

## Disappointing Debate

A Westminster Faith debate on marriage failed to catch fire despite the presence of Polly Toynbee, Andrew Goddard, Ronald Hutton and Rosalind Edwards on the panel. Chair Charles Clarke did his best to stir up controversy but without much success. A YouGov poll revealed that everyone agreed that a married couple with children count as a family and a sizeable number say the same about unmarried couples or lone parents with children but 47 per cent also consider a same-sex partnership to be a family. Religious people show little difference from the rest of the population in their views. The narrowest views are held by older men who vote Tory. Individual Christians are more welcoming of divorced people or same-sex partnerships than the churches to which they belong. Unfortunately the meeting never really got down to asking why certain sections of the population in both the UK and the US seem to be opting out of marriage altogether. The general view was that this was related to the cost, although one journalist from The Guardian told the debate he had been married twice for only £100 a time and considered both marriages to have been worth the price. Evidence that poorer sections of society are giving up on marriage for a number of reasons went unnoticed, even by the sociologist on the panel.