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

In support

It is a very good Bill in that it represents something Scotland is likely to coalesce around, with the exception of a relatively few extremists on the edges.

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

In support

It represents the removal of a major piece of discrimination, discrimination that is comparable to denying marriage members to a religious or racial group.

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

In support

Religious celebrants should have no special privileges in such matters.

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 support

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

In support

There should be a simple and cheap upgrade facility for those who were in civil partnerships before the introduction of same-sex marriage. To deny this would be to penalise those same-sex couples who took advantage of civil partnerships as representing the best public acknowledgement of their union that was available at the time.

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 support

I am in support of this provided the location in question allows a degree of seriousness to be maintained commensurate with the seriousness of the
commitment being entered into and of the legal and other public support that accrues to marriage. Marriage on the roller-coaster at a theme park, for instance, would not satisfy this condition.

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

Neither

"If" civil partnerships are to continue (and there appears to be no present intention to abolish them for same-sex couples), then I would want to see religious and belief organizations allowed to register them. But my hope is that with the introduction

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 support

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

The Bill is more than generous in its protections for such people, who often seem to feel a peculiar animosity towards same-sex couples far more intense than they feel, if they feel it at all, towards, say, adulterous couples, divorced-and-remarried couples and unmarried mixed-sex couples. Neither public officials nor employees of privately-owned firms should be allowed to opt out of dealing with same-sex couples. To allow this would be comparable to allowing public officials or private employees to refuse to deal with dealings members with other groups. It would be outrageous for a planning official to be allowed to opt out of processing an application by the Roman Catholic Church on the grounds that "I believe the RC Church to be a bastion of idolatry hateful to the Lord and have a conscientious objection to processing its application for a new church building." In just the same way it would be outrageous for, e.g., a registrar to be allowed to say, "The civil marriage of this couple is an abomination to the Lord and I demand to be allowed to have nothing to do with it."

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

I have seen in the press frequent expressions of concern that schoolteachers should not have to 'teach' same-sex marriage and that this is a matter of freedom of speech. In general, teachers are required to teach a publicly-agreed syllabus, not to foist their private views on children. It would be outrageous for a teacher to claim on freedom-of-speech grounds to be allowed, for instance, to tell a child that his or her unmarried mother "is a whore" or that a child's divorcing parents "will go to hell", no matter how sincerely the teacher believes it. Things should be no different in regard to same-sex marriage. Children need to be educated about the sorts of relationships, and the institutional forms of those relationships, that are available to them and to their family members, and that includes mention of the option of same-sex marriage. Teachers should not be allowed to suggest to children that there is 'something wrong' with Uncle Ted's and Uncle John's marriage--or, indeed, with their own parents' same-sex marriage. Relatedly, teachers should not be allowed to refuse to deal with same-
sex parents in the ordinary way of discussing children's progress at parents' evenings, etc.

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

I am entirely opposed to opening civil partnerships to mixed-sex couples. To allow this option would be to truckle to the common but false view that all marriage, even civil marriage, is essentially a religious institution, as though civil marriage were carried out by the state under a sort of franchise agreement with religious organizations. I know intelligent people who think like this. The tendency to think that all marriage, including civil marriage, is at bottom religious may in part be a consequence of the fact that religious leaders tend to speak as though they have a special claim to pronounce on all marriage, including civil marriage, not just marriage ceremonies as provided by religious organizations. This claim needs to be resisted, not pandered to by opening civil partnerships to mixed-sex couples. Relatedly, a lot of people seem to think that civil partnerships are *the same as* genuinely civil marriage, as though existing civil marriage (for mixed-sex couples) were still at heart a religious institution. The state should not be in the business of reinforcing such muddles. So far as concerns legal unions, there should only be civil marriage, available to same-sex couples and mixed-sex couples; with the option of appropriate religious ceremonies where religious organizations and celebrants can be found to provide them. Civil partnerships should be allowed to wither way as an anomaly, as an institution that at a historically specific time was a means of allowing same-sex couples some of the benefits and status of marriage. With the introduction of same-sex marriage, there is no need for them.

**Are you responding as...**

a private individual

Paul Brownsey
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