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# Changes in Tudor Religion and Politics and Their Impact on the Modernization of Ireland

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Changes in Tudor Religion and Politics and Their Impact on the Modernization of Ireland

A Senior Honors Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for Graduation in the Honors College

By  
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## Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
England Under Henry VIII.....	1
Religion.....	2
Politics.....	6
Edward VI.....	11
Religion and Politics Under the Boy King.....	12
Mary I.....	16
The Failed Counterreformation.....	16
Ireland Before the Henrican Reformation.....	18
Protestantism Arrives in Ireland.....	19
The Penal Laws.....	21
Wolfe Tone's Rebellion.....	24
From the Act of Union to Home Rule.....	25
The Great Hunger.....	27
Home Rule.....	31
Twentieth Century Ireland.....	32
The Great War.....	33
The Easter Rising and Its Aftermath.....	34
Eamon de Valera's Ireland.....	35
Éamon de Valéra's Quest for a Republic.....	36
The Constitution of Ireland.....	39
Conclusion.....	41
Bibliography.....	42

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## Abstract

The Tudor dynasty in 16th Century England brought forth many changes. Under King Henry VIII, reforms in religion and politics set forth a series of events that both changed and modernized the English Empire. Henry VIII's reformation—which had purely political motives—was the first religious reform led by a monarch and he implemented laws that left his people with no choice but to follow suit in his break from Rome. Under the reign of his son, Edward VI, exiled heretics were welcomed into England and encouraged to share their ideas which would contribute to the solidification of a Protestant faith that had developed through Henry VIII's establishment of the Church of England. Because Henry VIII had implemented anti-Catholic laws and the heretics under Edward VI rejected indulgence payments as well as corrupt church practices, a vast majority of the English people had converted to Protestantism. As a result, when Mary I came to power as queen, she was unable to revert her people back to Catholicism despite her best efforts and during the reign of the final Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I, Protestant ideas began to spread to the predominantly Catholic nation of Ireland. Irish land was seized and controlled by the British Empire and legislation was passed against Catholics who were unwilling to convert. Since the early 17th century, there have been several controversies between the English and the Irish; predominantly over religious conflict and land struggles. This thesis explains how the presence and influence of British Protestants forced Ireland to modernize as it did from the arrival of the British in the 16th century through late 1937 when the Constitution of Ireland officially went into effect.

## **Introduction**

In 1536, King Henry VIII of England began to implement changes in religious and political policy that would eventually change the course of Irish History. When Henry VIII made the political decision to break ties with the Roman Catholic Church, he paved the way for Protestant reform among his subjects. Such changes were continued and carried out during the subsequent reigns of his children Edward VI and Elizabeth I in a manner that allowed the British to use Protestantism as a means to exert dominance and control over the people of Ireland. From the late sixteenth century to the mid twentieth century, the British were able to maintain control over the Irish people and they used Protestantism as a political tool to do so. However, British oppression helped to instill a strong sense of nationalism and desire for independence into the Irish people and ultimately led to the political modernization of Ireland with a permanent governmental structure being enacted in 1937. This work as a whole aims to show how the religious and political changes in Tudor England led to a four-hundred year struggle that forced the Irish to modernize politically.

## **England Under Henry VIII**

The reign of King Henry VIII has proven to be one of the most controversial in English history. Through his personal quests, he managed to evoke both religious and political change that would have immediate impact over the English people and would later serve as a cause for the political modernization of Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## Religion

On 31 October, 1517, Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses on the Castle Church doors in Wittenberg, Germany, thus launching a series of religious reforms and the emergence of heretics who disagreed with the inner workings of the Catholic Church. Prior to his own reformation, Henry VIII had expressed a strong distaste and lack of respect for Luther and other heretics who broke ties with Rome in the early sixteenth century. In fact, his strong and public disdain of heresy led Pope Leo X to declare Henry VIII “Defender of the Faith” in 1521 and it was a title which he had proudly embraced. It was common for Henry VIII to order the arrest and later exile or execution of English heretics.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the Henrican Reformation, the pope had the same level of jurisdiction in England over religious matters as Henry VIII had in all other aspects.<sup>2</sup> Given Henry VIII’s abhorrence of heresy, he clearly had a strong respect for the religious teachings of Catholicism in the early years of his reign. However, the mere fact that the pope had as much power over the English people as he did suggests that Henry VIII would break from Catholicism to gain more control over his people and his government, something that would have strictly political connotations.

In 1526, Henry VIII found himself taken with Anne Boleyn. Though it had been common for kings to have mistresses, Anne refused to have relations with Henry out of wedlock. At the time of their meeting, Henry was married to Catherine of Aragon—the widow of his late brother, Arthur. Frustrated that his wife had not yet provided him with a male heir and desperate to wed Anne, Henry sought out theologians and churchmen for a solution. The churchmen found and informed him that his marriage to Catherine was damnable because “a marriage between a man and the widow of his deceased brother was against divine law” and, according to Leviticus 18:16

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<sup>1</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, C.1400-c.1580*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, 379-80.

<sup>2</sup> John A. F. Thomson, *The Early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529*, London: Longman, 1993, 74.

and 20:21, the childless widow of a man shall not remarry. Henry VIII embraced these findings as he believed that they provided sound reason to justify an annulment to enable his quest to provide a male heir as all of Catherine's pregnancies had resulted in stillbirths, miscarriages, or infant deaths—excepting the birth of her daughter, Mary. Under normal circumstances, a marriage such as that between Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon's would have been ruled unlawful and been annulled. However, in the event that Arthur and Catherine had not consummated their marriage—which Catherine claimed that they had not—the ruling of the annulment case would fall under papal jurisdiction.<sup>3</sup>

The Pope's refusal to grant Henry VIII an annulment on his marriage to Catherine of Aragon was the true catalyst to the Henrican Reformation. Throughout 1530, Henry attacked papal powers over the refusal of an annulment as he claimed that the Church was corrupt and he sent a petition on 7 February, 1531 asking churchmen to recognise him as their supreme head.<sup>4</sup> Henry VIII officially became the head of the Church of England in November of 1534<sup>5</sup> and he abolished papal authority in England on 25 June, 1535.<sup>6</sup> Unlike the Lutheran Reformation, this reformation was not a theological one as the traditions, practises, and beliefs taught under the Church of England did not differ significantly from those of the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> The main difference between the Church of England and the Catholic Church was that the monarch of England would have religious jurisdiction rather than the pope. The change in religious jurisdiction is significant because, through creating the Church of England, Henry VIII

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<sup>3</sup> G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, 3-20.

<sup>4</sup> Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, 40-47.

<sup>5</sup> Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard, *The King's Reformation*.

<sup>7</sup> Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, 29.

established the first Christian faith separate of papal authority where practising was not a punishable offense.

Most evidence supports the concept that Henry VIII established the Church of England purely for political purposes. Even in its earliest stages, there is evidence to support this idea. Cardinal Wolsey negotiated with Rome on Henry's behalf in his quest for an annulment and it is possible that his reason for doing so resulted from Catherine's nephew failing to elect him pope.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Henry VIII's justification of the need for an annulment was hypocritical in that Mary Boleyn, Anne's sister, had been one of his mistresses prior to Henry's marriage to Anne.<sup>9</sup> Because of this, Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn would have fallen under the same biblical prohibition as his marriage to Catherine of Aragon had as he had relations with her sister prior to their marriage.

Further evidence that suggests that the Henrican Reformation was purely political is the treatment of Catholicism and the manner in which Henry VIII had his people convert to the Church of England. In 1537, religious images, crucifixes, and other religious articles were removed from churches and destroyed as were roodcreens.<sup>10</sup> In the following year, the government began dissolving and destroying monasteries.<sup>11</sup> In August of 1536, Henry had Cromwell establish a set of injunctions to enforce the conformity of English people to the Church of England. These injunctions abolished the Pope's ruling, ordered the provision of Bibles in Latin and English, and encouraged their reading. It also called for clergy to preach the Ten Articles<sup>12</sup> and for parents and masters to teach the articles to their households.<sup>13</sup> The printing

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<sup>8</sup> Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, 99-106.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, 455.

<sup>12</sup> These articles were the foundation for the structure of the Church of England.

