

Debate gets hotter

After a mild session on marriage, the Westminster Faith Debate on same-sex marriage proved to be a much livelier affair. The presence of John Milbank, Tina Beattie and Steve Chalke was the guarantee of fireworks. Stephen Holmes from St Andrew's University was the other panellist. He also made a very valuable contribution but generated less heat. Milbank accused the Government of acting too quickly and of seeking to further the intrusion of the state into our personal lives. He argued that the inability of legislators to define adultery or consummation in same-sex marriages means that they will still be different from heterosexual marriage. This led to a lively exchange with a university professor in the audience who assured Milbank that his civil partnership had been consummated. Steve Chalke said his own support for gay unions was based on careful reflection on the Bible. Linda Woodhead revealed the findings of a YouGov poll that showed strongest opposition to same-sex marriage comes from Baptists and Mormons. Self-identified Anglicans are slightly opposed. Most opposition comes from men over 60.