

IRISH PENAL LAWS

I was ministering to a couple whose ancestral background is Irish and English and French.

They casually mentioned to me that their adult daughter has been trying for years to buy a house. She has the financial resources, yet she is not able to purchase a home. The mortgage broker said he had never seen anything like this in 25 years of being in the mortgage business. It was certainly puzzling to all of us. I went home, and that night I was spending time with the Lord in worship. The thoughts kept circulating in my mind, "How can they not buy a house? They have the money and they can't buy a house, what is that all about? How is that possible? What is the problem?" Then, all of a sudden, the Lord spoke to me in a clear, pristine audible voice, "The king will not allow them to own land."

I was so taken aback by this, not only by the statement, but by the audible voice of God. His words were so precise and clear. Immediately, I searched the internet for the meaning of this statement. That is when I came across The Penal Laws that was imposed upon the Irish Catholics.

As I researched, I started to uncover a Goliath that had been hidden for centuries. Anti Irish sentiment dates back to Henry II who reigned in 1154 - 1189. Anti Irish propaganda was meant to justify the Norman invasion of Ireland at the time. This sentiment increased through the centuries and came down the generations to the modern era. English Reformation, by which Henry VIII broke away from the Catholic Church and Rome, was to change Ireland totally. (he reigned 1509-1547)

This was to have a huge lasting effect on Ireland that resonates to this present day. Henry VIII established himself as Supreme head of the Church of England. The Irish would not acknowledge the king as the head of the church. They believed the pope was the head of the church. This was the beginning of centuries of rebellions, protests, uprisings and civil wars, not only regarding this issue of headship, but also against English rule and dominion. Later on, the Scottish Presbyterians also would not acknowledge the king as head of the church. They believed that God was the head of the church.

During the reign of Henry VIII, after a failed protest by the Irish Catholics against English rule, was the start of confiscation of land owned by Irish Catholics. Irish monastary lands were confiscated and rebel leaders' land were also confiscated and declared the property of the Crown. Henry VIII's daughter was Elizabeth I, she wanted to eradicate the Irish. So did many others after her because the existence of Catholic landowners posed a threat to the security of the English monarchy.

During her reign it was reported that never before had such destruction of property or such systematic slaughter been witnessed in Ireland. 20,000 English Protestants were put on confiscated land previously owned by Irish Catholics. The test of loyalty was no longer obedience to the Crown but the acceptance of the Protestant faith. Those who refused to convert became enemies in their own land.

By 1607 most Irish Catholic owned land was taken away, and given or sold at a bargain price to English Protestants. Confiscation of Irish owned land and the Penal Laws were imposed over a period of time starting from Henry VIII to James I of England and Ireland also known as James VI of Scotland to Charles I to Oliver Cromwell and then to William III who ruled jointly with Mary II.

After the third Catholic conspiracy in three years, the last being a failed assassination attempt of the king, James took strict measures to suppress the Catholics whether they be Irish or English. The English monarchy deliberately changed the demography of Ireland, by establishing British Protestants in confiscated Irish owned lands. The identity of the land of Ireland was changed and the authority of the English Crown was secured when Oliver Cromwell subjugated Ireland.

William III and Mary II joint rulers of England, Ireland and Scotland (1689 - 1702) The Popery Act

The Popery Act 1698 passed in 1700, during William III and Mary II's reign. This Act was to ensure that the existing penal laws against Catholics were more strongly applied. The full title of the Act is "An Act for the Further Preventing the Growth of Popery." Popery is the term used for the Catholics or Catholicism. A bounty of 100 pounds was on the head of any Catholic priest, caught for saying Mass or exercising any or part of the Office or Function of a Popish priest.

Any priest or layperson caught teaching or educating children were on conviction, liable to perpetual imprisonment at the discretion of the king.

