

## “HOMOSEXUALITY” Is Not a Biblical Term

The first time the word “homosexual” appeared in any bible was in the Revised Standard Version (RSV) published February 11, 1946. The translation committee changed the interpretation of two Greek words found in 1 Corinthians 6:9 – “malakoi” and “arsenokoitai”. Previously these words were loosely translated to mean “effeminacy” and “pervert” or “sexual pervert”. The RSV committee translated these words as “homosexual”. Several other bible translations followed suit and, for the first time in history, homosexuality was named a sin in the bible.

According to records kept by the RSV translation committee, they received a letter from a seminarian who challenged them to reconsider this change in translation on the grounds that it was bound more in today’s culture than in the true meaning behind Paul’s words. The seminarian pointed out the dangerous implications that could come with this mistranslation and misuse of the word “homosexual”.

Dr. Luther Weigle, the head of the translation committee, agreed with the seminarian’s findings. He wrote the seminarian a letter acknowledging their mistake and committed to correcting their error. Unfortunately, the revised version of the RSV which replaced the word “homosexual” with “sexual perverts” wasn’t published until 1971 – 25 years after the mistranslation occurred. Within that time several other translations had changed their versions to “homosexual”. Despite evidence to the contrary, many of these translations continue to misuse the word “homosexual” in their versions.

Today, the misuse of the word “homosexual” appears in most translations of 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10. Sadly, this has become the foundation of much of the anti-gay culture that exists today, especially in religious spaces. Many conservative religious leaders have used these biblical texts to condemn and marginalize Q+ Christians. And society at large has been shaped – at least in part – to believe the idea that sexual and gender minorities must choose between their faith and their identity.

It is important that we as Christians and as a church stand up for truth. Very few people are aware of this story and the negative impact this mistranslation has brought on Q+ people. Let’s bring it into the light. Share what you have learned with others. Remind folks that they do not have to choose between their faith and their identity. Pray that damage done by this error may one day be healed and redeemed.