

## 7.1α: The verb to be

### *Irregular verbs*

As languages evolve, they tend to become more regular and therefore simpler and more predictable. It stands to reason, then, that basic notions which must go back to the most archaic stages of human communication tend to be *irregular*. The verb *to be* is a prime example. Consider its forms in foreign languages that you may know, and even in English. The conjugation of an irregular verb needs to be memorized. I list the forms of the Present Indicative, Imperative, and Infinitive, adding the personal pronouns, which as you know are not indispensable, since most forms of this verb are unique.

| <i>Present Indicative</i> | <i>Present Imperative</i> | <i>Present Infinitive</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| ἐγὼ εἶμι                  |                           | εἶναι                     |
| σὺ εἶ                     | ἴσθι                      |                           |
| ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν             | <i>not yet...</i>         |                           |
| ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν               |                           |                           |
| ὕμεῖς ἐστε                | ἐστέ                      |                           |
| ἐκεῖνοί εἰσιν             | <i>not yet...</i>         |                           |

**Note** that the only form of the Present Indicative of this verb that has an accent is the second person singular. The other forms normally "lean upon" the preceding word. As we will see in the next section, this is what is meant when they are called *enclitic*. You will notice the same trait in the following examples.

## EXAMPLES

a) [ μαθηταί ἐσμεν· ] [ ἀπόστολοί ἐστε. ]<sup>1</sup>  
PN V PN V

*We are students. You (pl) are apostles.*

b) [ ἀγαθός ἐστιν ὁ κύριος καὶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστίν. ]<sup>2</sup>  
PN V S ἐν + dat V

*The Lord is good and He is in the world.*

c) [ μὴ ἴσθι πονηρός. ]<sup>2</sup>  
V PN

*Do not be wicked! (you sg)*

**NOTE 1:** The word *ἀπόστολοι* receives a second accent because it is supporting an enclitic. There are rules governing the accents of words followed by enclitics, and the accents that the enclitics themselves occasionally receive ... Before concerning ourselves with such specifics, we need to understand the more general rules governing accents.

**NOTE 2: IMPORTANT!** While in the clauses in a) and the first one in b) the verb *εἰμί* is a linking verb, that is not the case in the fourth clause. Typically, when *be* is equivalent to “be located,” “reside at,” “sit or stand in or on,” etc., it is an intransitive verb, not a linking one. A clue can be the adverbial modifier that accompanies it: They are *here*. She was *at home*. In that usage *to be* does not take a Predicate Nominative.