Exegetical Analysis of John 8:58

- Exposing the Inaccurate Translation of “I have been” in the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures

The following reading of John 8:58 from the Greek New Testament is taken from The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures published in 1985 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society:

εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί.

The English translation of the above verse from the 1984 edition of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is:

Jesus said to them: “Most truly I say to YOU, Before Abraham came into existence, I have been.”

The question arises around the last phrase as translated in New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, “I have been,” from the Greek phrase, ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi). Therefore, we will look at this passage from the Greek of The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures, as well as its translation in the New World Translation that also been reproduced in the right-hand column of The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures, and we will also look to see how this same phrase is used in the LXX with regard the Hebrew equivalent.

I. Analysis of John 8:58 from The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures as a whole.

A. My initial assessment of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures and The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures is that these translations have very little to do with genuine, scholarly exegesis of Greek, but rather an overt, theological attempt of some type, to express the translators’ own, theological bias, whatever that might be, which reflects quite poorly on its Greek exegesis and translation.

B. The translation of “I have been” from the Greek phrase, ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi)

1. The following New Testament verses contain the Greek phrase, ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi), when Jesus is referring to Himself, as well as other references that will help to give an overall understanding of what is being said. One important fact about New Testament Greek that is significant with this phrase is that whenever a personal pronoun of the first person singular or plural is attached to a verb, it is for emphasis, as the person who is performing the action of a verb in Greek is already contained in the Greek verb (this is true of most all languages, including modern, except for English):
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Personal pronouns are not used in the nominative as subjects of verbs unless emphasis or contrast is desired. They are not needed because the subject is present in the verb ending. Thus if you wish to be emphatic with the sentence “I am speaking, but you are writing,” the Greek personal pronouns would be added (ἐγώ λέγω, σὺ δὲ γράφεις). In English, emphasis is indicated by italics or the tone of the voice. For example John 6:48: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς (I am the bread of life).¹

Thus, the very fact that Jesus, or anyone else uses the first person, personal pronoun, ἐγώ (egō), with a verb, it is for emphasis, and so what Jesus is saying is, “I myself Am!” This then is not an exclusive term that Jesus used to focus on Himself for whatever reason at the various times He used it, but it was also used frequently throughout the New Testament by various people, as we will see in the examples below. Therefore, just the phrase, ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi), by itself, does not signify deity, but the context in which it is used does, and that is what we will see in the context of John 8:58. In addition, I will be giving the English translation from the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* so as to accurately address the translators’ use of the Greek:

a. Matthew 14:27: “At once Jesus spoke to them with the words: ‘Take courage, it is I (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi); have no fear.’” This is the translation from the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, and the translation, “with the words,” is an incredibly poor and incorrect translation of the Greek participle, λέγων (legōn), which should be translated as, “saying.” The translation “with the words” would be in the Greek μετὰ τῶν λόγων (meta tōn logōn) but the Greek, present, active participle is always translated as “saying,” and never would a competent, Greek scholar and translator give such a translation as “with the words” for λέγων (legōn). With regard to the translation of “it is I” for ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi), this is a translation made specifically for English readers so as to make sense of what Jesus is saying, and that it is, “I am,” meaning, “It is really me, coming to you, walking on the water!” The context is primary in understanding how ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi) is to be translated and understood in a particular setting for our English idiom, which is, “It’s me.”

b. Matthew 26:22: “Being very much grieved at this, they commenced each and every one to say to Him, ‘Lord, it is not I (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi), is it?’” Jesus had just finished telling His disciples that one of them was going to betray Him, and this was their response. Thus, as you can see, the phrase, ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi), used here, has nothing at all to do with Jesus identifying Himself as God, but rather, it is an idiom, whereby an individual will make an emphatic reference to himself, “Surely, it is really not me,” and this is an emphatic statement by them all, as

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indicated by the Scripture. In this particular instance, the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures is actually a good translation, indicating the emphatic nature of ἐγὼ εἰμί in this particular usage.

c. Matthew 26:25: “By way of reply, Judas, who was about to betray him, said: ‘It is not I (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi), is it, Rabbi?’ He said to him, ‘You have said it yourself.’” This is the same, exact construction as Matthew 26:22, in which ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi) is used as an emphatic statement, and here too, the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures gives a good translation of the emphatic nature of ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi), but the verse as a whole is quite poorly translated, indicating either a lack of knowledge of basic Greek, or else an overt attempt to do a very sloppy job in order to present to an uniformed public a quite biased translation.

