

Power and Inclusion: The Irish Parliament During the Enlightenment Era

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Course: HIST 2011
Date: March 28th, 2022
Word Count: 2996

Ireland is one of the only countries in Europe where the conquerors, the British, and the conquered, the Native Irish, did not assimilate to become one society. As such, it can be seen as the first British colony. Colonization comes with inequality, which can be understood through study of the Irish Parliamentary System during the Enlightenment Era. Studying Parliamentary systems and the discrimination within them is useful as laws are put in place that reflect values and discrimination within society, and the Members of Parliament who enact these laws are typically at the top of the social hierarchy and the laws they enact exacerbate existing inequalities. The Irish Parliamentary system discriminated against people who were not wealthy Anglo-Irish men. There were three types of discrimination most clear within this system; subservience to the British, unequal access to representation, and religious discrimination.

To offer historical context, while Ireland was conquered by the English prior to the enlightenment, direct rule by the British was not established until the Act of the Union in 1800.¹ In the 1680s there was an influx of Anglican English and Presbyterian Scottish immigrants into Ireland because of low land prices.² The Anglicans settled all around the country, dominated the political system, and controlled most land and money.³ The Presbyterians settled primarily in the north, and had smaller settlements around the island.⁴ The Anglicans were reluctant to include the Presbyterians in politics, and they experienced minor political and legal discrimination. The native Irish people, who were typically Catholic, existed prior to this influx, in all parts of the island and experienced the greatest amount of discrimination. By 1700 Anglo-Irish Anglican landlords controlled 80% of the land, and were bitterly resented by the Irish-Catholic tenant majority for this reason.⁵ The native Irish-Catholic peasantry continued to speak Gaelic, and this

¹ Richard, Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700-1850*. (Routledge, 1991), 13.

² Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700-1850*, 14.

³ Neal Garnham, "The Establishment of a Statutory Militia in Ireland, 1692-1716: Legislative Processes and Protestant Mentalities," *Historical Research* 84 no, 224. (2011): 267, Trent. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2281.2009.00539.x.

⁴ Ian, McBride, *Scripture Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.

⁵ Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700-1850*, 13.

along with discriminatory legislation, meant they maintained a sense of cultural distinctiveness and refused to assimilate.⁶ The Anglicans recognized their status as “a beleaguered colonial elite occupying hostile territory” and depended on England’s permanent military presence and their dominance over the Parliament to survive and stay in power.⁷ In the 1690s the Irish Parliament became a more permanent institution, and this structure is the structure that was in place during the Enlightenment Era.⁸

Section 1 - Subservience to the British

The first element of inequality in the Irish Parliamentary System that will be discussed is how it was subservient to the British Parliament and Monarch. The Irish Parliamentary System was based on Poynings’ Law, a law created to ensure Ireland’s obedience to the British Monarchy.⁹ The structure of this system meant that the British Parliament and Crown could monitor and rescind offensive provisions in Irish law.¹⁰ There were three elements of subservience to the British that will be examined; how the Irish Parliamentary System operated, what the objectives of this system were, and the English monopoly over the Irish Parliament.

Firstly, the Irish Parliamentary System operated on the basis of Poynings’ Law. This law required the English Monarchy and Privy Council to determine, and approve the reason for calling Parliament before the Irish Parliament was summoned.¹¹ Poynings’ Law dictated that the

⁶ Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700-1850*, 14.

⁷ Garnham, “The Establishment of a Statutory Militia in Ireland, 1692-1716: Legislative Processes and Protestant Mentalities,” 286.

⁸ Coleman Dennehy, “Speakers in the 17th-Century Irish Parliament,” *Parliamentary History* 29, no. 1 (2010): 74, Trent. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-0206.2009.00135.x>.

⁹ Aiden Clarke, “The History of Poynings Law,” *Irish Historical Studies*, 18 no. 70, (1972): 211, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/30005611.pdf>.

¹⁰ Kelly, “Monitoring the Constitution: The Operation of Poynings’ Law in the 1760s,” 106.

¹¹ C.I. McGrath, “English Ministers, Irish Politicians and the Making of a Parliamentary Settlement in Ireland, 1692-5,” *English Historical Review* 119, no 482. (2004): 586, Trent. doi:10.1093/ehr/119.482.585.

