoys”.

propose that it might not have been a signing for Souness to break the long “tradition” of not signing Catholics, but a signing to “put one over Celtic”. The immediate reaction of the media was to focus on the outrage of certain parts of the Rangers supporters who burned scarves, tore up season tickets, and, in one example, laid a wreath outside Ibrox mourning the loss of “116 years of tradition” (Murray 1998: 45). The signing attracted reactions from both sides of the Old Firm, and graffiti that read “Souness you Roman Bastard” appeared on city walls, while outside the Bellgrove Railway station the paramilitary slogan “Collaborators can’t play without kneecaps” appeared (Bruce et al. 2004: 130). Johnston himself had had problems before he left Celtic for his time in France, but now it reached a new level, resulting in him having to live in a safe-house in Edinburgh. As Murray puts it: “Johnston was in hiding from both sides of the religious divide” (Murray 1998: 47).<sup>55</sup> Souness did not just have an effect on how Rangers played, but according to Murray, before Souness the Rangers board had seen themselves as:

[...] the keepers of a trust, a sacred trust even, of a Protestant heritage which was interpreted by their fans as much as by their enemies as being anti-Catholic. (Murray 1998: 55)

With Souness, Rangers seemed to rearrange their priorities from “keepers” to winning games. On 15 April 1991 Souness left Rangers, stating his reasons as wanting to be closer to his children in the south of England and that he felt he had gone as far as he would be “allowed” to go in Scotland, referring to what he deemed to be bad treatment by the SFA and the media in Scotland (Murray 1998: 71). Souness later reflected that “I will never be comfortable with bigotry, and it will always be at Rangers” (Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001: 28).

Souness’ replacement would be Walter Smith, who built on Souness’s three league titles (the last two successive) with another seven in a row, and thereby equaling Celtic’s record nine in a row (Murray 1998: 72). This great achievement was

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<sup>55</sup> Souness also signed the first black player to play for Rangers in Mark Walters. The Rangers board were quick to set the standard when it came to racial abuse, and Rangers fans that did demonstrate this unwanted behaviour were banned from the ground. This did not however, persuade the opposition and on 2 January 1988 Walters was met by monkey chants and the throwing of bananas from Celtic supporters<sup>55</sup> (Murray 1998: 43). When playing at Ibrox however, racism from the Rangers crowd had an interesting turn to a “one of ours” mentality. When Celtic’s black player Paul Elliott fouled a Rangers player in 1990 he was met by a tirade from Rangers fans to the effect of: “You’re no’ even a real black! You’re no’ even a real darkie! At least we have a proper nigger! Mark Walters is black! You’re just coffee-coloured!” (Murray 1998: 44).

done with a team that no longer was a Protestant-only team, but with a team “boasting no Scots and a majority of Catholics” (Murray 1998: 139). This was amusing to the rest of the league who had heard of Rangers “tradition” throughout the years.<sup>56</sup> Smith went on to manage Everton, then the Scotland national team, before returning to Rangers in 2007 and remains their manager today.

## **6.7 Security issues**

In the period surrounding the First World War there was significant changes made to the policing of the Old Firm games. From 1921 the police ensured that the club supporters entered the ground via different routes (Murray 1988: 30). This is still practiced today, and large police forces divide the two supporter groups both before and after the game, while making sure that the only abuse taking place during the game is verbal.<sup>57</sup> It was also during the period surrounding WWI that the police started to perfect this practice, and incidents became less frequent, thanks in large part to the improved police methods and awareness of trouble. Today there are as few as 3-6 arrests made during an Old Firm game, which is seen by the police as a “major success” when seen in relation to the 60,000 fans present at Celtic Park for instance (Interview with police).

Due to the level of violence (and severity of it) the police even threatened to ban the Old Firm matches altogether during the inter-war years. It was during this time the police first started to use tactics especially aimed at football fans, such as when offenders had to report to the police headquarters every Saturday for four weeks as punishment (Murray 1988: 37). This may have been a prelude to the Football Banning Orders (explained in chapter 5).

Today the section of the police responsible for events such as football matches and marches is called the Operational Planning Unit.<sup>58</sup> This section operates in accordance with what is called the “Green Guide”, which is a guide to safety at sports grounds. They have also graded the different football matches that will occur during a season according to risk, in an A-B-C system, where C is the highest with the most

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<sup>56</sup> Hearts fans greeted Rangers with the refrain: “More Tims than Celtic! They’ve got more Tims than Celtic!” (Murray 1998: 139).

<sup>57</sup> Although verbal abuse is also something the police try to prevent, the stewards present at the game uphold the club in question’s “rules of conduct” and escort any violators from the ground.

<sup>58</sup> Although only responsible for the events in the areas distributed to them. The Operational Planning Unit I was introduced to is the one responsible for Celtic Park and Glasgow Green.

risk attached to it. The highest rated game is the Rangers vs Celtic game.<sup>59</sup> In preparation for an Old Firm game there is a myriad of things to do and consider. At the end of the season it would usually make itself known where the first Old Firm will take place because: “[...]the team that wins the league, plays the first home game between the Old Firm” (Interview with police). As the season starts the police will get the fixtures for the year and grade the games and distribute resources accordingly. Because of the amount of resources needed for an Old Firm game, the police unit will need support from other divisions, and in addition they need “specialist resources”, such as horses, which is pointed out to have “a huge impact” on crowd safety.

Old Firm games are different from the rest of the league’s games, something that is reflected in the league’s treatment of them. Firstly, their matches are played on Sundays, while others are played on Saturdays, and secondly, kickoff is set to 12:30, rather than the standard 15:00. This has two reasons, because of the TV schedule, and, more importantly, the pubs do not open before then.

When the police have gathered their resources they work alongside the stewards to ensure crowd safety. However, they have officers who are especially looking for “racially motivated incidents”. An example is provided:

When the teams arrive at Celtic Park, they come through the front of the stadium in a coach, and we would have officers around that area to make sure that there is no abusive or offensive materials about, like banners or flags. So we have people looking especially for that. (Interview with police)

The police even take it further, and stop the buses carrying the supporters to check for alcohol and flags. If large flags are found they are opened up and showed to the match commander<sup>60</sup> via CCTV cameras, who then decides whether or not they qualify as offensive. The role of CCTV goes further and is used to spot backpacks that might have flags in them. These are reported to the police officers at the scene who then proceeds to search them.

In the past police mostly focused on the football match, but recently they have decided to expand. The night before the game police officers will look up pubs or clubs to see if they will show the game the following day, only to come back to these places the next day “to reduce the potential for violence and disorder” (Interview with

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<sup>59</sup> The second highest rated was thought to be the Hearts of Midlothian vs Edinburgh Hibernian, and was described as “having some sectarian issues as well” (Interview with police).

<sup>60</sup> The police officer in charge for the day.

police). It is also pointed out by the informant that domestic abuse rises on days where Rangers and Celtic play each other. To counteract this, police officers visit repeat offenders the day of the match to remind them of their responsibilities.

It seems that the Old Firm matches affect the society surrounding them in a multitude of ways. The security needed for these games are extensive. As the informant points out:

So it becomes a full operation, not just the Park itself. This affects the whole of Glasgow area, so all divisions will have their own anti-disorder, domestic violence issues they will look into [...] So it's not just the games we focus on. (Interview with police)

## **6.8 Findlay Scandal**

Rangers have had many examples of Unionist symbolism in their ranks. Fan favorites such as Paul Gascoigne celebrated goals on several occasions by pretending to play the Orange Order flute, but the most revealing example came in the form of the deputy Chairman of Rangers, Donald Findlay. In 1999, Rangers had won all three of the main Scottish trophies, and after winning the Scottish Cup against Celtic held a celebration afterwards. In this celebration, Donald Findlay, who is a prominent legal figure in Scotland, and once the rector of St. Andrews University<sup>61</sup>, was filmed while singing “what seemed to be the full repertoire of loyalist and Orange songs”. One of the songs is a tribute to the earlier mentioned loyalist and also fascist street gang the Billy Boys from Brighton that describes how the participants are “up to their knees in Fenian blood”<sup>62</sup>. Findlay’s performance was made worse by the fact that only a few hours after a Celtic fan had been murdered and another seriously injured by a shot fired by a crossbow (Finn 2000: 88).