d. Mark 13:6: “Many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am he (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi),’ and will mislead many.” The first thing I noticed in this verse is that the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures gave the correct translation of “saying” in this instance from the Greek participle, λέγοντες (legontes), whereas in Matthew 14:27, they used the phase, “with the words” to translate the Greek participle λέγων (legōn). The translation here in Mark 13:6 of λέγοντες (legontes) is correct, but in Matthew 14:27 it is absurdly incorrect. And thus, tragically once again this is a reflection of a poorly translated text by either incompetent translators, or people who are approaching the text with an unmitigated bias who want to misdirect uninformed readers, or perhaps even both. With reference to the phrase, ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi), the correct translation in this instance is, “I am he,” with the “he” being in italics or brackets, indicating that the Greek personal pronoun, αὐτός (autos), is not in the text.\(^2\) Quite literally, Jesus is saying that many will come in His supposed name, saying, “I AM,” meaning that they are God and the promised Messiah. Thus, as far as the Greek itself, this verse is translated accurately except for the fact of inserting “he” in the text as though it was actually in the Greek – once again, a poor and sloppy translation with regard to specific accuracy, but in this instance the remainder of the verse was accurate.

e. Mark 14:62: “Then Jesus said, ‘I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi); and you persons will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.’” Jesus here is asserting before the Sanhedrin that He is the Messiah, as they asked Him point blank in verse 61. His response, therefore, with ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi), was far more than just asserting in the positive that He was the promised Messiah, but by saying “I am,” He was indeed stating that He is the fulfillment of Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13-14, which unequivocally made Jesus

\(^2\) Cf. New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1984), 1547.
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the fulfilled, prophetic Messiah. Thus, ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi) in this instance is presenting Jesus as emphatically asserting that He is the Messiah – “I am unequivocally the One you are anticipating.”

f. John 4:26: “Jesus said to her: ‘I who am speaking to you am (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi) he.’” Once again, the word “he” is written in the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures as though it was actually in the text, but it is not, and it should be written in italics, “he” or brackets. Apart from that, the translation is accurate. This is of course taken from Jesus’ contact with the Samaritan woman at the well, and Jesus revealed Himself to her, and many of the Samaritans believed that He was “for a certainty the savior of the world” (John 4:42 - New World Translation).

g. John 6:35: “Jesus said to them: ‘I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi) the bread of life. He that comes to me will not get hungry at all, and he that exercises faith in me will never get thirsty at all.” This is a remarkably accurate translation by the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures as compared to some of the others we have examined. The significant aspect of ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi) here in this context, is that the word ἐγὼ (egō) is the Greek, personal pronoun for “I,” and whenever a personal pronoun us used with a verb, it is there for emphasis sake, as the verb, unlike in English, contains the person who is speaking, so that a personal pronoun is not actually needed. However, whenever the pronoun is used with a verb, as stated above, it is for emphasis. Thus, Jesus is emphatically stating that He is “the bread of life.”

h. John 6:51: “I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi) the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever; and, for a fact, the bread that I shall give is my flesh in behalf of the life of the world.” Once again, Jesus is emphatically stating that He is “the living bread that came down from heaven,” and once again, this is a remarkably accurate translation of the Greek.

i. John 7:34: “You will look for me, but you will not find me, and where I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi), YOU cannot come.” Here again, Jesus is emphasizing the fact that “where I am, YOU cannot come,” and the verb in Greek for “cannot” literally means, “not able,” which is in the interlinear translation from The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures.