Council needed to approve the hearing of the acts to be presented in the legislature.¹² Once Parliament was called the Irish members would create Heads of Bills. These were drafts of bills that looked identical to normal bills, but instead of saying “be it enacted” in the preamble they read “we pray that it be enacted”.¹³ This means that they were asking the British for permission for the bills to be approved.¹⁴ This was necessary as Poynings’ Law prevented the Irish Parliament from creating legislation, insisting that legislation instead be originated in the British Houses.¹⁵ The Heads of Bill system meant that the Irish representatives were responsible for creating the details of bills. Heads of Bills could originate in either house of the Irish Houses of Parliament; the House of Commons or Privy Council.¹⁶ Once created, they would move to the Irish Bills Committee in London, a committee within the British House of Commons.¹⁷ This committee would adjudicate on the Heads of Bills and either reject or alter them.¹⁸ They had greater powers than simply rubber stamping bills, and often altered or rejected bills that they believed were not in the interests of Britain.¹⁹ Alterations could include simple edits, such as in phrasing, or total re-drafts.²⁰ Despite this important role, the committee had a membership of just 30 appointed individuals, with quorum of 3.²¹ Once the committee had edited and adjudicated, the bills would move to the British House of Commons and Privy Council to be voted on.²² If the

¹² Clarke, “The History of Poynings Law,” 208.

¹³ James Kelly, “Monitoring the Constitution: The Operation of Poynings’ Law in the 1760s,” *Parliamentary History* 20, no 1. (2002): 89, Trent.

<https://search-ebscohost-com.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hia&AN=6436170&site=ehost-live>.

¹⁴ Kelly, “Monitoring the Constitution: The Operation of Poynings’ Law in the 1760s,” 89.

¹⁵ McGrath, “English Ministers, Irish Politicians and the Making of a Parliamentary Settlement in Ireland, 1692-5,” 586.

¹⁶ Garnham, “The Establishment of a Statutory Militia in Ireland, 1692-1716: Legislative Processes and Protestant Mentalities,” 283.

¹⁷ Garnham, “The Establishment of a Statutory Militia in Ireland, 1692-1716: Legislative Processes and Protestant Mentalities,” 283.

¹⁸ Garnham, “The Establishment of a Statutory Militia in Ireland, 1692-1716: Legislative Processes and Protestant Mentalities,” 285.

¹⁹ Garnham, “The Establishment of a Statutory Militia in Ireland, 1692-1716: Legislative Processes and Protestant Mentalities,” 285.

²⁰ Kelly, “Monitoring the Constitution: The Operation of Poynings’ Law in the 1760s,” 89.

²¹ Kelly, “Monitoring the Constitution: The Operation of Poynings’ Law in the 1760s,” 90.

²² Kelly, “Monitoring the Constitution: The Operation of Poynings’ Law in the 1760s,” 90.

bills passed they would return to Ireland to be passed in both houses of the Irish Parliament.²³

The Irish houses could not amend legislation, only pass or reject, thus, most bills returning from Britain were passed.²⁴ Bills would then receive royal assent, and become law.²⁵

Secondly, this legislative system was complicated but it ensured that at all stages the Irish Legislature was subordinate to the British. The British could prevent debate, bills and laws from being passed, and could stop the process at any stage.²⁶ The original goal of Poynings' Law was to curb the independent tendencies of Native Irish Viceroy and make the Irish executive and legislature subordinate to, and dependent on the British.²⁷ Its original purpose was to reduce the Parliament to a cipher for English Crown policy, but with the emergence of the Heads of Bills system they became both a cipher and creator of bills.²⁸ This subordination allowed the British to ensure that bills would not infringe royal prerogative, existing arrangements or threaten British commercial or private interests.²⁹ This resulted in complete subordination of the Irish Parliament, meaning that the Irish were not treated equally.

Thirdly, the English had a monopoly over the Irish Parliament. The role of the Irish Parliament was to represent the protestants in Ireland.³⁰ As such, the Irish House of Commons was elected by rich male Protestants; the people who could vote at the time. The second house of the Irish Parliament, the Privy Council at Dublin Castle, was appointed from England.³¹ The Irish House of Commons was regarded as adjunct to this second house, and was not considered as

²³ Kelly, "Monitoring the Constitution: The Operation of Poynings' Law in the 1760s," 90.