After the story ended up on the front page of almost every major Scottish newspaper, Findlay himself turned in his resignation. Findlay had earlier expressed his opinions on banning racist or ‘sectarian’ songs, where he stated:

In short, I don’t think Scottish football has a ‘racism’ or a ‘sectarian’ problem, although that doesn’t mean we should be complacent about it. But to ban chanting on the basis that it is sectarian is not only impossible to implement, it would ruin the game as we know it ... The

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<sup>61</sup> The oldest university in Scotland.

<sup>62</sup> “Fenian” is term used pejoratively for Irish or Catholics.



regular songs are part of a tradition and no-one has the right to tell someone else that their beliefs are wrong. (As quoted in Finn 2000: 89)<sup>63</sup>

## **6.9 Present Perception**

While the situation in Scottish football has definitely improved since before the “Souness Revolution”, there are still today some issues that remain. Seeing as it is not too long ago that the practice of “sign no Catholic” was eliminated, one can still hear the references to the “old days”, and as one informant pointed out, there are those who find the whole thing amusing, as the retired referee who was an after-dinner speaker and joked about how him and all the rest of the referees used to be Rangers fans (Interview with Celtic fan). The references to the early days of the rivalry are numerous in songs and chants, and the “Irish connection” (of both teams) is still widely seen in symbols such as flags and banners. The churches are no longer involved in the clubs the way they were in the early days, and the priest I interviewed went as far as saying that he actively tried to “disassociate” himself from football, because he felt that the people claiming to be Catholic during football matches normally was not active churchgoers. There still is violence associated with the football clubs, but nowhere near the levels of the old days. The violence usually connected to Orange walks during the 1930s has declined considerably, and many of the people I spoke to claimed that it was not the actual Orangemen who were the problem anymore, but rather the people who followed them. There is however still a feeling of uneasiness around the Orange walk for many, due in part to these followers, and in part because of the nature of the walks, as one person told me of how he would normally leave the town were he lived when these marchers were going on.

All has not changed though, for the Old Firm still reigns supreme in the Scottish league, and the games between them remains intense, due in part to the importance of these matches. As we shall see in the next chapter, these teams are important for many Scots’ identity. The teams themselves have changed with the times as well, some would claim more so than others. One informant emphasized the difference between now and then:

For me the real important point that I want to get across is around the difference between past and present, just in the 31 years I’ve lived here. Hugely different. Hopefully, whilst the

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<sup>63</sup> To make matters seem worse, back in 1995, when Mark Scott (see chapter 5) had been murdered, Findlay had been the defence counsel of Campbell (Scott’s murderer). Later Findlay also represented a man sentenced ten years for “attacking another Celtic fan” (Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001: 29).

problem exists, it's diluting. [...]It was just because it was, it was acceptable just because that's the way it always was. But it changed over the years, but there's probably still a few more changes to make. But they will be made. (Interview with Celtic fan)

## 7.0 Identity, Sectarianism and Football Culture

Previous chapters have tried to show that there are several elements that play into the Catholic-Protestant relationship in Scotland. So far the religious history (chapter 2), the way ‘sectarianism’ is understood as a concept and as a social issue (chapter 3), and the role of football in the Catholic-Protestant antagonism in Scotland (chapter 6) have been presented. In this chapter issues relating to identity will be discussed.

### 7.1 Definitions of Identity

Identity, I was to discover, proved a significant term for some of the informants, and a term that was introduced early on in exploring the relationship between Catholics and Protestants. When explaining what ‘identity’ is, sociologist Richard Jenkins puts it: “identity is the human capacity – rooted in language – to know ‘who’s who’ (and hence what’s what)”, meaning that identity involves “a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and members of collectivities” (Jenkins 2008: 5). Jenkins defines ‘identity’ minimally as “the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their relations with other individuals and collectivities”. ‘Identification’ is defined as the “systematic establishment and signification, between individuals, between collectivities, and between individuals and collectivities, of relationship of similarity and difference” (Jenkins 2008: 18). Finn similarly emphasizes the multi-dimensional nature of “human social identities”<sup>64</sup> and says that “normally” identity formation is achieved through the social groupings a person belongs to or that it is seen to belong to. However, Finn argues that some social identities, namely those whose identity reflects ancestral origins outside of the country of residence, are seen as dual social identities and he points these out as the ones most open to “misinterpretation” (Finn 1991b: 371). In the construction of identity, unity within the social group’s identity is achieved on a basis of difference. An individual will create an identity through defining “self” as opposed to “other”, a process reflected in social groups defining “us” and “them” (Orjuela 2008: 50). This ability to group humans as polar opposites, as “us” and “them”, “friend” and “enemy”, demonstrates the power of a shared

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<sup>64</sup> The term “social identities” is avoided by Jenkins, because he argues that “all human identities are, by definition, *social* identities”, making the term “social identity” “redundant”, and because “to distinguish analytically between the ‘social’ and the ‘cultural’ misrepresents the observable realities of the human world” (Jenkins 2008: 17)

identity. Carl Schmitt argues: “Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy” (Schmitt: 1996: 37). While I do not focus on the sphere of the political in my thesis, the antagonism and its dialectics emphasized by Schmitt may give some vital clues to the understanding of football rivalry and identity in Scotland. Schmitt continues:

[...]real friend-enemy grouping is existentially so strong and decisive that the nonpolitical antithesis, at precisely the moment at which it becomes political, pushes aside and subordinates its hitherto purely religious, purely economic, purely cultural criteria and motives to the conditions and conclusions of the political situation at hand. (Schmitt 1996: 38)

A relevant example for this thesis is the example of Rangers’ “sign no Catholic” policy, where the interests of football were suspended in favour of goals other than sports, that they would rather lose games, than play with players of the “opposing side”. Both Finn and Orjuela emphasize the role of distributions of power between the different social groups, as Finn puts it:

[...]the societal framework within which members of minority social groups attempt to resolve questions concerning their own social identities is formed by the dominant social groups; and the response of the dominant majority to the minority social group frames the possible strategies that the latter group can pursue. The effect is that the establishment of the social identity for a minority is largely determined by the social majority. (Finn 1991b: 371)

However, the term ‘identity’ should not be seen as something that encompasses all that people are. It is however, useful to “identify common attributes or beliefs which mark out a group of people as having something quite significant in common with one another and, equally, as being different from others” (Bradley 1995: 17). Or as Tajfel puts it: “Social identity, then, is a blanket term concealing the complexity of the relationship between the clarity of the awareness that one is a member of a group and the strength and nature of the emotional investments that derive from this identity” (Tajfel as quoted in Bradley 1995: 19). So in this part of the thesis I will use the term identity not as a measure to cover all that an individual or group is, but rather as a means to explore the different aspects that play a role in the defining of oneself through associations, background and beliefs, and through an opposition between “us” and “them”.

## **7.2 Identity and Football**

In regards to the minority group's relation to the majority group in Scotland, one informant phrases it:

[...]the Catholic identity is more about being in the minority position, and more about being persecuted and being on the receiving end of this [sectarianism]. Whereas the Protestant identities, [is] not necessarily defined by activity against Catholics, but there are these Protestant values that's probably the bedrock of what people see themselves as. [...] The Catholic values come along in a lot of ways. The protectionism of the schoolsystem [...] There's been a thing about institutional paranoia. [...] I would say that that's the difference. That there's always been that element of persecution and paranoia for the minority. (Interview with CtF representative)

Interpreting the informant's statement, Catholics in Scotland have shaped their social identity in relation to "possible strategies" the majority group (Protestants) has laid out. According to the informant Catholics have defined their social identity in Scotland from a background of persecution and what the informant calls "paranoia". This confirms Orjuela's view that the discourse that determines a subject's position "is closely linked to power". These "dominant discourses" uphold the "social hierarchies" where the more powerful subject dominates the weaker, resulting in the majority group forming the social identity of the minority group (Orjuela 2008: 51). Although, even when groups have mutually opposed categories of social identity, that does not necessarily result in "antagonistic inter-group behaviour". The opposing groups may share another social identity, leaving the ensuing behaviour largely up to what aspect of the "inter-group differentiation" that is emphasized. As seen in examples where Scottish football supporters, many of whom are Celtic and Rangers fans, will come together to see the international team of Scotland play.<sup>65</sup>

When discussing social identities the local football club can often have a significant role. For some, "the football team has become the most substantial embodiment of the local community, with the affairs of the local club being seen as a crucial determinant of the vibrancy of the local community itself" (Finn 1994: 101). And as a result the football team "symbolically becomes part of their own identity", they see themselves as the supporters of the club, in the sense that through their attendance and gate-money, they finance the team and "uphold the traditions of the

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<sup>65</sup> This was challenged by some of the informants I talked to during my fieldwork. It was pointed out that many Celtic and Rangers fans would not go to the international team's games, because they supported other countries' teams instead, such as England or Ireland.

club” (Finn 1994: 101). The role of football in the social identity of an individual will be variable, and the emphasis on the elements involved will be diverse. Some will find the sense of “sharing in that social identity” in the social events surrounding football (Finn 1994: 108).