j. John 8:12: “Therefore Jesus spoke again to them, saying: ‘I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi) the light of the world. He that follows me will by no means walk in darkness, but will possess the light of life.’” Here again, Jesus is emphasizing Who He is, and this too is a remarkably accurate translation, but it does raise the question that I posed in Matthew 14:27 where the translation for λέγων is “the words,” but here in John 8:12, the correct translation is given, which is, “saying.”
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I have never seen any legitimate translation of the Greek, present, active participle, λέγων (legōn), being given as “the words.” Perhaps two different people were working on the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, and the one who translated Matthew 14:27 was not as competent as the person who translated John 8:12. I do not know, but the translation here is the correct rendering of λέγων (legōn). The other point I would make, which is a matter of preference, but it does not bring into question the legitimacy of the translation, and that is that I prefer “the darkness,” versus simply “darkness.” The word for “darkness” in the Greek has the definite article, “the,” attached to it, and thus, a great many English translations have “the darkness,” which for me, emphasizes the “spiritual, mental, and emotional darkness” unregenerate people are living in. However, the word “life” also has the definite article attached to it, and I know of no translations that render it as “the life.” So the above, “the darkness” is simply my preference, but it can legitimately be translated simply as “darkness” as the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures has.

k. John 8:18: “I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi) the one that bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.” Here again, this is an accurate translation.

l. John 8:24: “Therefore I said to YOU, YOU will die in YOUR sins. For if YOU do not believe that I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi) he, YOU will die in YOUR sins.” The same criticism here with regard to the personal pronoun, “he,” which is not in the text, and thus, the correct rendering should be, “he,” in italics or brackets, which indicates a textual insertion by the translator of a word that is not actually in the text. However, in this statement, Jesus is going far beyond just simply saying, “I am the Messiah,” with the profound statement, “For if you do not believe that I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi), you will die in your sins.” As He made this statement, the Pharisees were undoubtedly becoming quite ill at ease because that statement is far more than simply saying, “I am the Messiah,” but rather, “I AM the God who spoke to Moses at the burning bush” (Exodus 3:14).

m. John 8:28: “Therefore Jesus said: ‘When once YOU have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi) he, and that I do nothing of my own initiative; but just as the Father taught me I speak these things.’” The “he” is not written in italics, “he” or brackets, to show that it is not a part of the original text. Here again, however, Jesus is inching closer and closer to identifying Himself as the God who met Moses at the “burning bush” (Exodus 3:14).

n. John 8:58: “Jesus said to them: ‘Most truly I say to YOU, Before Abraham came into existence, I have been (ἐγὼ εἰμί – egō eimi).’” Significant is the New World
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Translation’s translation of ἐγὼ εἰμί in this verse, which is “I have been.” As we have looked at the other translations of ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi) in the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, we have seen a consistent translation of “I am he,” and once of “It is I” (Matthew 14:27, which was pointed out that this translation is an English idiom for, “It’s me’), but nowhere do we see any translation of ἐγὼ εἰμί in any responsible, scholarly, legitimate Greek translation of John 8:58 as “I have been.” It is at this point, therefore, that we are going to look at the issue this translation brings up, and that is, a denial by translators of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures that Jesus is in no way identifying Himself as being God who revealed Himself to Moses at the “burning bush” in Exodus 3:14.

2. What we see is that consistently throughout the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures in the above quoted Scripture passages when Jesus is speaking of Himself, the translation is, “I am,” but in John 8:58, the translation all of a sudden becomes, “I have been.” What we are witnessing, therefore, is major inconsistency, and as we will discover, apart from their very flawed, grammatical argument, the real reason is purely a theological one in wanting to dismiss the identity of Jesus with God who revealed Himself to Moses at the “burning bush” in Exodus 3:14.

II. The Biblical Truth of the Deity of Jesus Christ

A. The following points were sent to me by Mrs. Christy Darlington with regard to the justification by The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures for their translation of ἐγὼ εἰμί in John 8:58 as “I have been” in the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.

1. The following quote is taken from The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures, 1985 Edition:

The action expressed in John 8:58 started “before Abraham came into existence” and is still in progress. In such situation εἰμί (ei-mi’), which is the first-person singular present indicative, is properly translated by the perfect indicative. Examples of the same syntax are found in Luke 2:48; 13:7; 15:29; John 5:6; 14:9; 15:27; Acts 15:21; 2 Corinthians 12:19; 1 John 3:8.

Concerning this construction, A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament, by G. B. Winer, seventh ed., Andover, 1897, p. 267, says: “Sometimes the Present includes also a past tense (Mdv. 108), viz. when the verb expresses a state which commenced at an earlier period but still continues, – a state in its duration; as Jno. xv. 27 ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς μετ’ εὗρος ἔστε [ap’ ar-khes’ met’ e-mou’ e-ste’], viii. 58 πρὶν Αβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί [prin A-bra-am’ ge-ne’sthai e-go’ ei-mi’].”