²⁴ Kelly, "Monitoring the Constitution: The Operation of Poynings' Law in the 1760s," 90.

²⁵ McGrath, "English Ministers, Irish Politicians and the Making of a Parliamentary Settlement in Ireland, 1692-5," 587.

²⁶ Clarke, "The History of Poynings Law," 211.

²⁷ McGrath, "English Ministers, Irish Politicians and the Making of a Parliamentary Settlement in Ireland, 1692-5," 586.

²⁸ McGrath, "English Ministers, Irish Politicians and the Making of a Parliamentary Settlement in Ireland, 1692-5," 587.

²⁹ Kelly, "Monitoring the Constitution: The Operation of Poynings' Law in the 1760s," 95.

³⁰ Toby Barnard, "The Irish Parliament and Print, 1660-1782," *Parliamentary History* 33, no. 1 (2014): 98, Trent. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1750-0206.12091>.

³¹ Barnard, "The Irish Parliament and Print, 1660-1782," 97.

important.³² Appointing the administration at Dublin Castle was another way that the British could assume control over the Irish Parliamentary system, as they directly appointed half of the administration's members. Additionally, the higher members in the legislature were typically English. This can be best exemplified by the Irish House of Commons Speakers. Most Speakers were educated in London, and their religion aligned with the religion of the British Monarchy at the time.³³ Appointing members, and having higher up elected members as British aligned was another way that the British could directly control what happened in the Irish Parliament, and subjugate it to themselves.

Overall, this system of subordination meant that the Irish Parliament, and by extension the Irish, were not equal to the British. At all points in the legislative process, bills could be halted or altered by the British. This system allowed the British to ensure control over the Irish legislature, and the legislation discussed and created by it. Additionally, their monopoly over the Irish Parliament, and establishment of British allies within it, allowed them to control the government from within, and prevent dissent. These systems allowed the British to maintain their unequal control and power over the Irish.

Section 2 - Unequal Representation

The second element of inequality in the Irish Parliamentary System that will be discussed is the unequal representation within the Irish Parliament. The Irish Parliamentary system included mainly Anglo-Irish Anglicans, and thus excluded a lot of people living in Ireland at the time. There was discrimination in both the Irish representation sent to Britain and in the representation within Ireland. There were three elements to unequal representation that will be

³² Barnard, "The Irish Parliament and Print, 1660-1782," 97.

³³ Dennehy, "Speakers in the 17th-Century Irish Parliament," 70.

examined; fewer Irish representation in the British government, disproportionate Anglo-Irish representation, and legislative inequalities aligning with wealth inequality.

Firstly, there were Irish representatives sent to Britain to form part of the government there. However, there was an unequal distribution of Members of Parliament (MP's) representing Ireland. The English and Welsh were given 400 seats in Parliament, whereas the Irish and Scottish were only represented by 30 MP's each.³⁴ The few MP's that represented Ireland were viewed as agents of the English government, rather than true representatives of the Irish people.³⁵ The members sent were Anglo-Irish Anglicans and there was a complete lack of Native Catholic Irish and Presbyterian Scot representation within Parliament, which resulted in the system being discredited.³⁶

Secondly, within the Irish House of Commons and Privy Council there were similar problems of representation. Most MP's were Anglo-Irish Anglicans part of the New English Interest community, English immigrants who had come to Ireland between the reformation and 1649.³⁷ The distribution of seats and the constituency lines further contributed to the Parliamentary dominance of the Anglo-Irish Anglicans. In Ireland, there are four provinces, Ulster, Munster, Leinster and Connacht.³⁸ A man named Charles Fleetwood, the Irish Lord Deputy from 1652–1655, created constituencies within these four counties.³⁹ The divisions paid no attention to the political cartography or organization of the land.⁴⁰ These divisions were intended to ensure the Anglo-Irish Anglicans stayed in power, but ultimately they shared power

³⁴ Patrick Little, "Irish Representation in the Protectorate Parliaments," *Parliamentary History* 23, no 3. (2004): 336, Trent.

