

SPECIAL STUDIES NUMBER SIX

Colossians 2:9

Colossians 2:9 reads as follows:

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

The American Standard Version reads thus:

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

It is the word "Godhead" which we single out for consideration. The word in Colossians 2:9 is from the Greek word "theotes". This word, according to Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, page 423, means "Deity".

In Romans 1:20 reference is made to "the Godhead", but the word there is translated from the Greek "theiotes", and, according to the same source, means "Divinity".

Jehovah's Witnesses, in an effort to deny the Deity of Christ, substitutes the word "theiotes" in Romans 1:20 for the word "theotes" in Colossians 2:9, so that Colossians 2:9 reads in the New World Translation as follows:

"Because it is in him that all the fulness of the divine quality dwells bodily."

Walter Martin and Norman Klann have written a book entitled Jehovah of the Watchtower, which is an expose of Jehovah's Witness doctrine. On pages 55,56, they deal with the deceptive effort of Jehovah's Witnesses in handling Colossians 2:9 and Romans 1:20. I quote from that article at length as follows:

"In Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, which is referred to as being 'comprehensive' (NWT, p.19), a complete analysis of theotetos (Godhead, deity) is given, especially its interpretation in the context of Colossians 2:9. Jehovah's Witness will do well to remember that Thayer was a Unitarian (one who denies the deity of Christ) and therefore more prone to accept their interpretations than those of evangelical Christianity. But despite his theological views, Thayer was a Greek scholar whose integrity in the presentation of facts, despite their disagreement with

his beliefs, is the trait exemplified in all good critics and honest scholars. On page 288 of the edition of 1886, Thayer states that Theotetos [Godhead, deity] is a form of Theot [Deity] or in his own words 'i.e., the state of Being God, Godhead' (Colossians 2:9)! In other words, Christ was the fulness of 'the Deity' (Jehovah) in the flesh! The Emphatic Diaglott correctly translates Theotetos 'Diety'; but the NWT erroneously renders it 'the divine quality', which robs Christ of His Deity. Jehovah's Witnesses arrive at this inaccurate translation by substituting the word Theiotes, a form of Theiot (divinity) and thus escaping the condemning evidence of 'The Deity' (Jehovah) Tes Theotetos. However, documentary evidence reveals that they cannot rightfully do this for in Thayer's own words, THEOT (Deity) differs from THEIOT (Divinity) as essence differs from quality or attribute.' This fact again exposes the deception employed by the Watchtower to lead the unwary Bible student astray into the paths of blasphemy against the Lord Jesus. It is improper, it cannot be so translated, the substitution of one word for another in translation is pure scholastic dishonesty, and Jehovah's Witnesses can produce no authority for this bold mistranslation of the Greek text. Jesus Christ, according to the words themselves, in the same 'essence' and 'substance' as Jehovah, and as the essence (deity) differs from the quality (divinity) so He is God - Tes Theotetos (The Deity) - Jehovah Manifest in the Flesh" (end quote).

To substitute one word for another, when the two are not equal in meaning, is deceptive to say the least. I have in my library the testimony of more than 30 Greek scholars who have written on the two words in view. All of them, in the definition of the two words, agree as to the definition of each, and to the absolute distinction between the two words. I know of no conservative scholar who equates these two words in meaning, or that substitutes one for the other. The following is a list of some of them, and thier comments respecting these two words:

John Eadie, D.D., L.L.D., writes:

"The word is quite different in meaning...Romans 1:20 - a term which describes quality rather than being. The words differ as divinitas and deitas - divineness and Deity" (end quote, Greek Text Commentaries, Volume IV, Colossians, page 137).

A.T. Robertson, A.M., D.D., LL.D, Litt.D., writes:

"There dwells (at home) in Christ not one or more aspects of the Godhead (the very essence of God, from theos, deitas) and not to be confused with theiotes in Roman 1:20 (from theios, the quality of God, divinitas), here only in N.T. as theiotes only in Romans 1:20...Paul here asserts that 'all the pleroma of the Godhead', not just certain aspects, dwells in Christ in bodily form..." (end quote, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Volume IV, "The Epistles to the Colossians", page 491).

Marvin R. Vincent, D.D., writes:

"Godhead...only here in the New Testament. See on Romans 1:20 where... divinity, or godhead is used...Here Paul is speaking of the essential and personal deity as belonging to Christ" (end quote, Word Studies in the New Testament, Volume III, "The Epistle to the Colossians", page 486).

Richard Chenevix Trench, D.D., writes:

"Neither of these words occurs more than once in the N.T.; theiotes only at Romans 1:20...theotes at Colossians 2:9. We have rendered both by 'Godhead;' yet they must not be regarded as identical in meaning, nor even as two different forms of the same word, which in process of time have separated off from one another, and acquired different shades of significance. On the contrary, there is a real distinction between them, and one which grounds itself on their different derivations...in...Colossians 2:9... Paul is declaring that in the Son there dwells all the fulness of absolute Godhead; they were no mere rays of divine glory which gilded Him, lighting up his person for a season and with a splendour not his own; but He was, and is, absolute and perfect God; and the Apostle uses theotes to express this essential and personal Godhead of the Son..." (end quote, Synonyms of the New Testament, pages 7,8).

Kenneth Wuest, Teacher Emeritus of New Testament Greek, the Moody Bible Institute, writes on the word of Colossians 2:9 thus:

"Here, the word 'divinity' will not do, only the word 'deity'. It is well in these days of apostasy, to speak of

the deity of the Lord Jesus, not using the word 'divinity' when we are referring to the fact that He is Very God" (end quote, Word Studies in the New Testament, Volume I, "Ephesians and Colossians, page 203).