The football rivalry itself can be said to work as a symbol of the different allegiances at play during an Old Firm match. The act of following a team “permits various antagonisms to well up in ways that are similar to a ‘ritualized warfare’” (Armstrong and Young 2000: 175). During this “ritualized warfare” the emotional response from many of the people involved will result in people who are “neither totally rational in their thinking, nor polite in their expressions” resulting in chants and songs with references that can be very offensive. This has resulted in moves by politicians and clubs reacting by trying to implement measures<sup>66</sup> that would make the football stadium a more “family friendly” environment (Armstrong and Young 2000: 175). Armstrong and Young describes the experience of a football supporter:

The chanting, dancing fan, then, is essentially a young male who lives through a series of liminal periods within a community of like-minded others, all of whom are involved in chaotic and cascading activities which incorporate extreme elements of carnivalesque<sup>67</sup> and ritual warfare. In this the fan reaches a depth of emotion that flows from a polarity of joy on the one hand, to the alternative misery which accompanies defeat; and all the while is incorporated into a complex communal identity sustained by binary expressions of symbolic power which defines ‘us’ – our lads, in our favour – against ‘the others’ whose defeat is a priority. (Armstrong and Young 2000: 178)

Several of my informants have pointed out football as an outlet for this “us against them” mentality, some arguing that this is “tribalism”, others that it is impossible to avoid because this mentality is “human nature”. This “binary dualism” of “us against them” was commented on by Levi-Strauss when he argued that “hell is in the others“(Armstrong and Young 2000: 177).

### **7.3 The Football Match and its Symbolism**

The football match, and the actions associated with it, can be deemed a ritual where the football fan can express his/her identity together with their likeminded equals, and towards the ‘others’ in the form of the opponent and their fans. Similarly to the term

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<sup>66</sup> Some of these have been presented in earlier chapters.

<sup>67</sup> Finn and Giulianotti divides football identity into two contrasting parts: the ‘carnival’ supporters are described as displaying “sociable, indeed gregarious, behaviour that is best described as boisterous” and while “strongly associated with alcohol use, it remains decidedly non-violent”. ‘Hooligan’ supporters are described as supporters that “engage in competitive violence with other groups” (Finn and Giulianotti 1998: 190).

‘identity’, football is about differentiation. The aggressive nature of football matches is explained as:

The game and its metaphoric language is all about aggressively defeating an enemy – an ‘other’ – who must be shown to be inept, bungling, untalented and certain to be thrashed. (Armstrong and Young 2000: 183)

During a football match there is a very clear divide of “us” against “them”. The home team’s supporters are clearly separated from the away team’s supporters, and the two have separate entrances to ensure that there will be no clashes. The first thing that struck me when I attended an Old Firm game was the level of hostility from the very start. Immediately upon getting situated supporters start shouting insults, making offensive gestures and singing songs. This was true for both sides. Enormous flags were spread across the sea of supporters, and the waving effect this causes only strengthens the sense of unity observed among them. This all happened prior to the players entry, upon which the songs, insults and gestures only intensify. The insults that I could understand, were mostly centered around the “Orange” qualities of the other side. The Union Jack flag dominated the Rangers stands, as it seemed like every single supporter had one to wave. On top of this, there hung larger versions from the stands as well, often inscribed with slogans of varying natures, often in reference to Northern Ireland. The Celtic side was as dominant in their use of the Irish tri-colour, which to a similar degree dominated their stands.

During the football match, the ritual, the football chants work as a “public collective expression of social and cultural identity” (Armstrong and Young 2000: 180). Songs and chants are naturally going to be aggressive and perhaps mocking in nature. Fandom itself can be characterized as “cultural performance”, and a large part of this is found when spectators use the opposition’s history and/or background for abusive purposes.

The symbols that are used by each side are probably the best expression of the overt connections between sport, the political and the religious in the Old Firm rivalry. The Irish tri-colour and the British Union Jack are the most obvious ones. Celtic had to put up a fight to keep the tri-colour over the stadium.<sup>68</sup> Celtic’s reluctance to identify with the Union Jack is explained by one informant:

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<sup>68</sup> The “flag flutter” explained in chapter 4.

[Celtic's fans] don't fly the Union flag, because of the historical Irish connection with Britain, i.e. that there isn't one, and they don't want to be a part of Britain, and that they are not a part of Britain. (Interview with Celtic fan)

Rangers' association with the Union Jack is explained as a way "to underpin their identity as British". Rangers fans avoid waving the Scotland flag "because they view themselves in a more Unionist way", and all in all they "view themselves more as British than Scottish" (Interview with Celtic fan). Rangers' ties with prominent Unionists are demonstrated by Finn<sup>69</sup>, and their Unionist identity as the "Queen's team", as one informant put it, is in part demonstrated in their usage of the Union Jack. The Irish tri-colour is similarly used to "underpin" the Irish identity of Celtic's supporters. The Red Hand of Ulster is picked out by another informant as being the most common symbol among the Rangers supporters, a symbol that is seen as Ulster Unionist and Protestant (Interview with police). The lack of religious symbols present in the rivalry during the match is explained as due to the fact that, despite everything, both teams have an identity as Christian, and therefore the emphasis lies in the Unionist/Republican and the British/Irish differences (Interview with NBM representative).

Some of the symbols associated with either side have been banned by both the clubs and the authorities. The Rangers songs that are banned have tended to be offensive in their referring to the Irish in racist terms, or through glorifying certain aspects of historic events. The Celtic songs that are banned were pointed out by one informant to be "very rarely about hatred of the other side". What they do refer to is the IRA and their fight against the British.<sup>70</sup> One song that has been banned from the Rangers side is called the "Billy Boys" and is explained by one of the informants:

Billy being short for William, King William of Orange. So the Rangers fans would sing [that song] and they were the Billy Boys. And the words would be: "Hullo, Hullo. We are the Billy Boys. Hullo, Hullo. You'll know us by our noise. We are up to our knees in Fenian blood, surrender or you'll die, for we are the Brighton Derry Boys". Brighton being short for Bridgeton, an area in the east end of Glasgow that is famous for being a Rangers stronghold, Derry being an area in Northern Ireland. The problem with that song, as you can work out, is that it says that "we're up to our knees in Fenian blood, surrender or you'll die". That song was acceptable at Rangers' ground for years, both officially and unofficially. It was heard at every Rangers game for years, and it was only in recent years when the football club made a stand to try and do their part to stamp out sectarianism, that they made that song outlawed. You weren't allowed to play it. [...] if the fans sang it, they were threatened with getting thrown out. To be fair to Rangers, gradually, that song has been faced out and you now don't hear it. (Interview with Celtic fan)

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<sup>69</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>70</sup> Such references is however seen to be at least as offensive.



The “Billy Boys” song is based on King William of Orange’s “victory over Catholicism”<sup>71</sup> and a glorification of a street gang in Glasgow in the 1920s (Interview with police). The same informant tells of an experience with another song sung by the Rangers supporters, “No Pope in Rome”. He explains it as being about an “ideal world”, which would involve “No Pope in Rome” and “No Catholics to sadden my eyes”<sup>72</sup>, and describes it as “a very strongly bigoted, and you could say, sectarian song” (Interview with Celtic fan). Like most of the songs associated with Rangers this song also has references to the Orange Order in several places throughout the song: “No Pope of Rome, No chapels<sup>73</sup> to sadden my eyes, No nuns and no priests and no rosary beads, Everyday is the 12<sup>th</sup> of July”, 12<sup>th</sup> of July being the date of Orangemen’s day and the date of the Battle of the Boyne.

