

### The Telegraph

#### Ireland has said 'yes' to gay marriage and 'no' to Catholicism

The Irish referendum on gay marriage was about more than just gay marriage. It was a politically trendy, media backed, well financed howl of rage against Catholicism

By Tim Stanley

Whatever happened to Ireland? Its people used to be relied upon to reject social change – in previous referenda they have said no to liberalised divorce and abortion. But now, in the year of our Lord 2015, [early returns indicate that the land of St. Patrick has said Yes to gay marriage](#) . And it's the first country in the entire world to do so by popular vote.

So what happened? First, [foreigners spent a lot of money to get this passed](#) . Both sides have accused each other of relying on outside cash, but nothing could really match the scale of that poured into a Yes vote. Second, [the Irish were told that saying No might damage their economy](#)

Third, almost the entire Irish political establishment rallied around the gay marriage issue: it enjoyed the backing of politicians in Fine Gael, Labour and Fianna Fail. Finally, [the press was biased](#)

. One election-eve study found that Irish papers had carried three times more Yes articles than No articles.

Why were the forces behind Yes so overwhelming? Well, it could just be that the case for gay marriage is so strong – that the siren call of equality was irresistible. It could also be that the No side's arguments were out of touch with how the West now views not only gay rights but the institution of marriage itself. No campaigners kept on talking about the importance of parenthood – as though marriage was still a legal contract entered into with the express purpose or hope of raising children. But this traditional understanding of marriage has long since passed away. It's about love, children are not necessarily a priority, and religion is window

dressing. Given this tectonic shift in attitudes towards marriage, it's going to be harder and harder to insist that it be limited to just a man and a woman – or even just to two people.

But this referendum was about more than just the right to marry. Much, much more. It was the manifestation of a social revolution that's been simmering away in Ireland for some time.

It used to be that Irishness was defined by affection for the Catholic Church and resistance to European liberal trends. So stubborn was this identity that the country took longer than the rest of Western Europe to embrace secularism. But the paedophile revelations of the 1990s rightly rocked faith in the Church as an institution, while a series of recent scandals shook faith in its actual theology. The latter set of outrages were, frankly, distortions of the facts. **It was wrongly claimed that a woman had been allowed to die because Catholic doctors would not give her a life saving abortion**

(no such thing even exists).

**It was falsely charged that a Catholic children's home had dumped the bodies of hundreds of unwanted babies into a septic tank**

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Never mind that both stories crumbled under scrutiny – the popularity of them spoke to a growing sense that everything wrong with Ireland was due to the imported tyranny of Catholicism. Shake off the last remnants of traditional religious authority, it was reasoned, and Ireland could finally join the 21st century. Au revoir, Father Ted.

To emphasise, the Yes vote was undoubtedly a reflection of growing tolerance towards gays and lesbians. But it was also a politically trendy, media backed, well financed howl of rage against Catholicism. How the Church survives this turn, is not clear. It'll require a lot of hard work and prayers.

