

The Use of Words not Found in the Bible
By Gregg L. Bahnsen and John Calvin

“The use of the word ‘Trinity’ can aid in interpreting the Scriptures. Who would argue against this? Well some say the word ‘person’ is not used in the bible. The bible does not say there are three persons that are God. The word ‘trinity’ is not found in the bible. Calvin argues that it is alright to have these theological words.” – Bahnsen

“Now, although the heretics rail at the word “person,” or certain squeamish men cry out against admitting a term fashioned by the human mind, they cannot shake our conviction that three are spoken of, each of which is entirely God, yet there is not more than one God. What wickedness, then, it is to disapprove of words that explain nothing else than what is attested and sealed by Scripture!”

“It would be enough, they say, to confine within the limits of Scripture not only our thoughts but also our words, rather than scatter foreign terms about, which would become seedbeds of dissension and strife. For thus are we wearied with quarreling over words, thus by bickering do we lose the truth, thus by hateful wrangling do we destroy love.”

“If they call a foreign word one that cannot be shown to stand written syllable by syllable in Scripture, they are indeed imposing upon us an unjust law which condemns all interpretation not patched together out of the fabric of Scripture. But if that is “foreign” which has been curiously devised and is superstitiously defended, which conduces more to contention than to edification, which is made use of either unseasonably or fruitlessly, which by its harshness offends pious ears, which detracts from the simplicity of God’s Word—I wholeheartedly embrace their soberness. For I do not feel that concerning God we should speak with less conscientiousness than we should think, since whatever by ourselves we think concerning him is foolish, and whatever we speak, absurd. Yet some measure ought to be preserved: we ought to seek from Scripture a sure rule for both thinking and speaking, to which both the thoughts of our minds and the words of our mouths should be conformed. But what prevents us from explaining in clearer words those matters in Scripture which perplex and hinder our understanding, yet which conscientiously and faithfully serve the truth of Scripture itself, and are made use of sparingly and modestly and on due occasion? There are quite enough examples of this sort of thing. What is to be said, moreover, when it has been proved that the church is utterly compelled to make use of words “Trinity” and “Persons”? If anyone, then, finds fault with the novelty of the words, does he not deserve to be judged as bearing the light of truth unworthily, since he is finding fault only with what renders the truth plain and clear?” – Calvin

“There would never be any commentaries or theologies then, there would be simply different ways of combining the sentences of the bible. That’s entirely wrong. Theology is not simply the rearranging of bible sentences. It’s the application of what the bible teaches to our situation.” – Bahnsen

Other words used today to render truth plain and clear:

self-government economics theology epistemology ethics eschatology
public policy apologetics omniscience omnipotence providence