Religious freedom from gay oppression

*A bill legalizing same-sex marriage for couples in New York State is at a standstill over the issue of exemptions for religious organizations and individuals.  
  
The reach of these religious protections is wide-ranging —from whether Catholic adoption agencies may reject same-sex couples, to the right of religious caterers to refuse services for gay weddings.  
  
In New York State’s Marriage Equality Bill, should there be exemptions for religion? What should happen when equal rights for gay citizens and the right to religious free exercise clash?*

1  While for decades I have publicly supported both the legalization of gay interpersonal unions & churches' ordination of gays (that is, homosexuals), over**-**demanding and over-reachingby and for gays are not in the public interest.  It takes patience, and a will to accuracy and fairness, to think through to the most appropriate legislative language.

2  The gay (and gay-supporter) interest in blurring the word "marriage" (so that it no longer signals the societally-recognized sexual union of a man and a woman) is the fundamental ***over-demand*** of the gay movement.  This proposal to reduce the clarity of the English language is recidivist: linguistic evolution *usually increases* clarity.  If successful, this linguistic distortion would leave the English language - alone among the world's major languages - with no word for "the societally-recognized sexual union of a man and a woman."

3  New York State's proposed interpersonal equal-rights bill should be rewritten to remove the propaganda and inaccuracy of the present "Marriage Equality Bill."  Here, the adjectival "Marriage" is propaganda for corrupting the English word "marriage."  And the noun "equality" is inaccurate: the bill asserts that (heterosexual) marriages and (homosexual) unions should have equal rights (a legal matter), not that they are generally (in all respects) equal.

4  Paralleling the over-**demand** that the English language suffer a change of clarity to accommodate gay interests, the phrase "marriage equality" is - in addition to being inaccurate - an over-**reach**.  Laws, when properly written, are in the interest of fairness, equity, not point-for-point equality (as in "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth").  Fair laws on sexual behavior will always give preference to sexual unions with the potential for producing future citizens (with their potentials for being a burden on and/or a benefit to society).  How unfair it would be to children, and thus to society, to afford exactly the same rights to hetero and homo couples!  While not all hetero couples will produce children, no homo couple will do so - though homo couples should be permitted to adopt children.

5  Since "equal rights" can be read as meaning the same rights, and the "same" does not fit the bio-differing realities of hetero and homo couples, the appropriate legal term is not "equal" (the adjective cognate with the noun "equality") but "equitable" (the adjective cognate with the noun "equity").  The same bio-factor applies to gender rights: "equal" (meaning the same) rights would be unfair to women, whom equity entitles to preferential treatment during pregnancy and early motherhood.  But since "equal" means equitable in the case of women's rights, it may mean equitable in the case of homosexual unions.  /  I am a native New Yorker (though now living elsewhere), and could support a bill titled "Marriage-and-Union Equality."  This is the *liberal* position, between the conservative rejection of any legal recognition of homosexuality and the radical blurring of the word "marriage."

6  My position on "exemptions for religious organizations and individuals" is also *liberal,* between governmental interference with religious freedom and rigid religious rules insensitive to some human realities.  Gays who pressure for the former are insensitive to religious realities, and hypocritical in trying to oppress those who they claim are their oppressors.

*Willis E. Elliott*

*6.23.11*

*washingtonpost.com/onfaith/*

166