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continuance of an action during the past and up to the moment of speaking is virtually the same as Perfective, the only difference being that the action is conceived as still in progress... It is frequent in the N[ew] T[estament]: Lk 2:48 13:7... 15:29... Jn 5:6 8:58..."

Attempting to identify Jesus with Jehovah, some say that ἐγὼ εἰμί (e-go' ei-mi') is the equivalent of the Hebrew expression 'ami' hu', "I am he," which is used by God. However, it is to be noted that this Hebrew expression is also used by man, as in 1 Chronicles 21:17.

Further attempting to identify Jesus with Jehovah, some try to use Exodus 3:14 (LXX) which reads: 'Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν (E-go' ei-mi' ho on), which means "I am The Being," or, "I am the Existing One." This attempt cannot be sustained because the expression in Exodus 3:14 is different from the expression in John 8:58. Throughout the Christian Greek Scriptures Jehovah and Jesus are never identified as being the same person. – See App 2A, 2E.

What we now do is look at the comments made by the publisher in the above section in order to either verify his correctness, or to expose the errors contained therein.

a. With reference to the quote from Winer, the present tense verb in Greek is used to indicate a continuous, ongoing action. Thus, in John 15:27, we read in the Greek: καὶ ὑμεῖς δὲ μαρτυρεῖτε, ὅτι ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ ἐστε (kai humeis de martureite, hoti ap' archēs met' emou este), and the literal, English translation is: “And you all also are continuing to bear witness, that from the beginning you are with Me.” When a native, reading Greek would read this, this is how he would read and understand it, and he would know that the phrase, ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ ἐστε (ap' archēs met' emou este) meant that from the beginning of Jesus’ calling them to follow Him, from that moment until the time He is making this statement, “they are continually with Him – from the past up to the very moment He is speaking.” However, when translating this grammatical truth into English, the phrase, “have been with Me” is used to simply express for the English reader what is actually being expressed in the Greek verb tense. The following quote comes from A. T. Robertson, who is the unquestioned, recognized, and pre-eminent New Testament Greek Scholar, and from whose research, writings, and studies, a plethora of New Testament Greek Grammars have come:

The Progressive Present. This is a poor name in lieu of a better one for the present of past action still in progress. Usually an adverb of time (or adjunct) accompanies the verb. Gildersleeve calls it “Present of Unity of Time.” Cf. ἔστιν ἐς ᾗ ἄρτι (1 Jo. 2:9 – “is until now” – my translation). Often it has to be translated into English by a sort of “progressive perfect” (‘have been’), though, of course, that is the fault of the English.

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“So in modern Greek, ἑξῆντα μῆνας σ’ ἀγαπῶ (Abbott, Joh. Gr., p. 222 – "I continually love/have loved to the sixtieth month" – my translation). The durative present in such cases gathers up past and present time into one phrase” (Moulton, Prol., p. 119). Cf. Ἰδοὺ τρία ἔτη ἀφ’ οὗ ἔρχομαι (Lu. 13:7 – “Behold, for three years I am coming/have come” – my translation); τοσαύτα ἐτή δουλεύω σοι (15:29 – “so many years I am serving/have been serving for you” – my translation); πολλὰς ἡμέρας καὶ νύκτας ἔχει (Jo. 5:6 – “he continually has a long time/he had a long time” – my translation); τοσοῦτον χρόνον μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμί (14:9 – “I am continually with you so long a time/I have been with you so long a time” – my translation); ᾧ ἅρχης μετ’ ἐμοὶ ἔστω (15:27 – “you are continually with me from the beginning/you have been with me from the beginning” – my translation); πάλαι δοκεῖτε (2 Cor. 12:19 – “For a long time you are thinking/have been thinking” – my translation). Cf. ἀπὸ βρέφους οἶδα (2 Tim. 3:15 – “from childhood you have known” – my translation). It is a common idiom in the N. T. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:4 (πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως – “everything continually continues [διαμένει] as from the beginning of creation” – my translation); 1 Jo. 3:8 (ἀπ’ ἅρχης ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει – “from the beginning the devil continually sins/has sinned [ἁμαρτάνει]” – my translation). In Jo. 8:58 εἰμί is really absolute.⁴