<sup>13</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 398.

of Bibles in English modernized theological language to suit the present time, which made the religion more accessible than Catholicism where Mass was said in Latin until the late twentieth century. It also gave legitimacy to the claims that the reformation had little to do with theology as the injunctions presented legal implications for nonconformists. Those who publicly spoke out against the King by condemning his break from Rome and those who proclaimed their allegiance to the Catholic Church were often faced with exile or execution, thus ruling disloyalty to the Church of England illegal. According to historian Ethan H. Shagan, “Those who should have been the leaders of a resisting faction instead were increasingly driven underground or into exile, fearful of condemnation not only by the regime but by their own neighbours.” Henry had managed to gather enough support to the extent that both the state *and* the public condemned the practises of Catholicism. This support can also be seen in a riot that occurred in Boston, Lincolnshire in 1535 where parishioners attempted to beat down the door of their priest with “a great timber” as local justices of the peace had ordered the priest’s arrest for preaching papal teachings.<sup>14</sup> Had the Henrican Reformation been theological, the priest’s Catholic practises would not likely have been rendered illegal. Evidence also shows that the burning of Catholics did occur during the end of Henry VIII’s reign, but not to the extent that his daughter Mary burned Protestants.<sup>15</sup>

Although the Henrican Reformation had truly political motives, it is plausible to argue that there was a theological foundation to his actions. A letter about contentious preaching written by Henry VIII for some of his bishops on 7 January, 1536 stated that he wanted his people to be provided with a non-corrupt doctrine and that he did not want them to be “seduced with filthy and corrupt abominations of the bishop of Rome or his disciples and adherents, ne yet

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<sup>14</sup> Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, 59, 138.

<sup>15</sup> Collinson, *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640*, 26.

by the setting forth of novelties and the continual inculcation of things not necessarily brought and led to the inquietness of mind and doubt of conscience.” Henry stated that he saw the Catholic Church as corrupt in its refusal to annul a marriage that the Bible deemed unlawful and made further claims of corruption when Rome declared his marriage to Anne Boleyn “null and void.”<sup>16</sup> However, given the foundation of the Church of England and the treatment of Catholics following its establishment, it is evident that the reformation was truly political.

Henry VIII’s reformation and establishment of a new church proved to be highly successful in the years following his reign. In fact, England was “closer to being a Protestant country than anything else” in 1553 and Evangelical Protestantism appeared to grow during Edward VI’s reign.<sup>17</sup> Although biblical passages support Henry’s public reasoning for wanting an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, his actions surrounding the establishment of the Church of England prove his true motives for banishing Catholicism from his kingdom to be purely political. This can best be seen in his treatment of those who remained loyal to the papacy, the legislation surrounding the establishment of his new church, and the destruction of Catholic artefacts and structures. Had his reformation been theological in nature, it is not likely that the aforementioned events would have occurred and people would have likely been free to practise either sect of Christianity.

## **Politics**

In his quest for a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, Henry made political decisions that—while they were not intended to do so—led to the establishment of a new church over which Henry himself resided. In petitioning for divorce and subsequently establishing the

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<sup>16</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 387-88, 391.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Marshall, *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 85-110.

Church of England, Henry VIII manipulated who had power within his government through execution and land distribution. He made decisions that altered relations with other rulers and worked to eliminate the influence of the Catholic Church from his government. In this chapter, I will begin by briefly discussing how the Henrican Reformation came to be, how Henry VIII manipulated the body of his government, and how the establishment of the Church of England and Henry's manipulations revolutionised his government.

The year 1526 marked the beginning of a revolution in English government. Henry VIII had been growing increasingly anxious over the fact that Catherine of Aragon had not produced a male heir. It was at that time that theologians—hoping to gain Henry's favour—approached him with biblical evidence that his marriage to Catherine was defied the laws of the bible as “a marriage between a man and the widow of his deceased brother was against divine law” and readings from Leviticus claimed that Catherine's previous status as a childless widow should have rendered her unable to remarry.<sup>18</sup> Henry VIII, who had since become taken with the sister of one of his mistresses, Anne Boleyn, used the biblical evidence to petition for an annulment. The Pope's refusal of such annulment sparked the establishment of the Church of England, which was only intended to be a short-term solution to procure the annulment but ended up changing the course of English politics.

Henry VIII had the power to manipulate who served in his government and such power became one of his greatest resources in securing his desired outcomes politically. As Henry was able to control who served on his parliament, he was able to ensure that legislation worked in his favour which, by extension, enabled the Henrican Reformation to occur.<sup>19</sup> A prime example of Henry VIII's manipulation of Parliament can be seen through the career of Cardinal Thomas

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<sup>18</sup> Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Stanford E. Lehmberg, *The Reformation Parliament 1529-1536*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, 249.

Wolsey. Wolsey was sworn in as Lord Chancellor on 24 December 1515, shortly after having been named a cardinal.<sup>20</sup> For the next decade, he worked alongside the king<sup>21</sup> and Henry VIII regarded him so highly that he allowed him to rule from 1523 to 1529 without parliamentary interference.<sup>22</sup> However, in his failure to secure Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, he fell from favour and resigned as Lord Chancellor on 17 October, 1529 following his indictment for offences under the 14<sup>th</sup> century statute of praemunire<sup>23</sup> just eight days prior on 9 October.<sup>24</sup> On the 3 November, 1529 meeting of Parliament, Wolsey's successor, Sir Thomas More began by comparing Henry to a shepherd and Wolsey to a bad sheep—an analogy that is biblical in nature and shows the influence of religion in politics at the time.<sup>25</sup> Had Wolsey not died of natural causes on his way to London, his execution was imminent. Wolsey's death proved to be beneficial to Henry VIII as Wolsey's position as a cardinal brought papal presence to Henry's court and the succession of Sir Thomas Cromwell as Lord Chancellor provided Henry with a strong supporter of his reformation tactics in a powerful position.<sup>26</sup>

By the mid-1530s, it was no secret that royal favour was the basis of power in Henry VIII's government.<sup>27</sup> Opposing the king would be one's greatest downfall as Henry appeared to have no reservations in executing those who fell from his favour. This can be seen in the demise of Anne Boleyn in 1536. After three years of marriage, Anne had yet to produce a son.

Following the miscarriage of a male child on 29 January, 1536,<sup>28</sup> Henry VIII became displeased

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<sup>20</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics, Policy and Piety*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995, 41.

<sup>21</sup> MacCulloch, *The Reign of Henry VIII*, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Lehmborg, *The Reformation Parliament*, 1.

<sup>23</sup> A statute that prohibited jurisdiction (papal in this case) and claims of supremacy from outside of England within England

<sup>24</sup> G. W. Bernard, *Power and Politics in Tudor England*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, 51.

<sup>25</sup> Lehmborg, *The Reformation Parliament*, 79.

<sup>26</sup> MacCulloch, *The Reign of Henry VIII*, 27.

<sup>27</sup> MacCulloch, *The Reign of Henry VIII*, 25.

<sup>28</sup> The date of Catherine of Aragon's funeral

with Boleyn.<sup>29</sup> Shortly thereafter, Henry VIII had allegations made against her of adultery, witchcraft, and incest that led to her execution on 19 May, 1536. Other members of Henry VIII's court who faced execution after falling from his favour<sup>30</sup> were Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More. Thomas Cromwell managed to stay in Henry VIII's favour until 1540 when he was sent to execution without trial after constructing Henry VIII's unsuccessful marriage to Anne of Cleves.<sup>31</sup>

In denouncing the authority of the Catholic Church in England, Henry VIII was able to redistribute a large portion of the nation's land. In sixteenth century England, land ownership was synonymous with political power and influence and the nobility owned the vast majority of land. In 1521-22, the gentry and the Catholic Church each held about one third of the land. The nobility's share of the land would be approximately one to seven percent and the crown would possess approximately four to six percent. This changed with the dissolution of monasteries. During the Henrican Reformation, church property was surrendered or appropriated by the crown. While all noblemen were seen as powerful to some extent, those who had more land had greater power as they had the ability to influence their tenants.<sup>32</sup> When the crown seized land that had previously belonged to the Catholic Church, Henry VIII was able to distribute land to noblemen that he believed would benefit him politically if he increased their influence. Likewise, in giving more power and influence to some nobles, he was limiting the influence of others. By eliminating the Catholic Church's land ownership, he was using religion as a political tool to procure more power and influence over his people.

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<sup>29</sup> Lehmborg, *The Reformation Parliament*, 217.

<sup>30</sup> They disagreed with his proclamations of being the head of church in England

<sup>31</sup> MacCulloch, *The Reign of Henry VIII*, 7-27.

<sup>32</sup> Steven J. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558*, Houndmills: Macmillan, 1995, 26, 42, 166.

When Henry VIII first petitioned for an annulment on his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, he had not intended to establish a new church nor did he intend to sever ties with Rome. In fact, Henry VIII had taken great pride in being declared Defender of the Faith for speaking out against Martin Luther's actions in the early 1520s. He had wanted to be seen as an equal to the Holy Roman Emperor and the king of France.<sup>33</sup> By denouncing the papacy in England, Henry would be severing any chance for good relations with either of the two leaders; thus he would ruin international relations within their lands. He would also be contradicting the title that he had proudly earned by denouncing his Catholic faith<sup>34</sup>. Prior to their dissolution during the Henrican Reformation, the heads of monasteries were routinely summoned to the House of Lords.<sup>35</sup> Given their religious nature, monastic presence in English government could give the papacy political influence in England—something that would prohibit Henry VIII from achieving his desired outcome. Once Henry VIII declared himself head of the Church of England, he claimed to have full supremacy over both secular and spiritual matters, which would begin to eliminate conflict between church and state, but he still wanted England to remain Christian<sup>36</sup> and kept much of the beliefs and biblical teachings the same.<sup>37</sup> Had the Henrican Reformation been theological rather than political in nature, the Church of England's interpretation of the Bible would likely have differed from that of the Catholic Church.