Probably the song that is most subject to debate, at least during my fieldwork, is the song known as the Famine song. Many of the informants mentioned this song, perhaps because it was fresh in the memory due to the media’s treatment of it. The song is sung to the tune of Sloop John B by the Beach Boys and the lyrics are:

I often wonder where they would have been  
 If we hadn’t taken them in  
 Fed them and washed them  
 Thousands in Glasgow alone  
 From Ireland they came  
 Brought us nothing but trouble and shame  
 Well the famine is over  
 Why don’t they go home?

Now Athenry Mike was a thief  
 And Large John he was fully briefed  
 And that wee traitor from Castlemilk  
 Turned his back on his own  
 They’ve all their Papists in Rome  
 They have U2 and Bono  
 Well the famine is over  
 Why don’t they go home?

Now they raped and fondled their kids  
 That’s what those perverts from the dark side did  
 And they swept it under the carpet  
 And Large John he hid  
 Their evils seeds have been sown  
 Cause they’re not of our own

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<sup>71</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>72</sup> Lyrics from the song.

<sup>73</sup> In the version I found the lyrics said “no chapels to sadden my eyes” and not “no Catholics to sadden my eyes”, but the meaning remains the same.

Well the famine is over  
Why don't you go home?

Now Timmy don't take it from me  
Cause if you know your history  
You've persecuted thousands of people  
In Ireland alone  
You turned on the lights  
Fuelled U-Boats by night  
That's how you repay us  
It's time to go home

Irish ingratitude to Scotland, references to Irish and Celtic history are referred to throughout the song. "Athenry Mike" is the protagonist in the Irish folk song "Fields of Athenry", who was imprisoned by the British because he stole food to feed his starving children. "Large John" refers to the well-known Celtic manager Jock Stein<sup>74</sup>, and the "wee traitor" is probably Aiden McGeady, a Celtic player who declared for Ireland instead of Scotland. "You turned on the lights" refers to the claims of some Rangers fans that Celtic "turned on the lights" at Celtic Park to aid German bombers during WWII.<sup>75</sup>

Without provocation, the song came up on a number of occasions during the interviews, often as an example of why the songs surrounding the rivalry need to be controlled and why they are offensive. It was pointed out that because the song is often presented in the media as the Famine song and that it is presented as only being about "the famine's over, why don't you go home", many Scots do not see the offensive part of it. The song's lyrics is rarely presented in its entirety, and few know the exact words, as one informant put it, "but the words in it includes how Catholics rape their children etc, which is perhaps seen as offensive" (Interview with NBM representative). Another informant reflects: "[...] if you were chanting that to any other ethnic minority team, if it was a black team and you were chanting 'why don't you go home?' it would not be acceptable" (Interview with CtF representative).

An example of the songs banned from the Celtic side is the Irish "rebel" song "Go On Home British Soldiers":

Chorus:  
Go on home British soldiers go on home  
Have you got no fuck'in homes of your own  
For eight hundred years we've fought you

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<sup>74</sup> Presented in chapter 6.

<sup>75</sup> Which could not have been the case, it was pointed out, due to the fact that the "lights" at Celtic Park were not installed until well after the end of the war.

Without fear  
And we will fight you for eight hundred more

If you stay British soldiers if you stay  
You'll never ever beat the IRA  
The fourteen men in Derry are the last that  
You will bury  
So take a tip and leave us while you may.

Chorus

No! We're not British we're not Saxon we're  
not English we're Irish! And proud we are to  
be so fuck your union jack we want our  
country back  
we want to see old Ireland free once more.

Well we're fighting British soldier for the  
Cause we'll never bow to soldiers because  
Throughout our history we were born to be  
Free so get out British soldiers leave us be.

Here one can see the content of Irish “rebel” songs’ emphasis on the conflict between the Irish and the British. The emphasis in the Famine song lies on the Irish’ place in Scotland, while many of the Celtic songs are Irish “rebel” songs, adopted from the struggle in Northern Ireland. One informant points out that many of the Celtic songs are “based like movies, based on a story”, and uses the example of the song “Sean South of Garryowen”, which again revolves around the fight “for the freedom of Ireland”. The Irish “folk songs”, which also is used by Celtic supporters, is explained of being more about the suffering of the Irish, as in the case of “Fields of Athenry” (Interview with Celtic fan).

Although I do not claim to have knowledge of all the songs<sup>76</sup> involved in this rivalry, the few I have found seem to agree with the informant’s view, that many of the Rangers songs are based either on “hatred of the other side” or on glorifying of historical events, and Celtic songs as either being “rebel” or “folk” songs (while some of these are offensive in their support of the IRA). One of the exceptions in the Celtic songs is the Nacho Novo song. This was a song I heard while attending an Old Firm game at a Celtic pub, and the lyrics revolved around: “I hope you die in your sleep Nacho Novo, I hope you die in your sleep I pray, I hope you die in your sleep Nacho

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<sup>76</sup> The latest of which I was told of over the phone, was a song they call “Bouncy, Bouncy”, the meaning of which is currently debated. The Rangers fans will sing the song, while all the supporters jump up and down in the stands. The meaning behind this is claimed to be a reference to a Celtic supporter who recently was killed by an opposing fan, by repeatedly stomping on his head.

Novo, from a bullet from the IRA”. Nacho Novo is a player for the Rangers that for reasons unknown to me, has attracted the hatred of the Celtic side.

While the supporters sometimes demonstrate these attitudes today, both the clubs and players mostly stay out of it. While there are exceptions to this, and every once in a while some players “play to the crowd”, most refrain from doing so because of the media backlash they would face. One player has however embraced the rivalry and Catholic identity of the Celtic side wholeheartedly. Artur Boruc, the Celtic’s Polish goalkeeper has earned the nickname “Holy Goalie” due to his many antics during games. He is particularly known for crossing himself before every half of the game, while facing the crowd, which causes great anger when that crowd is made up of Rangers supporters. At one time he was fined for this, as this was deemed a matter of “public safety”. Boruc has also been seen to wear a t-shirt with a picture of the Pope under his Celtic shirt. As the “Holy Goalie”, he is both loved by the Celtic fans, and hated by the Rangers supporters for his behaviour.

One can see how a football match can work as an expression of identity through the use of symbols and songs. The flags of Ireland and Britain dominate the Old Firm matches and (together with other symbols and songs) are seen to “underpin” the supporters’ identity as one or the other. These songs and symbols often attach themselves to historical events and present the opposing side as negative. The informants expressed views that the songs of the Rangers support were seen as being more about “hatred of the other side”, than that of the Celtic support who often attached themselves to either Irish “rebel” or “folk” songs. While the clubs and players usually stay out of this part of the rivalry, those who do “play to the crowd” are either loved or hated for it, depending on who you ask. All in all the songs and symbols in use is an important part of the football match and its role as an expression of collective identities.

## **7.4 First Encounters with “Sectarianism” and the Old Firm**

The Old Firm rivalry is a big part of being Glaswegian<sup>77</sup>, for many introducing itself as early as their first school years. When asking one informant how long he had been a Celtic supporter he answered:

Like most people from this part of Scotland, I have supported the football club that I support since [...] basically when I started school, it becomes apparent who you support. And you get to school, particularly in my case, which was a Catholic school, you tend to find that everyone support Celtic. And in the majority of cases, the non-denominational schools, the kids tend to support Rangers. We start school here at either 4 or 5 years old, so in my case, you could say that I’ve been a Celtic supporter since I was 5. (Interview with Celtic supporter)

One can see in this statement another example of how the religious, educational and sport spheres blend into one another at an early stage for some Glaswegians. At this point in the interview I had not yet asked about the religion of the informant. While pointing out the schools role in the issue, the informant emphasized that he is not “anti segregated schools”. His first memory of the antagonism was from walking home from school at the age of five. Further down the road the “Protestant school” was situated, “but it’s technically non-denominational”. He remembers the kids singing childish songs at each other. The Protestant children would sing: “Cathy cats eat the rats”, while the Catholic children would answer: “Proddy dogs eat the frogs” (Interview with Celtic fan).<sup>78</sup>

This might be taken as meaning that in spite of children’s probable slight understanding of what it entails to be a “Catholic” or “Protestant”, they at least use the two as identifying markers as to what sets them apart. This is “the first example” he can remember, and sees it as something that is “evident throughout, your school years in particular”. The first time the informant witnessed the violent aspect of the divide was in relation to football, as his father took him to an Old Firm game when he was 12 or 13 years old. He was wearing a hat with the words “Saor Eire”<sup>79</sup> on it, because as the informant puts it: “I liked it” and he had “got into that side of things, the Irish connection”. As they were walking to their car, he sensed that there was a potential for what he calls a “powder keg situation”. To get to their car they had to

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<sup>77</sup> That part is not necessarily expressed in being a supporter of either team, but the Old Firm is a part of being Glaswegian due to the number of people involved in it, and the way it both expresses itself in the city, and influences it within.

