

The subjugation of Ireland laid critical groundwork for the English experiment in America. In 1542 Henry the 8th made Ireland a kingdom and summoned an Irish Parliament that would have to declared Henry the King of Ireland. However, things were not as simple as they seem. The Irish were rebellious people whom the English considered to be lacking the refinement that is so much a part of the English psyche. It is not so much that the Irish were radically different from the English, it is just that the English believed them to be. They went to Ireland with preconceived ideas about the barbarity of the Irish and simply “tailored the Irishmen to fit this ideology strait-jacket.” The English considered the Irish to be barbarous, only nominally Christian. The English had convinced themselves that Irish religion was not just a variation from English orthodoxy, it was an aberration opposed to Christianity. Once it was established that the Irish were Pagans, the first logical step had been established toward declaring them barbarians. The Irish became a “savage nation” that lived “like beasts”_ a lower order of humanity.

When the English arrived in Ireland they made no attempt to reach a settlement with the Irish. The Irish could become good, that is civil and Christian, only by submission. Those who choose not to submit could be exterminated and replaced with more deserving settlers from England. The half-brothers Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh served time in the military occupation of Ireland in the “reducing of that savage nation to better government and civility.” The colonies in Ireland proved to be the birthplace and paving ground for later English settlements in the New World. Colonization experiments had begun in Ireland only shortly before the idea of colonizing America came to the fore. It was in Ireland that the English evolved a pattern of aggression which they were later to apply to the Indians in North America, that of slaughtering a weaker people under the self-justifying delusion that they were dealing with a savage challenge to their civil and religious hegemony. The English carried this ideology to America to fit it on the Native Americans, “using the same pretexts for the extermination of the Indians as their counterparts had used in the 1560s and 1570s for the slaughter of numbers of the Irish.