

Religious guilt levels revealed in new poll

By Amaris Cole

ANGLICANS FEEL just as guilty as the rest of the nation when having an affair, a new poll shows.

Commissioned by the Westminster Faith Debates to coincide with a talk on sexualisation of society, 60 per cent of all those polled responded that they would experience guilt for extra-marital sex.

The denominations who would feel guiltiest about an affair are Baptists and Pentecostals, with 90 per cent responding they would feel this concern.

However, pre-marital sex caused more concern for religious people than the rest of those questioned.

Four times as many religious people say they would feel guilty about having sex before they were married than secular society.

Of those polled, 20 per cent of those who described themselves as religious said they

would feel sorry for having pre-marital sex, compared to only five per cent of non-religious people.

Using pornography caused concern for more than twice the number of people of faith, with 33 per cent responding that they would feel guilty for using this stimulation.

The poll also suggested there is no evidence for Catholic guilt, with only nine per cent feeling guilty for using con-

traception, despite the strict teachings on this.

In total, 4,437 adults were asked to carry out the survey carried out in January this year.

The Westminster Faith Debates are organised by Dr Linda Woodhead and supported by the Lancaster University, the Arts and Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council.

The Church of England Newspaper

Sunday March 10, 2013 E2

Too much sex?

A Westminster Faith Debate chaired by Charles Clark on whether we have too much sex today could hardly have been more topical in the wake of the revelations about Cardinal Keith O'Brien and the allegations against Lord Rennard. Maureen Kendler of the London School for Jewish Studies, Catherine Pepinster of *The Tablet*, Donna Freitas, Professor of Religious Studies at New York University, and journalist Jenny Taylor all agreed in condemning the sexualisation of society but Freitas and Taylor were the most outspoken. Freitas condemned the 'hook up society' among American students. Only evangelicals were exempt, she claimed. Both audience and the panel tried to find reasons for the growing emphasis on sex, with some blaming the changes of the 1960s, others emphasising a reaction against repression and a changing legal climate, and others pointing to the rise of expressive individualism. A YouGov poll taken before the debate showed Catholics feel little guilt at ignoring church teaching on sex. A widening gap between bishops and the faithful could prove disastrous for the Catholic Church, Professor Linda Woodhead suggested. Muslims were more reluctant than Catholics to use contraception and when it came to such matters as sex outside marriage and adultery Pentecostals and Baptists were the most ready to express disapproval, followed by Jews and Muslims. On many questions Anglicans were slightly less liberal than Catholics.