<sup>78</sup> “Cathy” being short for Catholic, and “Proddy” for Protestant.

<sup>79</sup> Meaning: “Save Ireland” in Gaelic.

pass from the Celtic side of the road, through the police and through the Rangers fans. As they did so, a Rangers supporter grabbed his hat, threw it on the ground and spat on it. This led to his father becoming angry, followed by a confrontation. They then found themselves “in the middle of Rangers fans who were throwing punches and kicks”. His father managed to get them out of there, and that was the first time he: “witnessed the violent aspect of it, and yeah, you’re certainly aware of it after that” (Interview with Celtic fan). Here one can see that the connection between what is seen as sectarian and the two football teams becomes evident.

On asking another informant how long he thought sectarianism had been a problem in Scotland he made a similar connection:

I’ve grown up in Glasgow, and I don’t support Rangers or Celtic, I support St Mirren. It’s interesting, because I grew up in an area called [...], which is [...], predominantly a Rangers supporters area. But there was a Catholic school [as well] so [there were] a few Celtic fans. (Interview with CtF representative)

Football seems to be the first thing many people many people think of when talking of sectarianism. It is apparent that there is a close association between religious and football identities. The second informant pointed out that he is not a supporter of either team that is usually linked to sectarianism, but at the same time, he grew up in a “Rangers area”, that is to say, a Protestant area. In both the above-mentioned cases, the school system is where the divide is experienced first. When talking to another informant, the role of education in the public’s experience of sectarianism was commented on:

Within education in Scotland [...]there are non-denominational schools and there are specifically Catholic schools, and that causes tensions and friction. Unfortunately, that means that the first time you meet that “them and us” thing about Catholics and non-Catholics within Christianity might be when you start school at four, four and a half. (Interview with NBM representative)

This informant further points out the school system as an area where “the natural human state” of “us and them” comes to fruition. Here, religion plays the part of a social marker more than anything else. It is a question of “us and them”, not necessarily meaning that either is particularly religious. The school system is viewed by some informants to be a divisive force, in that it makes it easy to point out who the “them” is. When asked whether or not the sectarian issue is mainly a problem for “young people”, the NBM representative pointed out that in the schools, the home

environment was thought to have a “stronger pull” than teachers. While it was conceded that it was the younger element that was the most visible through gangs and violence, she argued that sectarianism would manifest itself differently in older people. She brought up a relevant conversation she had had:

As a teenager said to me in a session not too long ago, when I said “how would you tackle this, what would you do?” she said “I would start with the old grandpas”, she went “because they’re all bitter old men who sit on the bus and say terrible things, I would start with them”. I asked what else she would do and she said: “I would go to the bingo, and talk to the old women”. So some people’s impression is not that it’s just young people. (Interview with NbM representative)

Another example of the older generation’s role was brought up when discussing sectarianism as ingrained in the Old Firm rivalry. While it was pointed out that football contributes to form bonds between family members, the “negative side of it” was emphasized:

[...]when I see a dad and maybe his brother, two men in their late 30s or 40s, taking a young boy to a football match, in this case a Rangers match, and they’re all wearing Rangers strips, but the two adults are speaking profanities clearly of a sectarian nature, perhaps singing a song that’s inappropriate. Now what’s the impact on that kid? That 5 or 6 year old boy? He looks up to these men, his dad, his uncle. You don’t need to be a brain surgeon to work out what’s going to happen there. He’s going to grow up not only thinking that’s acceptable, but thinking that’s good, and that’s what he’s going to be. And that example counts for the other side as well. I’ve seen Celtic fans, in the company of small children, acting in a similar moronic fashion. So that’s why it breeds. (Interview with Celtic fan)

The effects on children by the experiences connected to the Old Firm can be seen in the results of a workshop NBM did at a primary school. During the workshop they asked the children how they feel about wearing their school team’s shirt. The answers they got were words associated with “proud”, “good fun”, “good”, “sportsmanship” and “Scottish”. When asked: “What about when there’s a Rangers/Celtic match?” the words that were associated were words like “hate”, “fighting” and so on. The NBM representative also remembered a question from a child who asked her: “If you were a Catholic and married to a Protestant, how would you know what football team to support?” These examples demonstrate how early the identity processes connected to football start. For these children Rangers/Celtic matches are events when one has to be careful, where people fight, and when you had better not wear your football shirt. It is obvious that religion and football are intertwined even at an early age.

### 7.4.1 Blurred Lines

Learning how informants first experience the rivalry/division between Catholics and Protestants, it appears that the lines between religious affiliation and football are blurred. This does not mean that every Glaswegian has this kind of experience. One informant emphasizes that he did not experience any of these problems, and that he did not notice any of it until his teens. Nor did he have any of the negative associations with any rivalry between the Catholic schools and the non-denominational schools (Interview with priest). Another emphasized the fact that the different schools now have joint campuses, although identifying the school of his child as “Protestant probably” (Interview with police). The divided school system as the birthplace of sectarianism is something Finn has argued against, as mentioned earlier. Finn’s argument is based on the fact that these schools cannot be represented as “segregated” due to the children actually attending the same school, even though the set up of the schools are different.<sup>80</sup> This is a point some informants seemed to agree with.

The quotes do seem to trace some of the division among Catholics and Protestants today in the “divided” nature of the schools, reflecting the discourse about the subject in the media and among scholars. This could have more to do with the schools role as identity markers than the effect of what is being taught there. Although, as Bruce has shown, even some Catholics seem to be arguing against Catholic schooling, and some of the arguments recorded here seem to reflect that. Despite the fact that many of the informant’s arguments were centered on the divisive nature of the divided school system, one informant did take an alternate stand:

Bigotry isn’t bred in school, either Catholic or non-denominational. Bigotry comes from the home. Children are brought up to do that. I think some people use it as an easy excuse. It shifts blame on to somebody else, and saves them from having to take any responsibility of the situation. (Interview with priest)

The truth of the argument however, remains unclear due to the lack of any research on the subject. Whether or not religious division would occur without Catholic schools, is a question without an answer. Without them, both parties still have a multitude of areas to base this division on. When asked of methods of figuring out fellow Scots’

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<sup>80</sup> There is a difference in the way the school’s time table is set up, especially regarding religions place in it (Interview with priest).



religious background<sup>81</sup>, one informant divided the answer into three, the first being school<sup>82</sup>, the second was clothing<sup>83</sup>, and the third being surname<sup>84</sup>.

## **7.5 Supporter's Identity**

In the Old Firm rivalry the expression of social and cultural identity is integrated in the religious division amongst Catholics and Protestants. It is through referring to the backgrounds of these two social groups that the two supporter groups show their allegiance and, at times, proclaim their hatred of the other side. The identities taken on by the clubs play a large role in the intense rivalry. One informant described Rangers as representative of the “establishment”, i.e. the government or the “system”. One example he referred to was when he had attended a dinner where a former referee was the after-dinner speaker, who was “laughing and joking about how he would favour Rangers” and explained that “the referees used to be Rangers fans” (Interview with Celtic fan). While he did not believe this to be the case anymore, he saw this as a part of why Rangers were seen as the “establishment” team. Celtic on the other hand has an identity of being an Irish team, when Bradley interviewed a Celtic Park staff member, he found that even though his informant were perfectly aware of his Irish background (he was born in Scotland), he felt Irish, and while it was difficult to describe how that worked, he clarified that he knew more about what he was not, rather than what he was (Bradley 1996: 44). One of my informants also defines Celtic as something opposed to Rangers, saying that Celtic:

[...]were a bit more socialist, were a bit more left-sided, had a lot less power, but they were a club of the people whereas Rangers were seen as a club of the establishment, very British, the Queen's club, in Scottish terms.<sup>85</sup> (Interview with Celtic fan)

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<sup>81</sup> These methods are employed in Scotland to figure out a person's religious background without asking, in the words of one informant, “because people don't want to put their foot in it, by saying something offensive to the other side” (Interview with police).