So what is the above quote stating? First of all, in the 2 Timothy 3:15 quote, the Greek verb οἶδας (oidas) is actually a perfect tense verb, but it is used quite often to translate a present reality because that is what the perfect tense does –it expresses a completed action with an ongoing, continuous result. The following quote gives its origin:

οἶδα is an Indo-Eur. perf. of the root εἰδ-, ἰδ- (→ εἶδος, εἰδέναι, ἰδεῖν), though always used in the pres.: “to have realised, perceived” == “to know.” It often replaces the perf. εγνωκα (→ I, 689), “to have experienced, learned to know” == “to know.” But it can also be synon. with γνῶσκω; in the abs. use in the koine it is hard to establish any distinction of meaning.⁵

In addition, when Robertson says “In Jo. 8:58 εἰμί is really absolute,” what he is saying is the following:

There is an important distinction between absolute and relative time. An indicative verb indicates absolute time. For example, if an indicative verb is present tense, then it usually indicates an action occurring in the present.⁶

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Thus, what Robertson is stating about John 8:58 in that the grammatical construction of that sentence, Jesus is unequivocally stating that He is presently God, the great “I AM” of Exodus 3:14, and that is exactly what the Jews understood Him to be saying, as we see their response in the following verse: “Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple” (John 8:59). The word “indicative” that Mounce is referring to in the above quote is one of the Greek moods, and the Greek moods describe the level of reality that is being described. That is, it describes something actually happening – indicative mood; the probability that something will occur – subjunctive mood; the possibility that something may or may not occur – optative mood; and finally, the least of reality is the mood of commanding someone to do something, in which there is no certainty that a person will follow through with such a command – imperative mood. Thus, the indicative mood indicates actual reality, and here in John 8:58, Jesus is saying, in no uncertain terms of actual reality, THAT HE IS THE ETERNAL GOD OF EXODUS 3:14, and the Jews clearly understood exactly what He was saying. The following quote also deals with the present tense in helping those who are not familiar with Greek to understand what it is actually conveying:

The present tense approaches its kindred tense, the perfect, when used to denote the continuation of existing results. Here it refers to a fact which has come to be in the past, but is emphasized as a present reality, as we say, “I learn that you have moved” (that is, information has come to me in the past which I now possess. . . .

Sometimes the progressive present is retroactive in its application, denoting that which has begun in the past and continues into the present. For want of a better name, we may call it the present of duration. This use is generally associated with an adverb of time, and may best be rendered by the English perfect.

\[ \alpha\pi\epsilon\ \alpha\rho\chi\eta\iota\mu\epsilon\tau\ \epsilon\mu\omega\\ \epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon \] (John 15:27)

“You have been (literally, “You are”) with me from the beginning.”

What is being said, therefore, is that even when a present tense verb is given an English perfect translation, that is merely for the purpose of enabling English readers to better understand what is being said, but THE PERFECT FORM OF TRANSLATION IN NO WAY negates the continuous, ongoing action contained in the present tense.

b. With regard to the reference made to Moulton’s grammar, it is exactly as has been discussed above with Winer – the present tense does not lose any of its

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continuous, ongoing action, but it is merely given a perfect form of translation to help English readers understand the text.

c. The third area to analyze has to do with the initial Scripture references that were given that, according to the translator of The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures, 1985 Edition, indicate that:

The action expressed in John 8:58 started “before Abraham came into existence” and is still in progress. In such situation εἰμί (ei-mi’), which is the first-person singular present indicative, is properly translated by the perfect indicative. Examples of the same syntax are found in Luke 2:48; 13:7; 15:29; John 5:6; 14:9; 15:27; Acts 15:21; 2 Corinthians 12:19; 1 John 3:8.8

What we have seen, therefore, is that there is NO SITUATION EVER when a present tense verb “is properly translated by a perfect indicative,” but rather, a perfect form of translation may be given simply to help English readers understand what is being said. But the present tense retains its present tense action of continuous, ongoing action, regardless of how the translation may be given in English. We will now look at the Scriptural examples listed to support the assertion of the translator of The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures, 1985 Edition:

(1) Luke 2:48: “Now when they saw him they were astounded, and his mother said to him: ‘Child, why did you treat us this way? Here your father and I in mental distress (ὀδυνώμενοι - odunōmenoi) have been looking (ἐζητοῦμεν - ezētoumen) for you.’” In this passage, the phrase, “in mental distress,” comes from the present, active participle, odunōmenoi, and a present participle is simply translated in the time frame of the main verb. In the above verse, the main verb in the clause to which the present participle is attached is ezētoumen, and it is an imperfect, active, indicative verb, which indicates continuous action in past time. Thus, the translation, “in mental distress have been looking for you” is simply indicating their continued “mental distress” as they “were continually looking” for their son in the past. The following quote helps to make this clear: “However, the Greek participle does not indicate absolute time. It indicates relative time. This means that the time of the participle is relative to the time of the main verb. The present participle describes an action occurring at the same time as the main verb.”9 Thus, in this particular instance, a better translation of this verse would be, “your father and I were painfully continually seeking for you,” and the imperfect tense is indicating an ongoing action in the past.

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9 Mounce, 249.
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Therefore, this is in no way a “perfect indicative,” but rather a present participle with an imperfect indicative.

(2) Luke 13:7: “Then he said to the vinedresser, ‘Here it is three years that I have come (ἔρχομαι - erchomai) looking for fruit on this fig tree, but have found none. Cut it down! Why really should it keep the ground useless?’” In this instance, the verb erchomai is a present, active, indicative verb, and it would fit with the application of the present of duration, in the above quote: “Sometimes the progressive present is retroactive in its application, denoting that which has begun in the past and continues into the present. For want of a better name, we may call it the present of duration. This use is generally associated with an adverb of time, and may best be rendered by the English perfect.” Thus, what we have is a present, active, indicative verb, indicating continuous, ongoing action, but rendered for better English understanding with a perfect form, “have come,” but it is a present, indicative verb, not a perfect indicative verb, and it is simply given a perfect form for English consumption.

(3) Luke 15:29: “In reply he said to his father, ‘Here it is so many years I have slaved (δουλεύω - douleuō) for you and never once did I transgress your commandment, and yet to me you never once gave a kid for me to enjoy myself with my friends.’” The Greek verb douleuō is a present, active, indicative verb, and the issue here is exactly the same as Luke 13:7: “Sometimes the progressive present is retroactive in its application, denoting that which has begun in the past and continues into the present. For want of a better name, we may call it the present of duration. This use is generally associated with an adverb of time, and may best be rendered by the English perfect.” Thus, this is not a “perfect indicative,” but rather a present indicative that in no way EVER LOSES its continuous action identity, but it is given a perfect form in translation for the sake of English readers.

(4) John 5:6: “Seeing this man lying down, and being aware that he had already been (ἔχει – echei) [sick] a long time, Jesus said (λέγει – legei) to him: ‘Do you wish to become sound in health?’” First of all, the phrase, “Seeing this man lying down,” is perhaps not the best translation of the Greek text. The Greek verb for “Seeing” is iōdiō (idōn), which is an aorist participle, and an aorist participle primarily indicates action that occurs before that of the main verb, versus simultaneously, as the following quote states:

10 Dana and Mantey, 183.
11 Ibid.
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Whereas the present participle indicates an action occurring at the same time as the main verb, the aorist participle generally indicates an action occurring before the time of the main verb. There are, however, many exceptions to this general rule. (That is why it is only a general rule.) For example, many aorist participles indicate an action occurring at the same time as the main verb.12

Thus, although this is not a major issue, I do not know of any legitimate scholarly translations, either in English or other languages, that have translated ἰδὼν (idōn) as “seeing,” which would be simultaneous with the main verb that in this grammatical construction would be “He says (λέγει – legei, a present tense verb) versus, “after/when He saw,” which is obviously taking place before Jesus says anything to the man. And once again, in the two instances where the one present tense verb ἔχει (echei) is given a perfect translation (“had been”), and the other present tense verb λέγει (legei) is given a simple past translation (“said”), we find the same procedure occurring that Dana and Mantey point out: “Sometimes the progressive present is retroactive in its application, denoting that which has begun in the past and continues into the present. For want of a better name, we may call it the present of duration. This use is generally associated with an adverb of time, and may best be rendered by the English perfect.”13

And again as has already been stated, the “had been” in John 15:6 is not a “perfect indicative” in any sense of the word or meaning, but rather a present indicative that in no way EVER LOSES its continuous action identity, but it is given a perfect form in translation for the sake of English readers.