In reforming religion and establishing the Church of England, Henry VIII had managed to revolutionise his government. Through his quest to find a short-term solution that would allow for the dissolution of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, he managed to drive papal authority

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<sup>33</sup> MacCulloch, *The Reign of Henry VIII*, 6-7.

<sup>34</sup> Though he could make the claim that he was defending the faith from corruption, he was acting as Luther had when Henry had called him a heretic.

<sup>35</sup> Lehmberg, *The Reformation Parliament*, 41.

<sup>36</sup> Lucy E. C. Wooding, *Henry VIII*, London: Routledge, 2009, 155-56, 178.

<sup>37</sup> The two religions would differ in various aspects such as the Catholic belief that there was a purgatory and that the Catholic Church corruptly sold indulgences that would "heal" or allow an individual to surpass purgatory.

out of England; something that would have long-term repercussions for English government. By declaring himself the head of the Church of England and through manipulating those who had political power—both through governmental position and land distribution—Henry VIII was able to secure his desired political outcomes and he managed to give both secular and spiritual jurisdiction to the crown. Lastly, in making such changes to England’s political structure, Henry VIII managed to revolutionise his government in a manner that would permanently alter the course of English politics. It is important to note, however, that England’s political system was still modernizing during the Henrican Reformation. Although more structured than it had been previously, the English government had not yet developed a state. There was no uniform punishment for crime, so Henry VIII had the power to decide both what constituted a crime and the consequences of that crime—both on a subjective and individual basis.

## **Edward VI**

The reign of King Henry VIII of England has proven to be quite controversial. In his quest to obtain an annulment on his first marriage, he went from being the “Defender of the Faith”<sup>38</sup> to joining the ranks of the heretics that he had previously criticized by declaring himself head of church and state and subsequently established his own Church of England. Although Henry VIII had not initially set out to establish a new church and create a religious reformation, the consequences of his actions impacted England and its people for years as new ideas began to emerge and develop. While Henry VIII initiated religious reform in England, the reformation truly evolved during the reign of his son, Edward VI. Under Edward, England would experience more religious change than it had under Henry VIII and the changes would have more

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<sup>38</sup> A title given to him by the Pope (which he was incredibly proud of) for condemning heretics such as Martin Luther

theological motive than they would political. Because of this, it is important to examine how the reformation continued to grow and evolve under Edward VI, how Protestantism differed during Edward's reign from that of his father, and ultimately how those differences made the Edwardian Reformation so radical.

### **Religion and Politics Under the Boy King**

King Henry VIII passed away of natural causes on 28 January, 1547 when his son, Edward VI, was only nine-years-old and much too young to legally govern a nation.<sup>39</sup> However, the 1536 Succession Act had allowed Henry VIII to select who would succeed him on the throne. Through the Succession Act, Henry VIII was able to appoint guardians for Edward in his will so that Edward would be able to succeed Henry VIII in the event that he passed prior to his son's eighteenth birthday. In the final copy of his will—which was dated 30 December, 1546—Henry VIII named sixteen executors to form Edward VI's Privy Council and to govern Edward's public and private affairs until he reached eighteen years.<sup>40</sup> Among the council were Edward's uncle, Thomas Seymour; the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer; and the Duke of Northumberland and while all three men—as well as the others on Edward's council—played large roles in governing England during Edward's reign, Thomas Cranmer would prove to revolutionise religion in England.

When Edward VI ascended the throne in 1547, his regime was already working toward Evangelical reform. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer was most responsible for the continuation of the reformation in England as he utilised his position to allow for the introduction and spread of new ideas. Cranmer established and fostered relationships with the top Protestant theologians from mainland Europe and helped exiled Protestants seek refuge in

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<sup>39</sup> Peter Marshall, *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 181.

<sup>40</sup> Jennifer Loach, and G. W. Bernard, *Edward VI*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, 17.

England, thus allowing for the formation of communities of exiled Protestants. In establishing relationships with the Protestant theologians, Cranmer was exposed to new ideas that would contribute to the evolution of Protestantism under Edward VI. A prime example of this can be seen through Martin Bucer's arrival from Germany in 1549. Upon being exiled from Strasbourg, Bucer moved to England where he was promptly given the title of Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. With him, he brought the doctrine of predestination and the concept that Christ was spiritually present in the Eucharist.<sup>41</sup>

Changes in legislation and new publications under Edward VI heavily contributed to the continuation of religious reform in England. Anyone who did not believe that the king was the head of the church was a traitor, those who saw the Pope as the head of the church were heretics, and whoever believed that the Catholic Church could not err was seen as both a heretic and a traitor.<sup>42</sup> In acting as Lord Protector of England, Edward Seymour had preaching licenses suspended in 1547 and created legislation that disallowed preaching without authorisation. On 31 July, 1547, an official book of homilies was published followed by an injunction that required clergy to read them aloud to their people.<sup>43</sup> In that same year, chantries and orbits were abolished and clergy were allowed to marry.<sup>44</sup> Publications such as John Day's folio bible that depicted Edward VI as head of the church and the state and publications such as the Forty Two Articles and the Second Book of Common Prayer gave further religious legislation.<sup>45</sup> The Forty Two Articles, which were issued by Edward's council in May 1553, called for "justification by faith alone and predestination unto life," and stated that "sacrifices of the masses" were firmly

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<sup>41</sup> Alec Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation: The Tudor and Stewart Realms, 1485-1603*, Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2009, 152-54.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen Alford, *Kingship and Politics in the Reign of Edward VI*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 37.

<sup>43</sup> Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, 154.

<sup>44</sup> D. M. Loades, *The Religious Culture of Marian England*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010, 8.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Marshall, *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*, 201.

rejected, and that Antibaptism and popery were condemned.<sup>46</sup> The Second Book of Common Prayer—as well as its 1549 predecessor, The Book of Common Prayer<sup>47</sup>—provided a list of all acceptable prayers for varying types of services.<sup>48</sup>

Although both the reign of Henry VIII and the reign of his son, Edward VI, brought great religious reform to England, there were some key differences between how religion was reformed under them. The first key difference between Henrican and Edwardian reform is that Henry VIII had not initially set out to establish a new church. In his quest to obtain an annulment on his marriage, he had managed to abolish papal authority and expanded the powers of the crown by placing himself at the head of the church.<sup>49</sup> By the time Edward VI ascended the throne, the Church of England had already been established and was beginning to grow. Another important difference to note is that while Henry VIII employed members of his court to assist him in establishing reform, the reformation under Edward VI was driven by members of his Privy Council as he was too young to govern. Where Henry had used scripture readings “which geve justly and truelye unto the kinges Majesty hys tittle of the supreme hed of the church,”<sup>50</sup> legislation was established during the Edwardian Reformation that mandated which religious practises were allowed and how they were to be practised.<sup>51</sup> Henry VIII had openly opposed heresy until his rejection of the papacy, but the ideas and concepts created and revised for the Church of England under his rule came from within his court unlike those during Edward’s reign when Cranmer was openly welcoming exiled heretics and fostering relationships that brought new ideas to English Protestantism.

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<sup>46</sup> Loach, and G. W. Bernard, *Edward VI*, 121-124.

<sup>47</sup> D. M. Loades, *The Religious Culture of Marian England*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Loach, and G. W. Bernard, *Edward VI*, 124.

<sup>49</sup> Gunn, Steven J. *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1995.

<sup>50</sup> Stephen Alford, *Kingship and Politics in the Reign of Edward VI*, 102.

<sup>51</sup> Loach, and G. W. Bernard, *Edward VI*, 123-24.

Many of the differences in religious reform between Henry VIII and Edward VI caused the Edwardian Reformation to be considered radical. Under Edward, not only was there more, stricter legislation regarding religious practise; the legislation was not being mandated by Edward himself. Rather, members of Edward's Privy Council who were governing England in his place were establishing new regulations for religious practise such as the use of specific prayer books. Likewise, while the ideas implemented during the Henrican Reformation had come from within Henry's court, the Edwardian Reformation was influenced by European heretics and theologians.<sup>52</sup> For the first time, those who had sought religious reform or had rejected ideas and practises presented through Catholicism were able to seek refuge in England. Because of Cranmer's work to establish relationships with Protestant theologians from mainland Europe, the population of Protestants in England began to grow and small communities began to form to the point where, by 1553, the vast majority of churches in England were Protestant.<sup>53</sup>

Despite Edward VI's rapid decline in health and subsequent death in 1553, the developments for religious reform that had occurred during his reign proved to have significant impact in increasing the spread and success of a Protestant Church in England. Through the migration of Protestant theologians and the development of Protestant communities during Edward VI's reign, those who remained loyal to the Catholic Church were significantly outnumbered at the time of his death. With such a large population of practising Protestants, Edward VI's reign proved to be successful in establishing a sect of Christianity that—despite his successor and sister, Mary's unsuccessful attempts to abolish—would continue to grow and spread for centuries to come.