<sup>82</sup> The question being: “What school did you go to?”. Catholic school taken to mean that you are a Catholic, and non-denominational taken to mean that you are a Protestant.

<sup>83</sup> Rangers shirt or blue colours taken to mean that you are a Protestant, while a Celtic shirt or green colours are taken to mean that you are a Catholic. I had my own encounter with this mindset when meeting some friends one night in Glasgow, before I was aware of the connotations to colours, when I had chosen to wear a t-shirt that was green and white with no affiliation to the football team, and was met with the exclamation: “Oh, I know some places we wont be going tonight”. This being an allusion to the fact that I would be seen to be a Celtic supporter (and thereby Catholic), which would in turn result in some sort of altercation if encountering certain Rangers supporters.

<sup>84</sup> An “vaguely sounding Irish sounding name” is taken to mean that you are a Catholic.

<sup>85</sup> The informant went on to explain how there were words that would be associated with Rangers and some that were associated with Celtic. Rangers' fans would be described as “loyal”, while Celtic supporters would be described as “faithful”. According to the informant you would never hear a Rangers' supporter described as “faithful”, and never hear a Celtic supporter described as “loyal”.

Due to the origins of Celtic and Rangers<sup>86</sup> the two supporter groups have an identity of being either Catholic or Protestant. This is not a sufficient expression of the sectarian element of the Old Firm rivalry, but it plays a part in laying the groundwork for much of it. Stereotypically, all Rangers supporters are seen to be Protestant and all Celtic supporters Catholics. One informant expresses the more common understanding of this:

I think: Scotland's changed a hell of a lot in the past 15 years. Glasgow's changed even more in those 15 years. Our ethnic mix involve people from India, Pakistan, the Italian community. [...] It involves a lot of Africans, it involves a hell of a lot of Eastern Europeans. It's a real cultural and international melting pot of a city. [But] yes, unfortunately, I think it still remains the case that the majority of Celtic supporters will be from a Catholic background, and the majority of Rangers supporters will be from a Protestant background, but the two clubs are, thankfully, a bit more diverse than they used to be. (Interview with Celtic fan)

And in the words of another informant:

It's a perception. I don't know how religious those people are, but it's a well-known connection. It's a perception and it thrives. If you support one team you're one thing. There is a reason for it, there is a background for it, but now in the current day it's an irrational connection. Because people are not as religious as they used to be, but there's a connection there (Interview with Nil by Mouth representative).

Although the stereotype of Celtic supporters being Catholic and Rangers supporters being Protestant is thought to be outdated, it is nevertheless thought to still have a measure of truth to it by some informants, as well as being challenged by others. When talking to a priest about this issue, he pointed out that while he thought it had been “watered down a bit in recent times”, he:

[...]would always try to disassociate the Church from any allegiance to any football team, because I don't think it's healthy. And I think you would find that most of the people who stand in the football terraces on a Saturday and shout abuse at the other side aren't in fact churchgoers. But if someone would say to them “are you a Catholic or a Protestant?”, the Celtic fans would say “Catholic” and the Rangers fans would say “Protestant”. Well, in practice that wouldn't be true<sup>87</sup>. It's an affiliation they've got. And they hold on to it, just for the sake of hanging on to their side. (Interview with priest)

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“Loyal” clearly referring to the loyalist identity of Rangers, while “faithful” referring to Celtic supporters identity as Catholic.

<sup>86</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>87</sup> The informant also put out a challenge to find as many as 5000 churchgoers among the 50,000 Celtic supporters “that would normally claim to be Catholic” (Interview with priest).

Upon doing field observation, I did notice one instance where this might not have been the case. As I stood in line to get into the Celtic pub that would show the Old Firm match, I noticed that the owner of the pub would recognize and talk to several of the people in the line, and not from the pub itself, but from having gone to the same church and attending Mass together that day.<sup>88</sup> This would imply that many of the Celtic fans present at that particular pub were indeed churchgoers, although whether or not this is the exception or the rule, is difficult to say from such a random observation.

When asked of areas where sectarianism usually shows itself today the informants tended to place most of it with the supporters and not with the clubs themselves. In Glasgow religious difference has become the basis of the rivalry, unlike other football clubs with similar backgrounds. One informant refers to teams such as Hearts, Dundee and Dundee United, who all had religious backgrounds, but where the rivalry never situated itself on a basis of religion in the same way as in Glasgow (Interview with Citizenship through Football representative). In fact, because of all the controversy surrounding the Old Firm and the religious antagonism they represent, other teams have started to resent them:

To be honest there's a big proportion of the fans outside Rangers and Celtic, [where] the hatred is towards both as an entity, rather than either one of them. You'll find a lot of the smaller teams that talk about hating the Old Firm, it's that hatred for that whole thing that's going on around them, the sectarian thing. To be honest, both clubs have perpetuated this thing, because it's been good for them, in terms of business, in terms of getting people engaged. (Interview with CtF representative)

The idea that the football rivalry and the religious antagonism that is expressed through this rivalry can be taken to signify a deep rooted problem in Scottish society is challenged by Bruce et al., and he argues against it:

When 20,000 Scots of one religious and ethnic background regularly chant their hatred for all those of an alternative background, we might suppose that Scotland is indeed endemically sectarian. However, that such florid sectarianism occurs in the context of supporting rival football teams should cause us to think a little while longer. There are good reasons for supposing that most of those people do not mean it. (Bruce et al. 2004: 131)

Bruce et al insist that when trying to understand the different aspects of the rivalry one should not give too much credence to the supporters' statements in the context of

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<sup>88</sup> A fact picked up through field observation.

football. He argues that there are several factors one must take into consideration: firstly that a majority of the Old Firm fans are working class, in which “coarse language” and “casual violence is commonplace”, thereby saying that actions and statements “may signify a good deal less” (Bruce et al. 2004: 131). Bradley on the other hand, points to football as provider of “a safe environment” where one can express one’s “otherwise repressed or unarticulated political attitudes, cultural affinities and national allegiances (Bradley 1996: 45). The argument about the working class finds a spokesperson in one of my informants as well, albeit different aspects are emphasized. The culture surrounding team colours in Glasgow is characterized as:

[...]a curse of the common man. It’s a culture I think, it’s a political issue, that doesn’t just exist in this city, this country or even this continent. You know, lower classes and working classes [...]traditionally needed something to belong to. That’s why sports clubs are so important in working class areas, [it is] something to latch on to, something to believe in, something to belong to. And that will always result in rivalries, and those rivalries will always result in confrontation. (Interview with Celtic fan)

Bruce et al.’s second argument is that ritualized behaviour is a factor for many fans, and that their efforts are not based on “strongly held views” but merely on a wish “to annoy the fans of their greatest rivals”. This is a point mirrored by another informant, who argued:

I actually find that a lot of the football related stuff, while there are underlying issues with a minority of people, I think the majority of it is the wind up. Just to annoy the people on the other side. [...] People, to an extent, see it as a laugh. [...] We see it as, I don’t know how you’ll refer to it, but we call it ‘tit for tat’. You do this, we’ll do that. If Celtic for example qualified for Europe and Rangers didn’t qualify for Europe, the fans bring the beach balls in, things like that, to show: “We’re going to Europe”, “We’re going abroad and you’re not”. [...] That to me is just a wind up, a bit of fun. There are some underlying issues, but sometimes it’s just fun. (Interview with police)

The issue of “afters”, meaning the after-effects of football events such as alcohol-related violence is dismissed by Bruce et al. as something that occurs in “most cities, with much of it being far more extreme than Glasgow have ever experienced” (Bruce et al. 2004: 132). Again, this is reflected in some of the informants who see this as a problem that would (and do) occur in any city with a football rivalry. The informant also raised the issue of wearing football shirts in certain areas of the city and calls it “ill-advised” (Interview with Celtic fan). This perception, that violence is commonplace, is challenged by another informant. She explains that there is a

practice of avoiding the city centre whenever there is an Old Firm match. A practice the informant finds “sad” and poses the question: “Shouldn’t we be working towards a society where sport is a good thing?” This “common sense” surrounding the Old Firm is explained through an example:

During one of the awareness raising sessions a girl said that she took her son swimming in the local swimming pool, the day there was an Orange walk in the summer, and the boy was 5 or 6 and had on a Celtic strip, and when she came out from the swimming pool she had had her tires on her car slashed, and she called her husband who said: “Well, it’s your own fault, why would you let him wear a Celtic strip the day of an Orange walk?”. That’s accepted and unchallenged[...]and she was reprimanded for not having common sense, and that’s the way we live, and lots of people accept that, and therein lies the problem. (Interview with Nil by Mouth representative)

The last point Bruce et al. use to explain the current fierceness of the Old Firm rivalry, is “the absence of other rivals” (Bruce et al. 2004: 132). Lack of opposition from the rest of the Scottish league is causing the intensity of the Old Firm rivalry. One of the informants, however, feels that football in Scotland can work as at least one, of several, indicators of the schism in Scottish society. When asked when he felt anti-Catholicism had started to decline in Scotland, the first Catholic player on Rangers was pointed out by the informant, and when asked if football carried that kind of weight, the answer was: “Absolutely, I do think it [football] has that kind of influence” (Interview with CtF representative).