THE PENAL LAWS:

- Exclusion of Catholics from most public offices (since 1607), Presbyterians were also barred from public office from 1707.
- Ban on intermarriage with Protestants; repealed 1778
- Presbyterian marriages were not legally recognised by the state
- Catholics barred from holding firearms or serving in the armed forces (rescinded by Militia Act of 1793)
- Bar from membership in either the [Parliament of Ireland](#) or the [Parliament of England](#) from 1652; rescinded 1662-1691; renewed 1691-1829, applying to the successive parliaments of [England](#) (to 1707), [Great Britain](#) (1707 to 1800), and the [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland](#) (1800 to 1829).
- [Disenfranchising Act](#) 1728, exclusion from voting until 1793;
- Exclusion from the legal professions and the judiciary; repealed (respectively) 1793 and 1829.
- [Education Act 1695](#) – ban on foreign education; repealed 1782.
- Bar to Catholics and Protestant Dissenters entering [Trinity College Dublin](#); repealed 1793.
- On a death by a Catholic, his legatee could benefit by conversion to the [Church of Ireland](#);
- [Popery Act](#) – Catholic inheritances of land were to be equally subdivided between all an owner's sons with the exception that if the eldest son and heir converted to Protestantism that he would become the one and only tenant of estate and portions for other children not to exceed one third of the estate. This "[Gavelkind](#)" system had previously been abolished by 1600.
- Ban on converting from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism on pain of [Praemunire](#): forfeiting all property estates and legacy to the monarch of the time and remaining in prison at the monarch's pleasure. In addition, forfeiting the monarch's protection. No injury however atrocious could have any action brought against it or any reparation for such.
- Ban on Catholics buying land under a lease of more than 31 years; repealed 1778.
- Ban on custody of orphans being granted to Catholics on pain of 500 pounds that was to be donated to the Blue Coat hospital in Dublin.
- Ban on Catholics inheriting Protestant land
- Prohibition on Catholics owning a horse valued at over £5 (in order to keep horses suitable for military activity out of the majority's hands)
- Roman Catholic lay priests had to register to preach under the [Registration Act](#) 1704, but seminary priests and Bishops were not able to do so until 1778
- When allowed, new Catholic churches were to be built from wood, not stone, and away from main roads.
- 'No person of the popish religion shall publicly or in private houses teach school, or instruct youth in learning within this realm' upon pain of twenty pounds fine and three months in prison for every such offence. Repealed in 1782. [\[5\]](#)
- Any and all rewards not paid by the crown for alerting authorities of offences to be levied upon the Catholic populace within parish and county.

These laws were aimed at all Irish or English Catholics or dissenters. The dissenters were the Scottish Presbyterians who would not acknowledge the king as the head of the church.

As I researched, I found that the Irish Catholics bore the brunt of the injustices of the Penal Laws and The Popery Act.

- Protestants were not allowed to hire a Catholic.
- Irish Catholics could not buy or trade and therefore could not provide for their families.
- Catholics had to convert to Protestantism to keep their land.
- They were not allowed an education.
- They had to pay 12 shillings each time, or 20 pounds a month for not attending the Anglican Church.
- No English person would be punished or charged for the rape or murder of an Irish person.
- The Irish were cut off from their own laws and not allowed recourse to the laws of the colonists.
- The Irish were second class citizens in their own land, they were dehumanized
- The Catholic Church was outlawed. The Gaelic language was banned.

Various penal laws remained in effect for 140 years. .

Oliver Cromwell conquest of Ireland (1649 – 1653)

Quote from Cromwell referring to the Irish:

"I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood."

One author wrote of the Cromwell conquest:

"The worst atrocities committed in Ireland, such as mass evictions, killings and deportation of over 50,000 men, women and children as prisoners of war and indentured servants to [Bermuda](#) and [Barbados](#), were carried out." Cromwell's plan to rid Ireland of its people was either by starvation or shipping them to British Colonies. Those who refused to leave were imprisoned or executed or forced to live in bogs, forests and mountains. Cromwell's action so incensed the Irish people that they cursed the English with these words, "The curse of Cromwell on you."

Winston Churchill wrote:

Upon all of these Cromwell's record was a lasting bane. By an uncompleted process of terror, by an iniquitous land settlement, by the virtual proscription of the Catholic religion, by the bloody deeds already described, he cut new gulfs between the nations and the creeds. 'Hell or Connaught' were the terms he thrust upon the native inhabitants, and they for their part, across three hundred years, have used as their keenest expression of hatred 'The Curse of Cromwell on you.' ...Upon all of us there still lies 'the curse of Cromwell'."

In 1920, the penal laws were repealed. In May 1920 Sean T. O'Kelly wrote:

The position of Irish Catholics is a cruel one. We were enslaved by a Protestant power. The penal laws against our religion are not yet fully abolished. The injurious social and economic results of these anti-Catholic laws will not be overcome for generations. To the present day, we suffer political injury inside and outside of Ireland simply and solely because we are practising Catholics.

