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

In opposition

I get the sense that right from the start this is a Bill that has been pushed forward by a small but vocal and very determined minority. This is not something for which there was or is now a popular mandate. It is unnecessary given that all the legal rights of marriage currently exist for same sex couples in the context of civil partnership.

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 understanding of marriage as being a voluntary union for life of between one man and one woman has been accepted as far back as any of us can remember and further. It secures the equal value of men and women as it recognises the complementary nature of the differences between them. It also promotes the welfare of children providing a unique relationship for children to be brought into the world and reared. All the evidence of which I am aware supports the notion that marriage between a man and a woman provides the best environment for children to prosper. Surely every child has a moral claim on her natural mother and father, based on the fact that they brought her into being and that it is in principle good for every child to be brought up by her natural parents, committed in relationship to each other and to her. The UN convention on the rights of a child recognises the right of a child to know and be cared for by both of its parents. Redefining marriage as proposed in the Bill undermines all this. (See Redefining Marriage: the case for caution Julian Rivers http://www.jubilee-centre.org/document.php?id=432)

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

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)?

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

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

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?

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

I must confess to being very sceptical about the cash value of any of the proposed protections -we have already seen examples of discrimination against those who hold to the traditional understanding of marriage between a man and a woman even before any proposed changes in the law - people being disciplined and losing their jobs.

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

I do fear that the freedom to express the position of being in support of traditional marriage and on conscience grounds being unable to endorse same sex marriage is going to be seriously curtailed if the legislation goes thorough.

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

The general issue of protection of those who on conscience grounds cannot endorse same sex marriage needs to be given much greater scrutiny and needs to be addressed. I am also concerned that this redefinition of marriage will not be the last - if you can change the meaning of marriage in this way- why not change it to include polygamy for example. We are on a slippery slope.

Are you responding as...

a celebrant

David Scott
Inshes Church of Scotland
23 August 2013