<https://search-ebscohost-com.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hia&AN=15490814&site=ehost-live>.

³⁵ Little, "Irish Representation in the Protectorate Parliaments," 337.

³⁶ Dennehy, "Speakers in the 17th-Century Irish Parliament," 73.

³⁷ Dennehy, "Speakers in the 17th-Century Irish Parliament," 72.

³⁸ John Cunningham, "Oliver Cromwell and the 'Cromwellian' Settlement of Ireland," *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 4 (2010): 926, doi:10.1017/S0018246X10000427.

³⁹ Little, "Irish Representation in the Protectorate Parliaments," 338.

⁴⁰ Little, "Irish Representation in the Protectorate Parliaments," 338.

with the Scots Presbyterians.⁴¹ As these constituencies were gerrymandered, they did not represent local interests. Additionally, there was a lack of Irish Catholics in political leadership and ability to vote.

Thirdly, the legislative divisions that existed aligned with wealth divisions. Unequal representation exacerbated the unequal distribution of wealth, particularly between the urban and rural areas as well as between the ruling and ruled classes. One letter by Philo-Ierne describes the differences in wealth. Philo-Ierne describes how certain counties, including Cork, Waterford, and Kerry were still in a relative state of nature, or undeveloped, while the cities such as Dublin and Belfast were rapidly developing.⁴² This is attributed to the investments the English made in order to make these cities centers of exportation.⁴³ Philo-Ierne describes how the gentry, who were also the MP's, lived well with many luxuries.⁴⁴ This is in comparison to the peasantry who were on expensive rented lands and lived close to subsistence level.⁴⁵ These divisions aligned with the ones created by Fleetwood, as local, particularly rural, interests were disregarded, and a large segment of the population was excluded from political involvement.

⁴¹ Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700-1850*, 77.

⁴² Philo-Ierne, *A letter to a Member of the Irish Parliament relative to the present state of Ireland. Wherein Many Advantages are laid down which would arise to the Province of Munster in particular, and to the Kingdom in general, from improving and farther extending the Navigation of the Blackwater River thro' the Counties of Waterford and Corke*, Letter, 1755, from Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Trent, pg. 4
https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0104147431/ECCO?u=ocul_thomas&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=32d1fa0c&pg=8.

⁴³ Philo-Ierne, *A letter to a Member of the Irish Parliament relative to the present state of Ireland. Wherein Many Advantages are laid down which would arise to the Province of Munster in particular, and to the Kingdom in general, from improving and farther extending the Navigation of the Blackwater River thro' the Counties of Waterford and Corke*, 7.

⁴⁴ Philo-Ierne, *A letter to a Member of the Irish Parliament relative to the present state of Ireland. Wherein Many Advantages are laid down which would arise to the Province of Munster in particular, and to the Kingdom in general, from improving and farther extending the Navigation of the Blackwater River thro' the Counties of Waterford and Corke*, 4.

⁴⁵ Philo-Ierne, *A letter to a Member of the Irish Parliament relative to the present state of Ireland. Wherein Many Advantages are laid down which would arise to the Province of Munster in particular, and to the Kingdom in general, from improving and farther extending the Navigation of the Blackwater River thro' the Counties of Waterford and Corke*, 6.

This unequal representation meant the views of all Irish people were not being heard and were purposefully ignored. In the British Parliament, there was little to no Irish representation, and any representation that existed was that of the Anglo-Irish Anglicans who were a minority of the population. Within Ireland, the Anglo-Irish were the main representatives, and created systems that did not make political sense for the majority of the population, and prohibited people who were not Anglo-Irish from being elected. As Philo-Ierne describes, the unequal representation meant there were many people in Ireland not being served by the government or the resources the British were giving to Ireland. Overall, this unequal representation was key to the Anglo-Irish Anglicans remaining in power, but it discriminated against and harmed the remainder of the Irish people.