W.E. Vine, M.A., writes:

"Theiotes...divinity, the R.V. rendering in Romans 1:20 (A.V., 'Godhead'), is derived from theios...and is to be distinguished from theotes, in Colossians 2:9, 'Godhead'" (end quote, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, "Divinity", page 328).

I might point out that both Mr. Wuest and Mr. Vine, as previously quoted, also quote at length from the article by Richard C. Trench, previously quoted in part. Both Mr. Wuest and Mr. Vine endorse the conclusions made by Mr. Trench, from whom they quote.

The Expositors Greek Testament, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A.; LL.D., states:

"...the whole fulness dwells in Christ, therefore, it is vain to seek it wholly or partially outside of Him...The addition of theotes defines...as the fulness of Deity. The word is to be distinguished from...as Deity, the being God, from Divinity, the being Divine or Godlike. The passage thus asserts the real Deity of Christ" (end quote, Volume III, "The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians," by Professor A.S. Peake, M.A., page 523).

William Hendrikson, who holds a Th.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary, writes as follows on Colossians 2:9:

"...the apostle...has in mind...deity, not...divinity. He is referring to the Son's complete equality of essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, his consubstantiality, not his similarity...theotes used here in Colossians 2:9...means deity; theiotes used in Romans 1:20...indicates divinity" (end quote, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, page 111).

H. Frank Fort, of whom W. E. Dowell said, "I have not known in my lifetime a preacher who was more thorough in his presentation of great Bible truths...the result of...long hours of study, searching out every truth that relates to the particular subject under consideration" (end quote), wrote as follows:

"The word translated 'Godhead' in our text is from 'theotetos' and is literally 'Deity', and the 'Pleroma' (fulness) thereof dwelleth 'in him' (Christ)... They who teach that Jesus Christ is not 'the almighty' (Revelation 1:8), but merely a created 'Mighty God' (Isaiah 9:6) arrive at their conclusion on the principle of II.Peter 3:16. They depart from the translation of the 'Diaglott'...and depend on the 'New World Translation' of Jehovah's Witnesses. In the Diaglott on Colossians 2:9, the word which is translated 'Godhead' in the King James Version, is translated 'Deity' from the Greek 'theotetos', while in the N.W.T. a different word is substituted for 'theotetes', and translated 'the divine quality' (not deity, from the word which is actually in the text). Mr. Thayer, who was one of the world's foremost lexicographers, said, 'Theot (deity) differs from Theiot (divinity) as essence differs from quality or attribute' (Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament, p.288). Jesus Christ is the same essence and substance as Jehovah" (end quote, Colossians, Lesson 12, page 1).

It is interesting to note that this testimony is the same in content as that first introduced in this article by Walter Martin, Ph.D., and Norman Klann, Th.B, in their book Jehovah of the Watchtower.

We have quoted from Walter Martin, Norman Klann, Joseph Henry Thayer, John Eadie, A.T. Robertson, Marvin R. Vincent, Richard Chenevix Trench, Kenneth Wuest, W. E. Vine, A. S. Peake, Willian Hendrikson, and H. Frank Fort. This list could be expanded, but these suffice to show the unanimity of testimony concerning the two words translation "Godhead" in the King James Version in Romans 1:20 and Colossians 2:9.

The two words are not the same. The two words are of different derivation, and, therefore, have entirely different meanings. There is no documentary evidence for substituting the word of Romans 1:20 for the word actually in Colossians 2:9. To do this, as Jehovah's Witnesses, is deceptive and fraudulent. They have led many people astray by their underhanded tactics, but there is ample scholarship to set the record straight, if one has a will to know the truth.

Colossians 2:9 reads:

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead (Deity, not divinity) bodily."

The opening word "for" shows the link with what preceeds. This word is from "hoti" and means "because". We are not to seek spiritual life, and blessing, through "enticing words...through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men", verse 4,8. Christ is the fountain-head of all spiritual life, and blessing. Therefore, we are warned, "Beware", regarding anything "not after Christ", verse 8. "For (or, because) in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

The "in him" of verse 9 is the "Christ" of verse 8, the "Christ Jesus the Lord" of verse 6. The word "dwelleth" is from the Greek "katoikei". It is derived from "kata", meaning "down", and "oikeo", meaning "to inhabit as one's abode". Hence, "to settle down in a dwelling, to dwell fixedly in a place". The word "oikeo" simply means "to be at home". The prefix "kata" indicates permanence. The verb is in the present tense, indicating durative action. Thus, Wuest translates Colossians 2:9 as follows:

"Because in Him there is continuously and permanently at home all the fulness of absolute deity in bodily fashion" (end quote).

The present tense "dwelleth" speaks of an eternal, essential characteristic of Christ's being. There has never been a time when "all the fulness of the Deity" did not reside "in Him". This was true in time past (John 1:1,2; Philippians 2:6). It was true in time when men "beheld his glory" (John 1:14; I. John 1:1-2). And, it is true now, and now on, according to our text. Our text, however, makes a distinction for it says, "bodily". In other words, "all the fulness of the Deity dwells in His glorified humanity in heaven." This, of course, would not be true of His preincarnate state, although at that time He was perceived as God.

Notice also: The "fulness" of Colossians 2:9 is not just some of, or a part of, but is "all the fulness". This "fulness" speaks of the sun-total of all that Deity is in essence, power, attributes, etc.

This is the Christ who is the Saviour. "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12). He said, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved..." (John 10:9), and added, "verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47).

He is not a creature, but the Creator. He is not godlike, but very God. He is able to save, and qualified to be your Saviour. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not

the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).