## **7.6 Summary**

The role of identity came up during many of the interviews. The phenomenon of having an Irish identity in Scotland was said to have something to do with there being a lack of clear “British” identity. Scots do not necessarily identify with what is “stereotypically” perceived to be “Scottish” either. People need something to “hold on to” however, and because of a lack of a “real” Scottish identity, it is thought that some people turn to “Irishness” (Interview with NBM representative). There was little agreement among my informants when it came to the role of religion and religious identity in Scotland. Some played down the role of religion in Scotland today, arguing that Scotland is not as religious as it used to be and that the typical Scotsman was not “one or the other”. One took the middle ground saying that even though religion still plays a certain role in being Scottish, he thought that “a lot of people are quite happy to keep their own beliefs to themselves”. Others argued that religion had implemented

certain “defined values” in Scottishness, such as Calvinistic values, although as society is becoming more multicultural “people are moving away from these traditional values”.

The role of football has been emphasized as a “public expression of social and cultural identity”, and thereby has an ability to explore the dual identities that is involved in the Old Firm. In this chapter I have tried to present my understanding of the antagonism between Catholics and Protestants in Glasgow as interpreted through my fieldwork and interviews. Football was seen as the area in which the issue of ‘sectarianism’ showed itself most clearly, although this was challenged by some informants that argued that today it might be more about “winding up” the opposition, than actual hatred. The “common sense” surrounding the violence prevalent in Glasgow in relation to the Old Firm was both expressed and challenged by informants. The symbols involved in the rivalry seemed to put more emphasis on the national and political identities, than that of religious identity, suggested by one informant to be due to the fact that they both come from Christian backgrounds. However, Celtic’s Irish Catholic and Rangers’ British Protestant identity shines through during the football matches due to the use of the different symbols, which may be primarily national or political, but have clear religious connotations. These songs and symbols are important parts of the football match and its role as an expression of collective identities. The songs involved in the rivalry were mostly based on historical references of varying nature, although some songs from either side expressed hatred. Many informants met the antagonism during their first school years. The schools’ role in creating the problem had spokespersons both for and against among the informants, but there were those who argued that the home environment is where this issue really starts. Lack of a relatable Scottish identity was thought to cause a lingering Irish identity by some informants. The “British” identity of Rangers was thought not to be a part of “traditional” Scottish identity as well.

## 8.0 Conclusion

In chapter 2 I presented the religious history of Scotland in order to sketch out the religious and social background and make sense of some of the references that Protestants and Catholics in Scotland still refer to. Out of these, the most important is the Irish immigration, which, as explained earlier, changed the religious landscape of Scotland by introducing a large minority of Irish Catholics (and Protestants).

In chapter 3 I presented how the religious antagonism between Catholics and Protestants is the subject of debate, in which the term ‘sectarianism’ is central. After going through how sectarianism is debated amongst scholars, I showed how the term is understood by the informants interviewed during my fieldwork.

In chapter 4 I presented some of the areas in which “sectarianism” is thought to be prevalent, emphasizing the development up until today. In chapter 5 I presented some of the anti-sectarian work being done in Scotland today.

Chapter 6 summarized the history of Scottish football, with particular emphasis on the Old Firm clubs, and its role in Catholic-Protestant antagonism and as carrier of two opposing identities. The debate between scholars reach this area as well, as I demonstrated in the debate surrounding the origin of sectarian elements in football and consequently whether or not the clubs had religious origins that were based on the Protestant-Catholic antagonism. By arguing that Rangers were, if not religious then Unionist and anti-Catholic throughout their history, it is shown that the Protestant-Catholic antagonism exists in Rangers Chairmen prior to Celtic’s foundation, in practice proving that the sectarian element in Scottish football was not introduced by the Irish Catholics. However, Rangers have evolved since their early days, the most important period for this was the years with Graeme Souness as manager. Through the conversations I had with a police officer, it was explained how much effort goes into ensuring that the Old Firm games remain safe events, with minimal “sectarian” occurrences.

In chapter 7 I presented the understanding of the situation I gained from my fieldwork in Glasgow with particular emphasis on issues of identity. The football match and the symbols used by the supporters were examined as a ritual involving the expression of identity.

## **8.1 Sectarianism**

Over time, religious antagonism and “sectarianism” has become synonymous in Scotland. “Sectarianism” is, as highlighted above, derived from “sect” which is in its common usage a negative and non-objective term. However, when used in scientific study of religion, a “sect” is characterized by the exclusivity of their “truth”. Neither Presbyterianism nor Catholicism can be characterized as “sects” in either meaning, but Scottish “sectarianism” has come to mean something else. In Scotland, the exclusivity element manifests itself through substantial intolerance.

As outlined in chapter 3, scholars have previously commented on the inadequacy of the term “sectarianism” as a description of the Scottish phenomenon. Discussions with several informants, have confirmed this assessment. However, the term has taken on another meaning in the Scottish context, one that is ingrained in the discourse of the subject of Catholic-Protestant antagonism and Scottish society in general.

If “sectarianism” is not suited to describe the issue in Scotland, then what is? Many of the informants I spoke to during my fieldwork, as well as people who simply offered their opinion, felt that the term had more or less been “hijacked” by a sensationalist media. The repeated misuse of the term in the media have made it more or less synonymous with the problems relating to the Old Firm, resulting in an association between “sectarianism” and “hooliganism”. It is obvious that the Old Firm have taken on identities related to the issue of Protestant-Catholic antagonism, thereby making their confrontations symbolic of something more than mere sport. This was particularly evident when Rangers still practiced their policy of not signing Catholics.

Rangers have received their share of criticism for their alleged “anti-Catholic” identity, and have in recent years tried to do remedy the situation. There are several aspects at play in addition to a desire for the moral high-ground currently enjoyed by Celtic. The globalization of football has added an incentive to ridding themselves of the “British Protestant” identity due to the limited pool of supporters this provides. While Celtic seems better suited for a “transnational” club status, due to the appeal to the Irish diaspora throughout the world, Rangers’ identity has in practice limited the



club to the population of Scotland (and parts of Ireland).<sup>89</sup> This is a major drawback for Rangers, in a world where large parts of club income is derived from TV-rights.

## **8.2 Schools**

Education, or more specifically the segregated school system, has attracted wide criticism for creating antagonism between Catholics and Protestants. According to my informants, the problematic aspect of the school system in Scotland is today seen as not primarily a religious issue, but rather an identity issue. It is not a problem because of religious beliefs, but rather due to the identity drawn from these creating an “us against them” scenario. The debate surrounding the school system has been called a testimony to Scotland’s “sad legacy from the past”.

The school’s role in promoting “sectarian” attitudes has been questioned and many feel it may not play the key role in the situation as many claim. The informants however, felt that school was the first place they encountered sectarianism, even if that does not necessarily mean it originated there. The role of the home was pointed out by some as more influential on “young impressionable minds”, meaning that teachers are not as big of an influence as parents.

The role of education in “sectarianism” is a subject currently receiving much scrutiny in Scotland, and the existence of the Catholic schools hangs in the balance. It seems unlikely that they will be removed, especially as they appear academically superior to others. This does not detract from my informants (with some exceptions) speaking of school as the place where the “us” against “them” mentality first appeared. Additional research into this area would be useful, as schools appear to contribute to the “us against them” mentality. This divisive mentality appears to have only a very weak link to actual religion, but further research has the potential to put an end to allegations that the segregated school system has a role in creating “sectarianism”.