So, it seems that though the penal laws were repealed, the ramifications still resonates to this present day.

INDENTURED SERVANTS/SLAVES

There were several groups of indentured servants or slaves.

In the beginning they were indentured servants, and came on their own free will. They saw the opportunities of the British Colonies. They were released from their contracts after their time of service was fulfilled and were given a plot of land as was promised. These were known as the “free willers.” This system evolved into slavery over the years.

Another group were the impoverished parents who sent their children away in hopes of a better life for them. Children were extremely vulnerable to kidnappers who would kidnap and forcibly transport them to one of the British colonies, to be sold to landowners, also known as planters.

In 1618, authorities swept thousands of impoverished children and vagrant children in the slums and streets of London and shipped them to Virginia. They were sold to planters to work in the fields, more than half of them died within a year.

Then there were the petty convicts, the political prisoners, the prostitutes, the beggars and the poor all transported to Virginia, Maryland and the Caribbean Islands.

The English Colonies were Britain’s dumping ground for the “undesirables.”

At that time, Britain’s attitude was that poverty was caused by immoral character. The poor were therefore considered to be “the undesirables.”

The last group were the Irish. The Irish diaspora was worldwide. They were part of Oliver Cromwell’s policy of ethnic cleansing. After Cromwell conquered Ireland, unknown numbers of Catholic men, women and children were forcibly transported to the British Colonies. Young girls and young women was sent to “solace” the men. For over 100 years forced transportation was a way of life in Ireland. Kidnappers worked to satisfy the colonial need for labor, they were paid 2 pounds for every athletic young man.

With American Independence, the doors were closed to being the British dumping ground for their unwanted. Australia became the new penal colony. The French sociologist, Gustave de Beaumont, visited Ireland in 1835 and wrote: “I have seen the Indian in his forests, and the Negro in his chains, and thought, as I contemplated their pitiable condition, that I saw the very extreme of human wretchedness; but I did not then know the condition of unfortunate Ireland....”

In all countries, more or less, paupers may be discovered; but an entire nation of paupers is what was never seen until it was shown in Ireland.”

Statistics:

- 1612 - The West Indies: establishment of a Catholic Irish settlement on the Amazon River.

Until 1625 the “free willers” came, meaning those who came of their own free will as indentured servants.

After 1625 they were sold as slaves, regarded as chattels.

- 1625 - Proclamation to banish overseas of dangerous rogues. (Irish political prisoners)
- The kidnapping of Irish men, women and children was common.
- 1629 - considerable emigration to Guiana.
- 1632 - Antigua and Montserrat, some came as landowners and some as servants.
- 1636 - Ireland was prime source of labor for the islands.
- 1637 - 69% of Montserrat’s white inhabitants were white.
- 1650 - 25,000 Irishmen sold as slaves in St Kitts and adjoining islands, they petitioned for a priest.

- 1641 - Ireland's population was 1,466,000; by 1652 the population was 616,000.
- 850,000 died by the sword, plague, famine, hardship and banishment during the Confederation War 1641-1652.

Many Irish transported to St Bartholomew.

- 1648-1655 - 20,000 Irish political prisoners were shipped to Barbados.
- 1655 - Cromwell's conquest of Jamaica, thousands of children rounded up to fill the need for labor along with men and women.
- 1656 - 60,000 Irish Catholics sent to various islands in Caribbean.
- 1657 - "Those who refuse to transplant to Connaught or Clare within six months.....shall be attained of high treason.....are to be sent to America or other parts beyond the seas...."

Anyone returning after being banished was executed "without benefit of a clergy."

The flow of Irish Catholics continued through to the 17th century.

Between 1815 and 1845 prior to the potato famine, nearly 3 million Irish came over to the United States. Many of them came of their own free will and managed to survive the hardships and went on to create new lives for themselves.

Coffin Ships Headed For Canada

The Potato Famine struck in 1845. By the end of 1847 about a hundred thousand people who were sick, homeless, suffering from malnutrition boarded ships headed for Canada. Passenger fares to the U.S. tripled to discourage immigration but the fares to Canada remained low. They headed for Quebec, Canada and were detained at Grosse Isle which served as a quarantine depot for those in need of medical care. The sick or dying were held back in Grosse Isle, while the others were dispersed to Toronto, Kingston and Montreal.

