

Women and the Church

Westminster Faith Debates are commissioning a series of polls from YouGov on issues relating to faith and morals. Last week's debate unveiled a poll that revealed more Muslims than Anglicans approve the Church of England's current policies towards women. Of those who claimed to be Anglicans, just 11 per cent expressed support for current policies as opposed to 26 per cent of Muslims. But in what was at times a spirited debate, Rod Thomas of Reform drew the audience's attention to the fact that what was really at stake in the November debate in General Synod was the treatment of the minority in the Church and that in a ComRes poll over 30 per cent of members had identified with the minority and expressed the view that they should continue to have an honoured place. Prof Linda Woodhead of Lancaster University who has written on feminist theology, put the cat among the pigeons when she said women's ordination may have been bad for women in the C of E. Ordained Anglican women had been too ready to join the establishment and buy into the existing system whereas Catholic women continue to be a radical pressure group and the male Catholic clergy are too few in number to exercise complete control of their Church. As an 'ascribed minority' women often do better having their own space, Woodhead claimed.