Section 3 - Religious Discrimination

The third element of inequality in the Irish Parliamentary System that will be discussed is the religious discrimination that occurred. Ireland had three main sects of Christianity at the time, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Catholic. The Anglicans were the primary group in power and periodically attempted to rule without the Presbyterians, though this was ultimately unsuccessful. The Irish Catholics faced legal discrimination, and were excluded from governing, due to the Penal Laws. There were three elements to religious discrimination that will be examined; the Penal Laws, the motivation for these laws, and why this legislation was difficult to enforce.

Firstly, the Penal Era for Catholics began in 1704 with the Act to Prevent the Further Growth of Popery.⁴⁶ This legislation was the most notorious of the Penal Laws and the most

⁴⁶ Garnham, "The Establishment of a Statutory Militia in Ireland, 1692-1716: Legislative Processes and Protestant Mentalities," 267.

comprehensive.⁴⁷ It brought Irish anti-Catholic law in line with English laws on the same subject.⁴⁸ Previously there had been much resistance within the Irish Parliament with regards to establishing a comprehensive anti-Catholic law.⁴⁹ The British Parliament insisted that the Irish Parliament draft a Heads of Bill regarding, “Protestants from turning papists and for any estate of Protestants to descend or come to any papist and to prevent papists from dis inheriting Protestants”.⁵⁰ This law prevented Catholics from holding political office, voting, having privilege in a town, being a freeman of a corporation, serving on a grand jury, having a gun or being a lawyer.⁵¹ They could rarely own property, and they were only capable of holding a lease for less than 31 years.⁵² Their inability to hold property affected their ability to vote, as only property owners had the vote.⁵³ The statute says Catholics would be able to vote as long as they gave an oath of allegiance and abjuration, but as this went against their religion, they could not give this oath.⁵⁴ The Penal Laws affected all areas of Catholic life, but one of the most profound consequences was their almost entire exclusion from the Irish political system, as they could not hold office or vote. Catholics were not included in Irish poor relief legislation and it was not until 1778 that there was public relief available to them, despite being required to pay taxes.⁵⁵ Thus, this is taxation without representation, and without the benefits of citizenship.

⁴⁷ J. G. Simms, “The Making of a Penal Law,” *Irish Historical Studies*, 12 no 46 (1960): 105, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30005169>.

⁴⁸ Simms, “The Making of a Penal Law,” 108.

⁴⁹ Simms, “The Making of a Penal Law,” 105.

⁵⁰ Simms, “The Making of a Penal Law,” 108.

⁵¹ Edmund Burke, *A letter from a distinguished English commoner, to a peer of Ireland, on the Penal Laws against Irish Catholics; previous to the late repeal of a part thereof, in the session of the Irish Parliament, held A.D. 1782*, Letter, 1783 from Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Trent, pg. 6, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0105603733/ECCO?u=ocul_thomas&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=b75beadd&pg=7.

⁵² Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700-1850*, 13.

⁵³ Burke, *A letter from a distinguished English commoner, to a peer of Ireland, on the Penal Laws against Irish Catholics; previous to the late repeal of a part thereof, in the session of the Irish Parliament, held A.D. 1782*, 11.

⁵⁴ Burke, *A letter from a distinguished English commoner, to a peer of Ireland, on the Penal Laws against Irish Catholics; previous to the late repeal of a part thereof, in the session of the Irish Parliament, held A.D. 1782*, 10.

⁵⁵ Burke, *A letter from a distinguished English commoner, to a peer of Ireland, on the Penal Laws against Irish Catholics; previous to the late repeal of a part thereof, in the session of the Irish Parliament, held A.D. 1782*, 8.

Secondly, the Penal Law was created because it was believed the Catholics and the Catholic clergy were responsible for creating disorder in the country, and that they would encourage their congregants to resist British occupation.⁵⁶ It was therefore believed the Catholic community leaders should not be able to run for office or vote, as they would be a destabilizing force. This disenfranchisement meant natural leaders could not form or gain leadership positions. This was a way of preventing domestic subversion, a great fear for the Anglicans at the time.⁵⁷ It was also believed they were the reason why the conversion efforts directed at the Irish were unsuccessful.⁵⁸ The Penal Laws established rules that meant the clergy could not gain new members.⁵⁹ These laws included clauses that would mean clergy were expelled from the country, and that it was illegal to get an international education.⁶⁰ This was particularly important because there were no seminaries in Ireland, so all clergy members went to school internationally, often in France.⁶¹ The final motivation for this legislation was a motivation to convert the population. It was thought that by making their lives more difficult, and taking away their ability to be politically involved they would make the rational choice to convert to Anglicanism.⁶² The British believed the Catholics were being oppressed by the church hierarchy and that this was preventing the spread of Protestantism and “civil manners”.⁶³ There was a sense of moral duty to break the Catholic Church and free and convert the Irish. These conversion efforts were widely unsuccessful. While there were some conversions from the Gentry to the Anglican Church, there