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<sup>52</sup> Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, 154.

<sup>53</sup> Loades, *The Religious Culture of Marian England*, 74-75.

## Mary I

Despite Cranmer's best efforts to have Mary I removed from the line of succession, she officially began her reign over England on 19 July, 1553.<sup>54</sup> Upon taking her place as the monarch of England, Mary declared her allegiance to "that religion which God and the world knoweth she hath ever professed from her infancy hitherto" and expressed that she hoped to be peacefully embraced as queen by her subjects. However, by 1553, the vast majority of churches were Protestant while she remained a devout Catholic.<sup>55</sup> Because of this, she had a tough road ahead of her to gain the support of her subjects.

### The Failed Counterreformation

By the time Mary I took her place as queen of England, Protestantism had replaced Catholicism as the religion of the English people. In working to spread Protestantism, Edward VI's government had changed the language of church services from Latin to English, destroyed Catholic images and relics, and removed restrictions on preaching and private readings of Scriptures. Those were not the only changes that had been made during Edward VI's reign. Parliament passed the new Act of Uniformity in March, 1549. The act stated that all churches must preach services from Archbishop Cranmer's "Book of Common Prayer." Eventually, the use of any other service would be considered an offense. Any priest found guilty of celebrating a Roman Catholic mass would be fined. If the offending priest persisted in celebrating Catholic mass, he would be imprisoned for life.<sup>56</sup>

Mary I believed that the Act of Uniformity contradicted her late father's will and told Somerset—in reply to a letter that notified her that she was expected to conform—that she

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<sup>54</sup> Loach, and G. W. Bernard, *Edward VI*, 167.

<sup>55</sup> Loades, *The Religious Culture of Marian England*, 23, 74-75.

<sup>56</sup> Alison Weir, *The Children of Henry VIII*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1997, 49, 81.

would, “remain an obedient child to [Henry VIII’s] laws as he left them...” until her brother turned of age to act upon his position as king.<sup>57</sup> Had Mary I become queen upon the death of her father or had she been the one in charge of her brother’s affairs until he came of age, it is likely that the Church of England would have been reabsorbed into the Catholic Church. In fact, had Mary been responsible for Edward’s affairs, it is likely that the Act of Uniformity would have promoted Catholicism instead of Protestantism.

By the time Mary became queen, there had been a schism between England and the Catholic Church for nearly twenty years.<sup>58</sup> Mary I worked alongside Cardinal Reginald Pole to reverse the religious changes that Henry VIII and Edward VI had made in the previous twenty years and she made it her duty as queen to restore Catholicism in her kingdom. However, she believed that “it was her Christian duty, as sovereign to make the heretics suffer a foretaste of hell-fire in this world, so that at last they would repent and be saved. She also saw it as her duty to punish those who had sinned most dreadfully against God and His laws.” As a result, Protestant heretics were often burned to death and within a few years, “240 men and 60 women died at the stake.” On 21 March, 1556, Cranmer was burned at the stake on Broad Street in Oxford for refusing to renounce his Protestant faith in favor of the Catholic Church. By the end of Mary I’s five-year reign, she would burn over three hundred people, which was an immensely large population in comparison to her father’s eighty-one burnings over thirty-eight years and five burnings during Elizabeth’s nearly forty-five year reign.<sup>59</sup> Such burnings only proved to fuel Protestant resistance to Catholicism and increased their contempt for their queen.

Had Mary I been tolerant of the Protestant faith during her reign, a partial counterreformation that allowed for Catholics and Protestants to coexist peacefully might have

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<sup>57</sup> Weir, *The Children of Henry VIII*, 82.

<sup>58</sup> Weir, *The Children of Henry VIII*, 292.

<sup>59</sup> Loades, *The Religious Culture of Marian England*, 96, 296, 329-356.

been possible. However, by the time she became queen, so much of her nation had adopted the Protestant faith that it would be impossible to revert her subjects completely and forcing them to revert would only serve to increase their resistance to Catholicism. Because of this, England remained predominantly Protestant at the time of Mary I's death in 1558 and during the reign of her sister, Elizabeth I.

## **Ireland Before the Henrican Reformation**

Before examining the impacts that the introduction of Protestantism had on the Irish people, it is important to understand how Irish society functioned before the Henrican Reformation. The earliest settlers of Ireland were likely Scandinavians who arrived on the island before ocean levels rose around 6500 BC. By 150 BC, the Celts established themselves in Ireland and the inhabitants of the island were thoroughly Celtic by 450 AD, united by language and culture. Their society was agrarian in nature and focused heavily on the *fine* (tribe).<sup>60</sup>

The British were present in Ireland long before Henry VIII held the English throne. Trade with Britain began between 400 AD and 500 AD. Christianity arrived in Ireland during that time. A large enough population of Christians arrived from Roman Britain that Rome appointed the bishop Palladius in 431. His successor was St. Patrick who held the title of bishop from either 432-461 or 456-490.<sup>61</sup> While Bishop of Ireland, St. Patrick developed a system of churches and monasteries as well as a system of land division. The Irish constructed their communities using St. Patrick's system and continued to thrive and develop in the centuries following.

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Ireland experienced a revival of Gaelic art and culture. The Anglo-Irish wrote poetry and stories in the Irish language and many were

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<sup>60</sup> Joseph Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*. London: Oneworld Publications, 2014, 15.

<sup>61</sup> The existing records of St. Patrick's time in Ireland show his arrival in 432. His death is reported as occurring in either 461 or 492 and the earliest records of him were not compiled until the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century.

marrying Irish natives. Although such unions between the Anglo-Irish and the Irish natives worried the English government, England fought the Hundred Years war with France and was unable to send resources to Ireland. However, in 1394, King Richard II of England forced all Irish leaders to submit to him. His throne was later seized by Henry IV who found himself dealing with too many domestic problems to focus on Ireland. As a result, the Irish chiefs fought for and regained their lands. The Native Irish forced the Anglo-Irish into the area surrounding Dublin known as “The Pale.”<sup>62</sup>

The Irish had their own parliamentary system in the fifteenth century. English laws were invalid in Ireland until the Irish parliament passed them. In 1494, King Henry VII of England sent Sir Edward Poyning to Ireland to “bring the country into ‘whole and perfect obedience.’”<sup>63</sup> Poyning summoned the Irish parliament to pass a series of acts known as Poyning’s Law, which established a formal boundary between the Pale and the rest of Ireland. The law prevented the Irish from having too much power by stating that the Irish parliament was subordinate to British parliament that the Irish parliament could only meet with the king’s permission, and could only pass laws that the king had preapproved. However, while the king had control over Irish parliament, Irish society continued to function as it had prior to Henry VII’s involvement.

## **Protestantism Arrives in Ireland**

As discussed in previous chapters of this work, England experienced great religious reform under Henry VIII that was expanded upon during Edward VI’s reign. What has not yet been mentioned, however, is how those changes impacted the people of Ireland. This section will

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<sup>62</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 15.

<sup>63</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 16.

discuss how Protestantism spread from England to Ireland and how Protestantism was then used as a political tool to gain full control over the Irish people.

The Tudors had several reasons for wanting control of Ireland. The most important of which was its geographic location. If another kingdom such as France or Spain were to gain control of Ireland, they could use the island to threaten the Tudor king's power. As a result, Henry VIII installed a governing council in Ireland and the Irish parliament declared him King of Ireland in 1541. Regardless of whether or not the members of the Irish parliament wanted to give Henry VIII regency over their land, Poyning's Law allowed him to do so. In 1536, Henry VIII had attempted to Anglicize Ireland by declaring himself head of the Church of Ireland but he had been unsuccessful in reaching the people outside of the Pale. Although the Church of England grew and flourished under Edward VI, he too failed to Anglicize the Irish people. Mary I's counter-reformation enabled Ireland to remain mostly Catholic throughout her reign as well. Elizabeth I made the first successful attempts at Anglicizing the Irish people.

