

## Colossians 2:9

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. (NIV)

1. The word “Deity” or “Godhead” is a translation of the Greek word *theotes*. In *A Greek English Lexicon*, by Liddell and Scott, the classic lexicon of the ancient Greek language, it is translated as “divinity, divine nature.” In making their case, Liddell and Scott cite Greek authors Plutarch and Lucian, and also reference Heliodorus and Oribasius using the phrase *dia theoteta* = “for religious reasons.” The Greek word occurs only once in the Bible, so to try to build a case for it meaning “God” or “Godhead” (which is an unclear term in itself) is very suspect indeed. Standard rules for interpreting Scripture would dictate that the way Paul used *theotes* in Colossians would be the same way the Colossians were used to hearing it in their culture. There is no reason to believe that Paul wrote to the Colossians expecting them to “redefine” the vocabulary they were using. Christ was filled with holy spirit “without measure,” and God gave him authority on earth to heal, cast out demons, forgive sins, *etc.* Thus, it makes perfect sense that Scripture would say that Christ had the fullness of the “divine nature” dwelling in him. In fact, the same thing is said about every Christian (2 Pet. 1:4).

2. The word “fullness” demonstrates that the verse is speaking of something that one could also have just a *part* of. It makes no sense to talk about the “fullness” of something that is indivisible. God is indivisible. We never read about “the fullness of God the Father” because, by definition, God is always full of His own nature. Therefore, the verse is not talking about Christ being God, but about God in some way providing Christ with “fullness.” What this verse is saying is made clear earlier in Colossians: “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him” (Col. 1:19). That is true. John 3:34 adds clarification: “For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the spirit without limit.”

3. The fact that Christ has “all the fullness” of God does not make him God. Ephesians 3:19 says that Christians should be filled with “all the fullness of God,” and no one believes that would make each Christian God.

4. If Christ were God, it would make no sense to say that the fullness of God dwelt in him, because, being God, he would always have the fullness of God. The fact that Christ could have the fullness of God dwell in him actually shows that he was *not* God. 2 Peter 1:4 says that by way of God’s great and precious promises we “may participate in the divine nature.” Having a “divine nature” does not make us God, and it did not make Christ God. The note on 2 Peter 1:4 in the *NIV Study Bible* is almost correct when, referring to the divine nature, it states: “We are indwelt by God through His Holy Spirit” (we would say “holy spirit, referring to God’s gift). Likewise Christ, who was filled with holy spirit without limits, had the fullness of “Deity” dwelling in him.

5. The context is a key to the proper interpretation of the verse. The Colossians had lost their focus on Christ (see Col. 1:15-20 above). Colossians 2:8 shows that the people were in danger of turning to “hollow and deceptive philosophy” rather than being focused on Christ. What could philosophy and traditions offer that Christ could not? The next verse

is a reminder that there is no better place to turn for answers and for truth than to Christ, in whom all the fullness of God dwells. There is nothing in the context here that would warrant believing that Paul is writing about the Trinity. He is simply saying that if you want to find God, look to Christ. Christ himself had said he was “the Way” and “the Truth,” and that “no man comes to the Father except through me.”

Dana, Letter #23, pp. 137 and 138  
*Racovian Catechism*, pp. 142-144  
Snedeker, p. 450

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