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From: *The Guardian, Manchester*, October 22nd, 1964

## CHURCHES' MOVE ON HOMOSEXUALITY LAW

### *Approach to Home Secretary*

At a last, depleted, session yesterday, the British Council of Churches, meeting at Hoddesdon, decided to approach the Home Secretary, Sir Frank Soskice, to reopen discussion on the controversial Part 2 of the Wolfenden Report which proposed that homosexual conduct in private between consenting adult males should not be a criminal offence.

Opinion in the council on the desirability of changing the law was divided. The Wolfenden Committee found that *opinion*, generally, was divided when it reported seven years ago. The Rev. J. M. Neilson (Methodist), of Manchester, was anxious lest the council's officers suggest to the Home Secretary that such homosexual *conduct* should no longer be an offence at all.

All sorts of consequences might arise if it were removed from the statute book completely so that it was no longer even a misdemeanour. He feared such action might encourage rather than discourage such activity.

Dr Aubrey Vine, secretary of the Free Church Federal Council, pleaded for delay. He suggested that, before any approach to the Home Secretary, the BCC's advisory group on sex, marriage, and the family should prepare for the council a memorandum on whether any change in the law was desirable. Lord Wemyss and March (Church of Scotland) was against any deputation to the Home Secretary.

But the council, by 25 votes to four, authorised its *advisory* group to discuss with the Home Secretary the «question of implementing some or all of the recommendations under Part 2 of the Wolfenden Report.»

The Rev Kenneth Greet, chairman of the group, opening the discussion, said members were unanimous that since 1957 there had been a steady movement of opinion in the Churches and in society generally towards the view expressed in the Wolfenden Report. No Church was now opposed to some revision of the law though there were divergencies of view in some, particularly the Church of Scotland and the Congregationalists, on the changes suggested. «Even they would, I think, agree', Mr Greet said, «that reform of the law, in the present, more rational atmosphere, ought to be discussed.»

From: *Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici, 1642*

I have never yet cast a true affection for a woman; but I have loved my friend as I do virtue, my soul, my God. I love my friend before myself, and yet methinks I do not love him enough; some few months hence my multiplied affection will make me believe I have not loved him at all. When I am from him, I am dead till I be with him; when I am with him, I am not satisfied, but would be still nearer him . . .

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