

Notes on John 1:1

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (KJV)

Some anti-Trinitarians have tried to argue that the omission of the definite article "the" (Greek *ho*) prior to the second usage of *Theos* in this verse indicates that the Word was only a divine being and not God in the fullest sense of the term. Here are a few points on this:

1) John could have written *eis theos* ("a god") if he had wanted to clearly demonstrate the ontological difference between "God" and "the Word", but he didn't.

2) John could have used the word *theios* ("godlike", "divine") in reference to the Word, but instead he used *theos* ("God").

3) In verse 18 John states "No one has ever seen God." Here John again omits the definite article "the" (Gr. *ho*), yet the context clearly indicates that he is speaking about the Father. If we were to apply the logic of the anti-Trinitarians consistently, we would thus have to hold that the Father only has the nature of God but is not truly God in the fullest sense of the word, because the definite article is missing here in reference to Him.

4) Without the omission of the article in reference to the Word in verse 1, one could get the impression that "the Word" and "God" are one and the same person, when in actual fact the Word is God but is not the same person as God. This fits well with the SDA understanding of the Godhead in which the members are distinct individual personalities, but one in mind, character, and purpose.

5) Luther argued that in verse 1 John disposes of Arianism because the *Logos* was eternally God. Luther as well repudiated the unscriptural papal doctrine of *Modalism*: "So the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is Lord. And yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord. For, like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be both God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say, There be three Gods or three Lords." (Smalcald Articles, Part I, Article I: Of God, Triglotta edition). I think Ellen White would have had no problem with Luther's affirmation of the three Persons of the Godhead being fully God and fully Lord while maintaining the essential oneness of God.

- Side note on John 1:18: The most reliable and ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament have the reading *monogenes theos* ("one and only God") in place of *monogenes huios* ("one and only Son"). Most contemporary English versions, such as the ESV, ISV, LEB, NET, and TLV, are based on these most reliable Greek NT manuscripts and use the term *theos* ("God") rather than *huios* ("Son"). ESV: "No one has ever seen God; **the only God**, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." This is a striking testimony to the deity of Christ.