The Irish people living outside of the Pale initially resisted Elizabeth I's attempts at converting them to Protestantism. The Anglo-Irish and the Gaelic Irish, united under a common ground, were not so willing to abandon Catholicism. Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, sought assistance from the Spanish in waging a war against Elizabeth in 1601. However, his efforts were unsuccessful as the Spanish withdrew in January of the following year and O'Neill was forced to surrender on 30 March, 1603. Although they had suffered defeat, O'Neill and his followers were allowed to keep their land but they were still unhappy with Elizabeth's attempts to Anglicize them. As a result, more than 90 leaders sailed to France and Rome in September,

1609 in what is today known as the “flight of the earls.”<sup>64</sup> In leaving, those leaders left much of Ulster open for English and Scottish settlement.

### **The Penal Laws**

Once English and Scottish settlers took hold of plantation land in Ulster, they developed a Protestant landowning class that the English used as a tool to politically dominate the Irish Catholics. English landowners forcefully removed the Irish from the plantation land and the Irish were no longer allowed to own or lease it. James I gave Irish land to the English Protestants and banned Catholicism. By 1605, James had established laws that gave exclusive control to the Protestant people. Catholic priests were banished, Catholics lost their rights to practise law and inherit estates. Attendance at Protestant church services was mandatory and those who wished to remain firm in their Catholic faith were forced to form their own underground parishes and hold mass in their homes. As the seventeenth century drew on, Protestantism would continue to serve as a political tool for dominance over the Irish people.

In 1640, there were approximately 100,000 Protestant settlers while the Irish population was at approximately 750,000. However, despite being heavily outnumbered, the English Parliament was growing stronger in Ireland and the Irish feared that Catholicism would become increasingly suppressed and that more areas would become plantation lands that they would be forced from. As a result, an attack on Dublin was planned for 1641, but was discovered in advance. Instead, local risings occurred in Ulster, and those were fairly successful.

The uprisings led the Native Irish to regain and establish control of Ulster and ally with the Old English. Together, they began a march toward Dublin as a “Catholic Army” in a planned rising by Phelim O’Neill. The Catholic Army also staged peasant attacks on Protestant settlers

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<sup>64</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 22-23.

that killed approximately 4,000 Protestants. By 1642, their rebellion had spread to most of the island, but strong English forces arrived and the Catholic Army was ultimately pushed back into Ulster, their rebellion a failure.

The English saw the failed rebellion as an opportunity to subdue the Catholic Army. Had the English not been involved in a series of civil wars, they would have been successful in destroying the Catholic Army before it had a chance to form. The wars, which spanned from 1642 to 1649 allowed Catholicism to survive in Ireland. The wars also resulted in the execution of King Charles, which left Oliver Cromwell presiding over parliament.<sup>65</sup>

Cromwell arrived in Ireland on 15 August, 1649 and, under his control, Protestantism was the most prominent political tool used to exert dominance over the Irish. Under Cromwell, 600,000 people from a population of a 1.4 million died. 450,000 of those people were Catholic as Cromwell specifically waged a war against Catholicism. Under his control, 600,000 Catholics were killed or enslaved with 60,000 being sold into chattel slavery in Barbados. Prior to his arrival in 1641, Protestants had held approximately forty percent of the land, but that number grew to approximately eighty two percent by 1660. Catholicism was turned into a capital offence and it was common for churches and pilgrimage sites to be burned. In killing and enslaving Catholics as well as burning their churches, Cromwell managed to both shrink the Irish population and eliminate the structures in which they could convene, thus decreasing their ability to revolt against him and the English.

In order to gain further control over the Irish, English Parliament passed the Crown Recognition Act in 1692. The act, which blamed the Irish Catholics for all wars and rebellions since the Protestants arrival, gave the English full governing control over Ireland by stating:

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<sup>65</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 25.

Ireland in annexed and united to the imperial crown of England and by the laws and statutes of this kingdom is declared to be justly and rightfully depending upon, and belonging, and for ever united to the same; and the Kings and Queens of England are by undoubted right Kings and Queens of this realm, and ought to enjoy the stile, title, majesty, power, preheminance, jurisdiction, prerogative and authority of Kings and Queens of the same...we are in duty bound, dorecognize and acknowledge, that Ireland, and all titles, stiles, royalties, jurisdictions, rights, privileges, prerogatives, and preheminences-royal thereunto belonging, are most rightfully and lawfully vested in their Majesties King William and Queen Mary...<sup>66</sup>

The Crown Recognition Act states that Ireland is under total legal jurisdiction of the English Crown and, therefore, is governed by the English Parliament in England. This control allowed for the implementation and continuation of the anti-Catholic penal laws that would plague Ireland for the next hundred years and demonstrates an inability for the Irish to represent themselves in government that will hold until Daniel O’Connell’s fight for Home Rule in the mid-nineteenth century.

Between 1691 and 1778, English Protestants enacted a series of penal laws against Catholics. These laws barred Catholics from voting and from taking up positions in public office. Catholics were not allowed to marry Protestants; they could not own firearms, practise law, own horses of value, or practice law. They could not be schooled or become teachers nor could they purchase land or adopt children. The only way that they could regain these rights was to convert to Protestantism.<sup>67</sup> However, Catholicism was such a part of Irish culture that conversion to Protestantism seldom occurred. Because Catholicism was inherently a part of the Irish identity and the British were aware of this, it is evident that the penal laws were implemented with the sole purpose of gaining political control over the Irish. Had their aims been theological in nature, the English Protestants would likely have implemented laws that barred Catholics from

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<sup>66</sup> Crown Recognition Act (Ireland) 1692.

<sup>67</sup> It is also important to note that the Administration of Justice Act, which stated that all legal and government documents needed to be written in English or Latin to give the English further governing control. Any offenders were to be charged a £20 fine, which would have been much too expensive for anyone who fell victim to the penal laws.

practising their religion publicly and they would have likely distributed prayer books as they did with the Book of Common Prayer and the Second Book of Common Prayer in Tudor England. They would not have passed laws barring them from owning land or working in the legal field, but by restricting their rights in nearly all aspects of life, they prevented the Irish from having political dominance over their own lands and allowed the English to have almost complete control.

### **Wolfe Tone's Rebellion**

At the end of the eighteenth century, both the Catholics and Protestants alike were growing tired of English control. Although the Protestants were not subject to the same, harsh laws that plagued the Catholics, the Crown Recognition Act had left them with limited representation in parliament. The Society of United Irishmen formed in 1791. The society was Protestant-led and it sought to establish religious unity in Ireland with the aims of establishing universal suffrage, a republican government free of British control, and individual rights much like the French and American revolutions had worked for. During this time, Theobald Wolfe Tone, a Protestant from Kildare, who hated the British, wanted to eliminate their power in Ireland. In 1796, he travelled to France to gain their assistance in revolting against Britain. The French agreed to provide a fleet and 15,000 troops. However, before they were able to arrive, the British brutalized the Irish. Approximately 300,000 United Irishmen were tortured. As a result, revolutions began in Dublin and its surrounding counties. By the time that Wolfe Tone arrived with his French fleet, the British had already quelled the revolts. Wolfe Tone was seized and tried. He was denied his request to be shot, so he slit his own throat in prison.

Although Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen had aimed to decrease the amount of power that the British had in Ireland, their efforts had backfired. Ireland would begin the

nineteenth century under stricter British control. My next chapters will show how the British tightened their control over the Irish, how the Irish grew increasingly discontent with the British, and the actions that the Irish took to ensure that they would survive.

## **From the Act of Union to Home Rule**

Although failed, Wolfe Tone's rebellion was not without great consequence. In 1800, British Parliament passed the Act of Union, which stated that Great Britain and Ireland would "for ever, be united into one kingdom, by the name of "the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.""<sup>68</sup> In passing the new law, Great Britain had removed essentially all remaining political control from Ireland. The Church of Ireland was absorbed into the Church of England as was Irish Parliament to the British Parliament. Both annexations show sound evidence that the British used Protestantism as a political tool for control. In establishing a Church of Ireland, the British had provided an alternative option to suffering under the penal laws should any Catholic decide to convert. Likewise, the Irish Parliament gave the impression that the Irish had control over their land despite the Crown Recognition Act having given all real power to England's monarch in 1692. By absorbing the Church of Ireland into the Church of England, the British proved that they were using Protestantism as a tool for control because both sects of Christianity were the same theologically, but governed from within their respective nations. When the Act of Union absorbed the Church of Ireland into the Church of England, the only real change was that the Church of England oversaw the Protestants in Britain and Ireland. Similarly, when British Parliament absorbed Irish Parliament, the only large-scale change was that Ireland was governed from London. Following the Act of Union, the Irish did comprise one-fifth of the House of

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<sup>68</sup> Act of Union (Ireland) 1800.