## **8.3 Employment**

In the past, employment has been a major area of concern, as it related to anti-Catholicism in Scottish society. My informants did not comment extensively on this area, but it is still an area deserving of attention. Due to improved employment laws,

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<sup>89</sup> For further reading on this see Giulianotti and Finn *Old Visions, Old Issues: New Horizons, New Openings? Change, Continuity and Other Contradictions in World Football* (2000).

and generally a lower acceptance of anti-Catholicism, this has become far less prevalent in Scottish society. Some informants still pointed out that it might still exist, but that employers might have “smartened up” and keeps it low-profile. The school system plays a role here as well, as a religious marker. Due to the perception that all students who attend Catholic schools are Catholic and all students who attend non-denominational schools are Protestants, discriminatory practices may still prevail in employment.<sup>90</sup> When applying for jobs, applicants have to name the school attended, and as a result reveal their religious background. This is part of the practice, mentioned in chapter 5, of “asking without actually asking” about religion. While this method is far from exact, it might have become the basis of more recent discriminatory practices. In addition, there is a question of whether improvement occurred due to actual change in attitudes or because of necessity. Attitudes might linger, and the said methods of religious identification play an important role. Religious discrimination in the workplace remains an unanswered question, despite real improvements in recent times.

#### **8.4 Football**

Football is the national sport in Scotland and there is therefore a chilling irony to football becoming a main outlet for “sectarianism” today. Football is the first thing many Scots will mention when asked about Catholic-Protestant antagonism in Scotland. Considering the history of the issue, this alone shows how prevalent the aspect has become. Some scholars highlight that football should not be taken too seriously as an indicator of any actual societal problems in Scotland, but there appears to be a degree of correlation in their shared history. The anti-Catholicism of the 1930s was reflected in football during that period and the trend was reversed in the 1960s when Celtic was the most successful. Again, during the Troubles in Ireland there was a turn for the worse in Scottish football. The real question today seems to be if this still holds true in a Scotland that has become multicultural, and with an Old Firm that is trying to become “transnational”.

It is not clear whether Rangers and Celtic have historically harbored the same feelings towards each other as their fans. The fact that they are known as the “Old Firm” is, as explained above, based on the business approach the teams have taken

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<sup>90</sup> A good deal of the informants started to consistently refer to the non-denominational schools as “Protestant” schools some time into the interviews, perhaps demonstrating this thought pattern.

towards their rivalry. Both teams are perfectly aware that there is a lot of money to be made from the rivalry. Bruce et al.'s claim that the clubs, in fact, had a good relationship during the early days is based on these "sound financial reasons". From 1912 the teams have drawn large numbers of fans to their games, not only when winning, an argument for the core element of this rivalry being something beyond mere sports. Other teams in Scotland, such as the "New Firm", had periods of considerable success but ultimately succumbed to the lack of attendance at their games. The clubs' willingness to stray from apparent tradition, and what the supporters in the past have seen as the core element of their team, was evident when the Rangers owner decided to hire Souness, the self-proclaimed "football mercenary". Success was needed to keep the club going in sports terms, but even so the supporters were hesitant in embracing something other than their tradition. The supporters' reluctance further demonstrates that these clubs, and their identities, are not based solely on football. For teams to be successful in today's sporting world, they need the economic benefits of attracting supporters, TV and sponsorship deals. In an era where the English Premier League, along with the Spanish and Italian, has the largest drawing power, whatever draws supporters must be seen as positive for a Scottish club, and the Old Firm teams seem to have tapped into a guaranteed source of attraction when they attached themselves to religious identity, national identity and political identity. The effect of this can be seen in the average attendance of the Old Firm compared to the other Scottish teams. In a society where "sectarianism" is largely thought to be in decline, it is relevant to question whether the Old Firm is furthering the "sectarian" element of their rivalry for financial gain. Even though the two clubs do have their own initiatives for tackling "sectarianism", some of the people I spoke to during my stay in Glasgow, claimed that the two clubs were careful not to do "too much" in order to keep the rivalry intact. Not due to any real animosity between the clubs, but rather financial reasons.

Another issue related to football is the "common sense" attitude toward football-related violence. It seems accepted that it is dangerous to wear certain colours on certain days. This issue exists in other places in the world<sup>91</sup>, but in Glasgow there seems to be a city-wide understanding of this and it has yet to be challenged. The fact

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<sup>91</sup> One informant likened it to the rival gangs Bloods and Crips in Los Angeles, and their affiliations to the colours red and blue.

that “sectarianism” is largely accepted as norm is one of the problems anti-sectarian work faces today.

There is however, no doubt that conditions in Glasgow have improved in recent times. Secterianism is still seen as a problem, but when compared to the past, informants all agree that “it’s not as big of an issue anymore”, but that there exists a minority of people whose mind cannot be altered. If this is case, it is relevant to question why this minority is allowed to control attitudes of an entire city? Even if conditions have improved it does not mean that it cannot get better. As the Nil by Mouth representative pointed out, people are still getting killed over this, which is not acceptable no matter how small-scale the problem appears when compared to the past. Understanding the identities involved in Catholic-Protestant antagonism is crucial to understanding how and why these things happen, and to gain understanding of how it can be changed.

The main questions for this thesis were how the Catholic-Protestant relationship is seen and understood, and what role the identities of the Old Firm play in religious antagonism in today’s Scottish society. The Catholic-Protestant relationship is a current issue in Scotland and it receives widespread attention via various outlets in Scottish society. Historically, antagonism between Protestants and Catholics has been prevalent throughout, although particularly so during and after the Irish immigration. The Irish immigrants reshaped the religious landscape of Scotland and became the largest minority in Scotland. Antagonism between the Protestant majority and the Catholic minority characterized their relationship, and anti-Catholicism was particularly prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s. This antagonism is what is referred to today as “sectarianism” in Scotland.

Rangers and Celtic became representatives for Scottish Protestants and Irish Catholics early on. Celtic had their origin within the Catholic faith of the Irish immigrants, and this became a source of great pride in a time where hostility towards the Irish and Catholicism was commonplace. Rangers had their origins in an environment of Unionist values and political Protestantism, in effect establishing their identity through affiliation. Rangers Football Club was founded before Celtic Football Club and it therefore seems questionable that Celtic alone is responsible for bringing political and religious elements into Scottish football, yet this allegation remains. It seems plausible that these elements did not surface until the emergence of a widely successful “Irish Catholic” club, but Rangers’ affiliations to Unionist values and

political Protestantism predates Celtic. Both teams have manifested their respective identities. Rangers practice of “sign no Catholic” is the most blatant one, not only because Celtic lacked any such practice, but because of its late removal. It would take up until the arrival of an ambitious manager, in the form of Souness, for Rangers to rid themselves of this policy and his influence was met with a degree of reluctance. Old Firm matches became venues to air allegiances, and grievances. As a result, “sectarianism” became a facet of the two clubs’ rivalry. The antagonism between Catholics and Protestants has declined with time, as public expression of anti-Catholicism and anti-Protestantism increasingly became socially unacceptable. Antagonism has remained, and while it is no longer expressed publicly, it has found an outlet in the rivalry between Old Firm supporters. These supporters still base their identities on being “Scottish Protestants” and “Irish Catholics”. The identities express themselves through symbolism during football matches, as seen in chapter 7. The symbolism consists of several elements, such as flags and songs. Through these, one can clearly see the connections to Ireland and Northern Ireland, and their political affiliations. The Old Firm match has become a ritual where national, political and religious identities are expressed. While there is some disagreement between the informants when it comes to the continued validity of the claim that “all” Celtic fans are Catholics and “all” Rangers fans are Protestants, it still holds some truth when seen in relation to their expressed loyalties. Celtic’s supporters emphasize their “Irishness” and by extension their Catholic identity. The same is true for Rangers fans and the British/Protestant identity. However, the overt connection to the church has disappeared, leaving behind a “perceived religion”, one that does not necessarily correlate with church attendance. Church attendance in general is on the decline in Scotland, and this is therefore not particularly perplexing. Some argue that as Scotland becomes less religious, the “ritual” of the football match has no base in religion at all anymore. However, the religious elements of the supporters’ identity are still very much emphasized, a point often emphasized by my informants when faced with the argument that “most” supporters do not have any “real” ties to religion. Scotland’s use of faith as an identity marker along with ethnic/national background is an area that could benefit from further research. It is a complicated situation, especially due to the nature of proclaimed and perceived religion.

## 9.0 Literature

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