How would you characterise your views on the Bill in general?

In opposition

How would you characterise your views on the introduction of same sex marriage, so that same sex couples can marry each other?

In opposition

In my view marriage is a reserved power, in that it pre-dates law and nation and has traditionally been accepted to be the life long union of one man and one woman.

How would you characterise your views on putting belief celebrants on the same footing as religious celebrants?

Neither

How would you characterise your views on the arrangements for authorising celebrants to solemnise opposite sex and same sex marriage (including the opt-in procedures)?

In opposition

How would you characterise your views on civil partnerships changing to marriages?

In opposition

How would you characterise your views on allowing civil marriage ceremonies to take place anywhere, other than religious premises, agreed between the couple and registrar?

Neither

How would you characterise your views on allowing the religious and belief registration of civil partnerships?

In opposition

How would you characterise your views on allowing transgender persons to stay married when obtaining a full Gender Recognition Certificate, which provides legal recognition in the acquired gender?

In opposition

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of protections for those in society who may have concerns about same sex marriage?
As a teacher, I am concerned that my freedom on religion is hampered and my conscientious objection to same-sex marriage would be trampled on if I refuse to endorse same-sex marriage in the class. A conscience clause should be introduced in employment and equality laws to allow employees who believe in traditional marriage not to be forced to express approval of marriage between two people of the same sex. The law currently protects atheist teacher from having to teach religious education and a similar allowance should be given to teachers who for religious convictions or otherwise, do not feel able to teach about same-sex marriage. As a church leader, charity law should be amended to ensure that disagreement with same-sex marriage is not used to remove charitable status from religious and other charities, so that e.g. religious groups will not lose their charitable status if they are unwilling to “marry” same-sex couples. As a parent with deeply-felt views about their children being taught about same-sex marriage in the classroom. The law should not undermine these views but should protect parents’ right to withdraw their children. Many will be unaware what their children are being taught so they should have a legal right to know when such lessons will take place.

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?

More robust safeguards are needed to ensure that no person will be compelled to express agreement with a same-sex marriage or be punished for expressing their disagreement with it. People who express disagreement with same-sex marriage are already facing difficulties. There are clearly different views on this issue, and many people hold to the historic and long-standing definition of marriage, which is a belief worthy of respect in a democratic society. Those holding that view have a right to be able to express it freely. Amendments need to make clear that merely discussing or criticising same-sex marriage is not, on its own, a form of discrimination for the purpose of equality law or a breach of public order legislation. Such changes would help those who believe in traditional marriage to feel free to discuss the issue with their colleagues or customers, employees or employers. It would send an important message to those who are quick to label any disagreement with same-sex marriage as “bigoted”. I am concerned that even raising my religious disagreement with same-sex marriage with my public-sector line-manager would jeopardise my career.

Would you like to comment on any other wider issues in relation to the Bill that are not mentioned above?

Are you responding as...

a private individual

Michael Atkinson
23 August 2013