Commons, but the Irish were so outnumbered that the act put all Irish issues into British hands.<sup>69</sup> However, the only real change was that the Irish were not being governed from within Ireland because they had already been under British control for a century, so any laws made in regard to Ireland would be passed by men who were likely receiving biased information on which to make their decisions. To further support this concept, it is important to note that the Act of Union states, "...that the persons holding any temporal peerages of Ireland, existing at the time of the union, shall, from and after the union, have rank and precedence next, and immediately after all the persons holding peerages of the like orders and degrees in Great Britain subsisting at the time of the union..."<sup>70</sup> Those who held titles in Ireland prior to the Act of Union would continue to hold their titles after, but their rank would be below their counterparts in Great Britain and would therefore be powerless in comparison to the British.

Initially, Irish Catholics were in support of the Act of Union because they thought that the unification would catalyse an effective move toward emancipation.<sup>71</sup> However, they quickly discovered that they had been mistaken. Catholics did achieve emancipation, but not until 13 April, 1829; twenty-nine years after the Act of Union had been put into effect. Daniel O'Connell, a Catholic lawyer,<sup>72</sup> began the fight for Catholic emancipation in 1804.<sup>73</sup> After achieving his goal fifteen years later, O'Connell set his sights on abolishing the Act of Union and building a new Irish parliament. Unfortunately, despite working throughout the 1830s to get the Act of Union repealed, O'Connell's attempts were unsuccessful. Nevertheless, his work to regain rights for the Catholic people of Ireland is recognized as an important component in the shaping of Irish nationalism.

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<sup>69</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 40.

<sup>70</sup> Act of Union (Ireland) 1800.

<sup>71</sup> Pašeta, Senia. *Modern Ireland: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 16.

<sup>72</sup> One of the first Catholic lawyers after the penal laws

<sup>73</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 45.

Despite O’Connell’s best efforts, the Act of Union remained in place for nearly the remainder of the century and it is crucial to recognise the impacts that the act had on both the United Kingdom and Ireland’s economies. A common market was established under the Act of Union, which would ultimately enable the British to wage a non-violent, economic war against the Irish Catholics from 1845 to 1852. My next chapter will discuss the Great Hunger that the British used to invoke a genocide of the Irish Catholic people.

### **The Great Hunger**

The Great Hunger,<sup>74</sup> which occurred from 1845 to 1852, was a time during which the potato crops failed and the Irish were plagued with a socioeconomic depression that drastically impacted the nation and its people. With approximately 1.5 million casualties, the famine is quite arguably the greatest genocide that the English have invoked against the Irish throughout history. England exported food from Ireland throughout the famine, devised a long-term land policy that deliberately led to the famine and extended it, and advocated racist attitudes against the Catholics that preceded and produced the famine and then influenced a callous attitude toward the suffering of the Catholics. It is telling that only Catholics died. The Great Hunger was not merely a time of starvation for the people of Ireland, but a time of genocide driven by racism as well.

The famine began in 1845 when potato crops were infected by *Phytophthora infestans*, a fungus that had arrived in Ireland from Europe, Great Britain, and the Americas.<sup>75</sup> More than half of the Irish’s potato crops managed to avoid the fungus in the first year, but nearly the entire crop of the following year failed due to infection. While many people believe that the lack of a potato supply led to the mass hunger of Irish peasants, there was more than enough food on the island to feed its eight million inhabitants. According to historian John Kelly, a news report

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<sup>74</sup> Also known as “The Great Famine”

<sup>75</sup> Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, 34-35.

published on 28 August, 1846 stated, “In the past seven days, over the docks of London had flowed 1,616 quarters of Irish oats; 1,929 packages of Irish bacon; 542 boxes of eggs; 5,606 packages of butter; 892 packages of lard, 1,240 of pork, and 39 of beef; 170 hampers of hams and 178 of malt; 132 live pigs; and 1,488 packages of fresh salmon.”<sup>76</sup> The amount of food that was exported to England in that one shipment would likely be enough to feed roughly ten thousand people who had lost their staple crop. While this large amount of food products was exported to England in just one shipment, a total of 7,300 tons of Indian corn, 200 tons of maize, and 100 tons of meal were imported to Ireland during the months of August and September when 1.5 million tons would have been needed to combat the hunger. A result of the amount of Irish exports exceeding that of imports was an increase in the price of the food items that were available. In Galway, the price of corn increased from £10 to £15 per ton and in Dublin, the price of cornmeal rose to £15. At this time, labour wages were so low—at 7.25 pence—that people were not able to afford to pay their rent and purchase food. Because of this, people were turning to workhouses for both food and shelter. However, there was such a large influx of people going to the workhouses that they reached and exceeded their capacities and waiting lists held as many as six-thousand people.<sup>77</sup> With such a dire need for food items in Ireland, the mass export of products native to Ireland never should have happened. In exporting the items that Irish locals needed for survival, death resulting from starvation was imminent.

Another factor that greatly contributed to the famine being a genocide was the creation of long-term land policies. Under these policies, landlords who owned large areas of land would rent out smaller parts of the land to farmers who would then sublet parts of their rented land—often to Catholics as they were not allowed to own land—should they be incapable of affording

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<sup>76</sup> John Kelly. *The Graves Are Walking: The Great Famine and the Saga of the Irish People*. 1st ed. (New York, New York: Henry Holt, 2012), 128.

<sup>77</sup> Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking*, 130-143, 172-173.

the rent. Should those farmers be incapable of affording rent, they too would sublet pieces of their land. The landlords had a lot of power over their tenants and would often treat them as slaves by utilizing their tools and livestock at harvest time and by sexually exploiting the tenants' wives and daughters.<sup>78</sup> When the famine occurred, rent prices ran extremely high while the standard of living was incredibly low. The vast majority of Irish peasants were already living in poverty but the high rent and food scarcities left them completely destitute. During this time, the British believed that the landlords were at fault for Ireland's troubles because they were unable to successfully manage their lands, so the Poor Law Extension Act was passed on 8 June, 1847 which left the landowners financially responsible for famine relief.<sup>79</sup> Prior to the enactment of the Poor Law Extension Act, land owners were organizing large-scale evictions that frequently targeted small farmers.<sup>80</sup> Because of this, the small farmers and their families were left with no place to live, no way to produce food, and very small chances of survival.

British racial attitudes did not help the situation that was plaguing Ireland. Generally speaking, the British were a "Laissez faire" people in terms of involving themselves with financial issues. Their attitudes toward the Irish people combined with this proved less than helpful during the time of the famine. For example, part of a conversation between a medical officer and a clerk during the famine from 15 May, 1847 stated:

Medical Officer: Ye sentenced in one day two hundred persons to death [referring to new workhouse admits].

Clerk: We did not, they sentenced themselves to death.<sup>81</sup>

This shows the British attitude that the Irish's suffering was of their own fault. Another reason why the British did not feel the need to provide sufficient aid to the Irish was their belief that

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<sup>78</sup> Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking*, 9-20.

<sup>79</sup> "Irish Potato Famine: Financial Ruin." The History Place. 2000. Accessed March 10, 2015.

<sup>80</sup> Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking*, 212.

<sup>81</sup> Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking*, 210.

“dependency on government [was a] moral plague.”<sup>82</sup> Like the clerk at the workhouse, the vast majority of British people believed that the Irish had brought misfortune upon themselves. Additionally, British Prime Minister John Russell believed that should his government provide aid to the Irish, the English and the Scottish would demand to be “drained, fenced, and furnished” with government funds” as well and even once asked, “Why cannot Irish gentlemen do as English gentlemen do?” and, “If the Irish won’t, can’t save themselves, [then] who will save you?”<sup>83</sup> He was of the belief that the Irish were clearly inferior to the British as they could not find a solution to their troubles on their own. If not even the highest ranked government officials could recognize how severe the famine was in Ireland, how could his nation’s people feel compelled to aid?

The famine was just another way for the British to exert dominance over the Irish people. There was enough food being produced on Irish soil despite the potato blight and, had the British reduced or limited the quantity that they forced Ireland to export to them, the food supply could have remained large enough to meet the demands of the Irish people at an affordable price. However, by continuing to forcibly import large quantities of Irish food products, the British were able to leave millions Irish Catholics choosing between homelessness and starvation; whichever choice they made, death was imminent. In addition to the 1.5 million casualties of the famine, an estimated 1–2.5 million Irish emigrated elsewhere in the hopes of survival. By backing the Irish into a corner where their chances of survival were less than ideal, the British managed to maintain authority over a rapidly declining population with fewer resources on hand. However, their treatment of the Irish during this time combined with their inherently racist

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<sup>82</sup> Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking*, 93.

<sup>83</sup> Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking*, 152.

attitudes further fuelled Irish discontent that would only continue to escalate well into the twentieth century.

## **Home Rule**

In the decades following the Great Hunger, the Irish grew increasingly resentful of the British and the political control that they held over them. The weakness of the Land Act of 1870 disappointed Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants were angered over the dissolution of the Church of Ireland. Therefore, by mid-1870, both Irish populations shared the idea that Ireland would be better off if governed from Dublin rather than from London, thus propelling O'Connell's previously failed concept of Home Rule. Over the course of the decade, the Home Rule Association and its successor, the Home Rule Confederation garnished support among the Irish peasants and farmers.<sup>84</sup> Charles Parnell formally won leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1880 and worked to return parliamentary rule to Ireland.

