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

The institution of marriage predates the establishment of any human law, nation and church and although the law relating to marriage has been modified over the centuries it has never fundamentally altered the essential nature of marriage as given by God: that is marriage is a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. The plan to redefine marriage is therefore a radical departure from Godâ€™s loving purpose for humanity and it is unprecedented in the course of human history. To change marriage in this way opens the door to other forms of legalised sexual relationships. For example in Canada and the USA, where marriage has already been redefined, there have been attempts made to legalise polygamy. Also in Brazil and the Netherlands a three-way relationship was given legal recognition making it comparable with marriage.

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

In opposition

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?

In opposition

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?

Neither

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of protections for those in society who may have concerns about same sex marriage?

My fear is that despite any safeguards put in place churches and ministers who refuse to marry same-sex couples will be susceptible to legal action. Recently a homosexual couple in England have made it known they are already planning to go to court to force churches to host gay weddings. The European Court of Human Rights could overturn and protections put in place and we have no guarantee that this court will not rule that Christian ministers must either solemnise all marriages or cease to be permitted to marry people altogether. It was recently reported that Sikh temples have been advised to halt all civil marriage ceremonies on their premises to protect them from possible legal challenges for refusing to conduct same-sex weddings. Believing in the traditional, biblical definition of marriage must not be used by public sector employers to dispute or question the equality and diversity credentials of existing or prospective employees.

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

The issue of freedom of speech is essential to this issue because it is the expression of beliefs about marriage that tends to get people into trouble. People who express disagreement with same-sex marriage are already facing difficulties. For example Adrian Smith, a housing manager in Trafford, was demoted for gross misconduct after a colleague complained when he described same-sex marriage in church as an equality too far. In Scotland, the Rev Brian Ross was removed from his post as a police chaplain because he disagreed with gay marriage on his personal internet blog. Apparently this breached Strathclyde Police’s policy of equality and diversity! Specific amendments are necessary to protect the right to free speech and debate. They need to apply across public order and equality laws, including employment and goods and services. As a bare minimum 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 homophobic or bigoted.

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

As a Christian minister I believe the Word of God (i.e. the Bible) to be supreme rule of faith and life and it is perfectly clear that marriage is only for one man and one woman. Any other sexual union is sinful and separates us from God. To celebrate sin (which is what a religious celebrant who marries a same-sex couple would in fact
do) is abhorrent to God who loves all people and calls them to repent and believe in His Son, the Lord Jesus.

**Are you responding as...**

a celebrant

Rev Douglas Campbell
Bo'Ness Old Kirk (Church of Scotland)
13 August 2013