⁵⁶ Robert Burns, “The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior,” *The Review of Politics* 24, no. 4 (1962): 486, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1405359>.

⁵⁷ Garnham, “The Establishment of a Statutory Militia in Ireland, 1692-1716: Legislative Processes and Protestant Mentalities,” 268.

⁵⁸ Burns, “The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior,” 486

⁵⁹ Burns, “The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior,” 505.

⁶⁰ Burns, “The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior,” 494.

⁶¹ Burns, “The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior,” 503.

⁶² Jacqueline Hill, “Religious Toleration and the Relaxation of the Penal Laws: An Imperial Perspective, 1763-1780,” *Archivum Hibernicum* 44 (1989): 106. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25487492>.

⁶³ Burns, “The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior,” 487.

were not many from the general Irish population.⁶⁴ Most Irish people spoke Gaelic, and this prevented them from understanding the Anglican missionaries sent to convert them, and thus they were unlikely to convert.⁶⁵ Overall, the motivations for these laws were both fears of the Catholic power, and a sense of moral obligation to convert the Irish.

Thirdly, this legislation was difficult to enforce, and enforcement that existed was patchy and ineffective. Many aspects were unenforceable with the enforcement services available and there was a lack motivation to enforce them.⁶⁶ When these laws were enforced it was done so erratically. For example, farms next to each other would receive vastly different responses to lawbreaking.⁶⁷ Additionally, these laws were frequently challenged in court by Catholics and the courts ended up allowing most Catholic merchants, and some Catholic landlords to maintain their properties and businesses, despite this being against the spirit of the law.⁶⁸ The legislature and courts also spent much of the first years after the enactment of these laws seeking out false converters.⁶⁹ The reason why these laws were not well enforced was both in logistical challenges, and because of the relative unpopularity of the legislation.⁷⁰ This resulted in laws relating to Catholic political involvement being maintained, but many of the laws that applied to other areas of Catholic life were not being enforced.

Overall, the Penal Laws, while they were not well enforced, resulted in a lack of Catholic representation in Parliament, in both voters, and elected members. This meant their issues and views were not discussed and could be ignored, thus increasing inequality between the Catholics and the Protestants. These laws were created because there was a fear of Catholic power, and a

⁶⁴ Burns, "The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior," 508.

⁶⁵ Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700-1850*, 14.

⁶⁶ Burns, "The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior," 503.

⁶⁷ Burns, "The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior," 507.

⁶⁸ Burns, "The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior," 500.

⁶⁹ Simms, "The Making of a Penal Law," 105.

⁷⁰ Simms, "The Making of a Penal Law," 105.

sense of moral duty to convert them. While conversions were not successful, Catholics were not allowed in power, reducing their ability to create natural leaders and revolt. Overall, this legislation had mixed, but destructive results.

Conclusion

Most scholars conclude the Irish Parliamentary System was one rife with inequality. The basis of the system was one of subservience to the British government, where bills could be hindered and content could be altered to conform to British interests, in order to control the government and prevent dissent. There was also inequality within the representation, whereby there was little Irish representation in the British Parliament, the Irish Parliament was exclusive to the Anglo-Irish, and the lack of representation aligned with wealth distribution. Finally, anti-Catholic legislation prevented Catholics from being a part of the political processes in order to try to convince them to convert, and to prevent dissent. The Irish Legislative system and the privileges and inequality contained within it reflect the structures in Enlightenment Era Ireland. This system privileged the British, and the descendants of the British at the expense of the native Irish Catholics. This is a colonial structure and one that is repeated throughout the British Empire.

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