By 1884, Parnell had the support of the Catholic Church. With their backing, he worked to eliminate the Liberal majority in Parliament and by late 1885, he succeeded. On 17 December, 1885, British Prime Minister Gladstone declared that he, too, was in favour of Irish Home Rule. On 8 April, 1886, he presented a bill to parliament that would reinstate a parliament in Dublin that was to deal with domestic affairs. British parliament, however, would remain in control of all of Ireland's foreign affairs, their military, and imperial taxation. Although the Irish had been successful in returning some political control to Dublin, the British would still hold a significant amount of power over them should the bill pass. With the British controlling their military, the Irish would be rendered incapable of revolt unless they wanted to put forth an unskilled, untrained army against the British. The British would still have significant influence over their

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<sup>84</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 98.

economy as well. Because they would require the Irish to continue paying an imperial tax—which they had the ability to increase or decrease without Irish input—they had the power to force anyone who attempted to oppose them into total destitution. However, the bill was defeated by 341 to 311 votes in the House of Commons on 8 June, 1886; it never reached the House of Lords.<sup>85</sup>

In 1889, Parnell's reputation dissipated due to a political scandal, but Gladstone remained in support of Home Rule and worked to create a new bill in favour of Irish ruling. His revised bill, which he presented to the House of Commons passed, but was defeated in the House of Commons on 2 September, 1893.<sup>86</sup> Although the Irish continued to be unsuccessful in their attempts to separate from the British, a fire had been ignited under the Irish people that would only serve to strengthen their sense of nationalism and desire to gain independence. In my next chapter, I will show how the Irish fought for their independence from Britain and how they established a permanent government system, free from British rule.

## **Twentieth Century Ireland**

The twentieth century was perhaps the most eventful and certainly the most successful period in Ireland's fight for independence from the British. Escalated by the First World War, the Irish fight for independence was stronger than ever in the early years of the twentieth century. A continued fight for Home Rule paired with British pressure to fight in World War I instilled a strengthened sense of Irish nationalism and ultimately led to revolt in 1916 which ultimately led to a new structure of government that would serve to solidify Ireland's status as an independent

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<sup>85</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 99-100.

<sup>86</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 102.

nation. This chapter will discuss how Ireland's involvement in World War I ultimately led to the development of a permanent political system free from British rule.

## **The Great War**

According to historian Senia Pašeta, “the First World War was the single most important influence on the political development of modern Ireland.”<sup>87</sup> Leading into the war, Ireland was on the brink of finally winning a semblance of self-government. The third Home Rule bill was introduced to parliament on 11 April, 1912. The bill passed in the House of Commons in January, 1913, but was rejected by the House of Lords. However, the House of Lords' veto power had been reduced in 1911 and the bill was only to be delayed for two years.<sup>88</sup> After a forty-five year struggle, Ireland would finally have been granted Home Rule in 1915 had global conflict not interfered. When the war began in 1914, the bill was put on suspension until the war was declared over.

In addition to the suspension of Home Rule, the First World War was also responsible for a great number of Irish casualties and a growing contempt for the British. More than 200,000 Irishmen volunteered to fight on behalf of the British Army.<sup>89</sup> Because the Irish were still ranked second to their British counterparts, the British typically sent Irish units on high-risk campaigns such as Gallipoli. Ultimately, such campaigns amassed approximately 40,000 casualties. Meanwhile, from 1914 to 1916, Irish nationalists were setting the stage for a rebellion.

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<sup>87</sup> Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, 73.

<sup>88</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 119.

<sup>89</sup> Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, 75.

## The Easter Rising and Its Aftermath

On Monday, 24 April, 1916, 1,558 Irish volunteers and 219 members of the Citizen Army<sup>90</sup> stormed several buildings around Dublin—capturing the General Post Office (GPO)—which housed British officials.<sup>91</sup> In addition to capturing the General Post Office—which was used as British headquarters—the Irish rebels also captured the Four Courts, Liberty Hall, and City Hall. The British retaliated the following day and they had an advantage over the rebels; where the rebel group had been mostly comprised of a small number of volunteers, the British were able to call in reinforcement troops.<sup>92</sup> Their retaliation efforts included the use of gunfire toward the Four Courts and the GPO and the eventual burning of the GPO. Within a week, the British managed to end the Easter Rising but not before 450 deaths and 2,500 injuries occurred among the rebels and the British forces.<sup>93</sup> Although the rising—like all other attempts at revolt—appeared to be a failure, it was successful in that it marked the beginning of the true fight for Irish independence.

The British became increasingly oppressive of the Irish in the aftermath of the Easter Rising. They increased British military presence and arrested approximately 3,500 men suspected of partaking in the rebellion. Although around half of the suspects were released, an additional 1,841 were detained. However, the conditions of their imprisonment were relaxed enough that the men were able to strategize on how to move forward.<sup>94</sup> Political party Sinn Féin emerged as the focus of Irish nationalism as did its eventual leader, Eamon de Valera. In my next chapter, I will discuss how de Valera led Ireland transformed Irish politics and led the Irish to independence from Britain with a permanent political system.

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<sup>90</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 122.

<sup>91</sup> Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, 75.

<sup>92</sup> Coohill, *Ireland: A Short History*, 122.

<sup>93</sup> Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, 77.

<sup>94</sup> Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, 77.

## **Eamon de Valera's Ireland: Civil War and the Constitution of the Irish Free State**

The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 allowed the Irish Free State to write its own constitution but required that members of Irish Parliament take an oath to the British crown.<sup>95</sup> The Constitution of the Irish Free State was signed in London on 6 December, 1921 but was not recognized until 1922. The British had significant influence over the document which was signed by five Irishmen and seven British men including future Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. Although the British were greatly involved in the construction of this new constitution, it was the first time that Ireland was recognized as a free state since the ratification of the Act of Union in 1800. Although the constitution's first article established Ireland's status as a member of the British Commonwealth, the second article called for full governmental power and authority to be returned to Ireland and stated that the Irish people would have complete control.<sup>96</sup> After fifty years, Ireland would *finally* receive the Home Rule that it had so desperately wanted. The eighth article is perhaps the most significant. Article 8 states:

Freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion are, subject to public order and morality, guaranteed to every citizen, and no law may be made either directly or indirectly to endow any religion, or prohibit or restrict the free exercise thereof or give any preference, or impose any disability on account of religious belief or religious status...<sup>97</sup>

The aforementioned article essentially grants the Irish people freedom of religion and prohibits the preferential treatment of one religious group over another. This is perhaps the greatest step taken toward religious equality since the British introduced Protestantism to Ireland in the late sixteenth century. Even though the British still had influence over the Irish Free State, they would no longer be able to use religion (Protestantism) as a political tool to exert control over the Irish. It is important to note that the constitution also granted free elementary education, the right

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<sup>95</sup> Bill Kissane. "Éamon de Valera and the Survival of Democracy in Inter-War Ireland," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42 (2007): 214.

<sup>96</sup> "Constitution of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Eirann) Act, 1922."

<sup>97</sup> "Constitution of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Eirann) Act, 1922."

to participate in elections, and established a legislature (Oireachtas) which consisted of the King, the Senate, and the Chamber of Deputies.

Although the Constitution of the Irish Free State granted the Irish the greatest amount of independence from Britain in nearly four-hundred years, many Irish people were unhappy that the Anglo-Irish Treaty established Ireland as a state of the British Empire. As a result, the Irish Civil War began in 1922. The war lasted from 28 June, 1922 to 30 April, 1923 and those who were in favour of the Anglo-Irish Treaty were deemed victorious. Éamon de Valéra had been the leader of the anti-treaty group and, in 1922, he had little support.<sup>98</sup> However, that would change over the next fifteen years.

### **Éamon de Valéra's Quest for a Republic**

While Ireland was officially recognized as a free state with ties to Britain, de Valéra would not be content until the Irish had their own republic. When the Irish government chose to create the Cumman na nGaedhael party, de Valéra opted to adopt the Sinn Féin name because the Sinn Féin party had ignited the movement for Irish independence.<sup>99</sup> This was a turning point for Irish politics. For the first time, Ireland had its own political parties. De Valéra remained at the forefront of the Sinn Féin party from 1922 to 1926 when the Fianna Fáil party formed.

The first official meeting of the Fianna Fáil party was on 24 November, 1926.<sup>100</sup> In his speech at the first convention, which was aimed at defining the party's goals for the future of Ireland, de Valéra stated, "a nation within itself ought to be able to settle its polity so that all occasion of civil conflict between its members be obviated, and no nation which even pretends to freedom will suffer a foreign power to impose conditions which make the adoption of such a

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<sup>98</sup> Kissane, "Éamon de Valéra and the Survival of Democracy in Inter-War Ireland," 213.