It is estimated that in total, from when Grosse Isle was set up in 1832 to the closing in 1932, almost 500,000 Irish immigrants passed through Grosse Isle on their way to Canada. Two mass graves have since been unearthed, each with five or six thousand bodies of men, women and children, one in Grosse Isle and another in Montreal.

Since uncovering the penal laws and the Irish diaspora, I now understand why so many people I have encountered have difficulty getting jobs, owning their own homes and are suffering from poverty. These are Christians who love God, they come from different parts of the world, they all seem to have a common thread, that is not being able to obtain all that God has for them.

**Prayer To Be Released From The Consequences Of The Penal Law
And To Be Released From "The Curse Of Cromwell"**

In the Name of Jesus, I repent on behalf of all my ancestors going back to the root, of all hatred between the English and the Irish and the Scottish, and for all hatred between the Catholics and the Protestants.

In Jesus' Name, I repent on behalf of all my ancestors for war, killings, murders, rebellions, destruction of land and homes.

In Jesus' Name, I repent on behalf of all my ancestors for the buying and selling of slaves, for murders, killings, tortures, hangings and inhumane treatment of slaves or of any other human being.

Lord, on behalf of my ancestors, I repent for robbing children of their childhood, for child labour and for child molestation and rape.

Lord, I repent for generational abuse and rape of women, and using women for breeding purposes.

Lord, I repent on behalf of all my ancestors for renouncing Catholicism for the purpose of keeping their land and it was not a decision of the heart.

Lord, I repent on behalf of all my ancestors for renouncing Catholicism for the purpose of inheriting what was not rightfully theirs.

Lord, I repent on behalf of my Irish ancestors for denying my identity, for denying

You, Lord, for blaming You, Lord, for our circumstances.

In Jesus' Name, I forgive the English Monarchy for cursing us with the Penal Laws.

In Jesus' Name, I forgive King William III and Queen Mary II and the English Parliament

for passing The Popery Act, to ensure that the Penal Laws were more strictly applied.

In Jesus' Name I extend forgiveness to the Monarchy, the English Parliament and the English people for stealing our land and our homes, for suppression, oppression and not allowing us to prosper.

In Jesus' Name I forgive all those who would not give us a job or feed us or extend mercy or charity to us because we were Irish Catholics.

Lord, on behalf of all my ancestors, I extend forgiveness for forced conversions to the Protestant faith.

In Jesus' Name, on behalf of my Irish ancestors, I extend forgiveness to the English Monarchy, to Oliver Cromwell, to the English Parliament for cursing us so that we became a

reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and a derision to those around us. We became a byword among the nations, a shaking of the head among the peoples.

Dishonor was before us, and shame covered us, because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles, because of the enemy and the avenger. Psalm 44:13-16

Lord, in Your Name, I ask that You would release me and my family and my descendants to a thousand generations from these curses that have come down the generational lines.

In the Name of Jesus, I ask You, Lord, to release me and my family and my descendants to a thousand generations from the stronghold of the Penal Laws.

I make declaration that we are allowed to get jobs, people are allowed to hire us.

I declare we are allowed to own land and to own our own home.

I declare we do not belong to anyone; we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord, please release us from the victim spirit, the poverty spirit, the spirit of helplessness and hopelessness.

In Jesus' Name we take back our identity, our freedom and our rightful inheritance.

Lord, please lift off us the shame, blame, humiliation, ungodly brandings, markings and stigmas that came down the generational line.

In the Name of Jesus, we are no longer to be shunned, we are no longer outcasts, no longer a byword among the nations.

In Jesus' Name, we are released from the shackles of slavery and released from all contracts of forced indentured servitude.

I repent on behalf of my Irish ancestors for cursing the English or any others with the words "The curse of Cromwell on you."

Lord, release us, our children and all our descendants to a thousand generations from the curse of these words, in Jesus' Name.

In Jesus' Name, I break off us all chains, shackles and ropes that have kept us bound.

I remove off us all generational ungodly limitations placed on us, I also remove off us all ungodly limitations we placed upon ourselves.

Lord, I ask that You would release the blessings You have in store for me and my family and my descendants to a thousand generations.

In Jesus' Name I appropriate all the work and power of the Cross for our freedom.

Amen.