<sup>99</sup> Kissane, "Éamon de Valéra and the Survival of Democracy in Inter-War Ireland," 215.

<sup>100</sup> Maurice Moynihan, ed. *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera 1917-1973*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 143.

polity impossible.”<sup>101</sup> Later, in the same speech, de Valéra said, “What a future would lie before this country if all its children, all who sincerely love it, were enabled in freedom to work side by side for its advancement.”<sup>102</sup> According to de Valéra, the only viable future for the Irish people was to have a political system wholly independent from any other nation or power.

By the 1932 and 1933 general elections, Fianna Fáil had the support of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which helped the party achieve a government majority.<sup>103</sup> Less than a month later, de Valéra—as leader of Fianna Fáil—addressed the United States in a radio broadcast.<sup>104</sup> In his broadcast, de Valéra said:

Irishmen know only too well what America suffered in those [Civil War] years. We know, also, all that she was saved from by the leadership of Abraham Lincoln. We too have endured the bitterness of civil strife, but we, unhappily, were unable to prevent the partition of our country. The partition of Ireland was not, however, the act of her own people. It was decided upon by the representatives of Great Britain without the support of a single Irish representative. The people, then fighting for their independence, protested against it with all their force. They have never since assented to it.<sup>105</sup>

In his broadcast, de Valéra established a parallel between the United States—a nation that had broken free from British oppression—and Ireland which at the time had yet to fully do so itself. In making the parallel, de Valéra highlighted a few key differences between mid-nineteenth century United States and mid-twentieth century Ireland such as the mere fact that while the partition of the U.S. into the Union and Confederate states was driven by U.S. citizens, the Irish did not choose nor want Ireland to be divided as it was. De Valéra also implied that Ireland could and would someday be its own, independent republic. In another speech given on 23 April 1933, de Valéra stated:

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<sup>101</sup> Éamon de Valéra, “First Ard-Fheis of Fianna Fáil” from *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera 1917-1973*, November 24, 1926.

<sup>102</sup> “First Ard-Fheis of Fianna Fáil.”

<sup>103</sup> Kissane, “Éamon de Valéra and the Survival of Democracy in Inter-War Ireland,” 216.

<sup>104</sup> Moynihan, *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera*, 233.

<sup>105</sup> Éamon de Valéra, “Ireland Free, Gaelic and United” from *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera 1917-1973*, November 24, 1926.

In devoting ourselves to this task [of restoring the republic], we must bear in mind that to the leaders of Easter Week the republic meant more than a form of government, that it meant more even than an independent Ireland. They were not men who used words lightly; and when in their Proclamation they guaranteed ‘equal rights and equal opportunities’ to all citizens, they meant it. They meant that the handicaps which made it all but impossible for so many of our poorer citizens to live the life of rational beings should no longer be tolerated and that the opportunities for modest comfort and cultural development should be made available in due measure to all. There is, indeed, much to be done before we can claim that guarantee has been fulfilled.<sup>106</sup>

In this particular speech, de Valéra is arguing that the fight for a truly independent Ireland began with the Easter Rising in 1916 and that Ireland will not be a republic until all citizens have equal rights; in other words, until each citizen can act without British constraint.

One of the reasons why de Valéra was so successful in leading Ireland to political independence is that de Valéra clearly identified issues within Ireland’s legislature and he presented a unified, logical argument that Ireland would fail without change. In a speech on economic policy delivered on 12 and 13 August, 1928, de Valéra brought forth a number of issues that Ireland was facing economically at the time. According to de Valéra, Ireland was facing a large decline in population. The nation’s lack of developed industry combined with the government’s “survival of the fittest” attitude toward what little industry Ireland had was a serious issue. Upon presenting the issue of industry in Ireland, de Valéra stated, “...if we are to be self-supporting and get all these things that we want for ourselves, what is going to happen? It means the elimination of all sorts of waste. It means doing things by machinery where human beings would be eliminated as far as possible, and therefore it means, ultimately, a lot of unemployment unless we are able to compete in the world markets.”<sup>107</sup> In his speech, de Valéra told of how the current government had failed to develop industry in a manner that would allow

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<sup>106</sup> Éamon de Valéra, “The Republican Goal” from *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera 1917-1973*, November 24, 1926.

<sup>107</sup> Éamon de Valéra, “Economic Policy” from *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera 1917-1973*, 12-13 August, 1928.

for economic growth. He then argued that Ireland was on a path that would only lead to an increase in unemployment should neither change nor action be implemented to correct the issue. Later, in the same speech, de Valéra argued, “By all means educate the people into [the industrial system], but you will not educate the people into it if you hold out the idea that the whole purpose of this country is to supply foodstuffs to the English markets; that our whole salvation and our whole purpose is to produce food for England.”<sup>108</sup> In arguing that the Irish economy was centred on providing for the English, de Valéra successfully showed Ireland’s need for both a change in governmental structure and a need for independence from Britain.

Another contributing factor to de Valéra’s success was the support of the Catholic Church. Under Fianna Fáil, Catholic feast days became public holidays, contraceptive imports were banned, and the Catholic Church was present in primary and secondary education.<sup>109</sup> As there was still a Catholic majority in Ireland—despite nearly four-hundred years of oppression—such would have appealed to the masses and kept Fianna Fáil the favourable party.

### **The Constitution of Ireland**

De Valéra and Fianna Fáil’s work to completely eradicate British influences on Irish politics began in 1933 with the Constitutional Amendment (Removal of Oath) Bill. An additional two acts, the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act and the Aliens Act defined all non-citizens of Ireland—including the British—as aliens.<sup>110</sup> While those acts further restricted British control, Ireland did not truly achieve political modernization until early 1938 after the Constitution of Ireland went into effect in the final days of 1937.

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<sup>108</sup> Éamon de Valéra, “Economic Policy.”

<sup>109</sup> Kissane, “Éamon de Valéra and the Survival of Democracy in Inter-War Ireland,” 218.

<sup>110</sup> Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, 92.

The people of Ireland officially enacted the Constitution of Ireland on 1 July 1937. The first article of the Constitution states, “The Irish nation hereby affirms its inalienable, indefeasible, and sovereign right to choose its own form of Government, to determine its relations with other nations, and to develop its life, political economic and cultural, in accordance with its own genius and traditions.”<sup>111</sup> The second article reads, “The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands, and the territorial seas,” and the third article states, “Pending the re-integration of the national territory, and without prejudice to the right of the Parliament and Government established by this Constitution to exercise jurisdiction over the whole of that territory, the laws enacted by that Parliament shall have the like area and extent of application as the laws of Saorstát Éirann and the like extra-territorial effect.” Lastly, Article 5 of the sixty-two article document reads, “Ireland is a sovereign, independent, democratic state.”<sup>112</sup> Together, the four aforementioned articles define the Republic of Ireland as a self-governing, independent and democratic nation contained within the island of Ireland and its pre-existing territories. The Constitution also defines *how* the nation is to be governed. Article 12 commands that the president is to be elected by a direct vote of the people and limits their term to seven years with the possibility of serving a maximum of two terms. Additionally, the Constitution establishes the Republic of Ireland as a parliamentary democracy with a three branch Legislature consisting of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches. The government is in charge of the Executive Branch while the Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann, and the president comprise the Legislative Branch. The judiciary, which is headed by the Chief Justice, houses the Supreme Court.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> “The Constitution of Ireland.” July 1, 1937.

<sup>112</sup> “The Constitution of Ireland.”

<sup>113</sup> “The Constitution of Ireland.”

The Constitution of Ireland is significant for a number of reasons. After approximately four-hundred years of British oppression, the document defined the Republic of Ireland as the independent nation that it had been fighting for long before the independence movement began in 1916. It managed to outline the rights of Irish citizens and established a set governmental structure that has been permanent and unwavering since the Constitution's enactment. The Constitution officially went into effect on 29 December, 1937 with Éamon de Valéra as President and Taoiseach. The Republic of Ireland was finally an independent nation.

## **Conclusion**

Although political issues between Britain and Ireland would continue well into the late twentieth century, the Constitution of Ireland was successful in establishing the Republic of Ireland under a firm political system free from British control. After a four-hundred-year struggle, the people of Ireland finally achieved political independence from the British. Though religious and political oppression by the British catalysed Ireland's move toward establishing a constitution and becoming a parliamentary democracy, it is likely that Ireland would have modernized politically by establishing a permanent political system on its own. However, it is possible that the political system that the Irish would have established without British influence would have been quite different to the one that they solidified in 1937. Therefore, it is evident that changes in religion and politics in Tudor England ultimately forced the Irish to modernize politically four centuries later.

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