(5) John 14:9: “Jesus said (λέγει – legei) to him: ‘Have I been (εἰμι – eimi) with YOU men so long a time, and yet, Philip, you have not come to know me? He that has seen me has seen the Father [also]. How is it you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ’” Both λέγει (legei) and εἰμι (eimi) are present, indicative verbs, and here too, the grammatical rule for translating a present tense verb in a past or perfect form is in place: “Sometimes the progressive present is retroactive in its application, denoting that which has begun in the past and continues into the present. For want of a better name, we may call it the present of duration. This use is generally associated with an adverb of time, and may best be rendered by the English perfect.”14 And again, the “said” is not an aorist, indicating a completed act in past time, and the “have been” is not a “perfect indicative” in any sense of the word or meaning, but rather

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12 Mounce, 262.
13 Dana and Mantey, 183.
14 Ibid.
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both these verbs are present indicatives, and in no way do they EVER LOSE their continuous action identity, but they are given a past and perfect form in translation for the sake of English readers.

6) John 15:27: “and YOU, in turn, are to bear witness, because YOU have been (ἐστε – este) with me from when I began.” Once again, the grammatical rule sited by Dana and Mantey fits in here, and the present indicative of ἐστε (este) in no way changes to a perfect indicative, but rather, it is given a perfect form in translation for the sake of English readers: “Sometimes the progressive present is retroactive in its application, denoting that which has begun in the past and continues into the present. For want of a better name, we may call it the present of duration. This use is generally associated with an adverb of time, and may best be rendered by the English perfect.”

7) Acts 15:21: “For from ancient times Moses has had (ἔχει – echei) in city after city those who preach him, because he is read aloud in the synagogues on every Sabbath.” In this particular verse, the Greek verb ἔχει (echei) is translated as “has had,” but in the NAS, it is translated as “has” in its present tense form, but in both cases, its present tense function of emphasizing ongoing and continuous action is present. Thus, with the perfect form of translation, “has had,” the Dana and Mantey, grammatical rule comes into play: “Sometimes the progressive present is retroactive in its application, denoting that which has begun in the past and continues into the present. For want of a better name, we may call it the present of duration. This use is generally associated with an adverb of time, and may best be rendered by the English perfect.”

8) 2 Corinthians 12:19: “Have YOU been thinking (δοκεῖτε – dokeite) all this while that we have been making our defense (ἀπολογοῦμεθα – apologoumetha) to YOU? It is before God that we are speaking in connection with Christ. But, beloved ones, all things are for YOUR upbuilding.” In this instance, the Dana and Mantey, grammatical rule comes into play for the verb δοκεῖτε (dokeite), which is a present indicative verb. However, the Greek present middle participle, ἀπολογούμεθα (apologoumetha), fits in with the grammatical rule stated by Mounce with regard to present participles, and that is, they are to be translated in contemporaneous time with the main verb: “However, the Greek participle

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
does not indicate absolute time. It indicates relative time. This means that the time of the participle is relative to the time of the main verb. The present participle describes an action occurring at the same time as the main verb.”\(^\text{17}\) Thus, due to the fact that the verb is in the present tense, regardless of the perfect form of translation given it to aid English readers, grammatically, the present participle should be translated in the present because the main verb in this clause, δοκεῖτε (dokeite), is a present tense verb. However, the New World Translation of the Holy Scripture’s translation is not the only translation that gives a past tense translation to “we have been making our defense (ἀπολογούμεθα – apologoumetha), the ESV does as well: “Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you?” On the other hand, the NAS probably has the best translation of this verse: “All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved.” Regardless of that issue, the present tense verb, δοκεῖτε (dokeite), translated as, “you have been thinking,” fits in with the Dana and Mantey, grammatical rule that has been continually sited above.

\(\text{1 John 3:8:}\) “He who carries on sin originates with the Devil, because the Devil has been sinning (ἁμαρτάνει – hamartanei) from [the] beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifest, namely, to break up the works of the Devil.” Here again, the Greek verb ἁμαρτάνει (hamartanei) is a present tense, indicative verb, with the ongoing emphasis of ongoing and continuous action that is inherent in the present tense, indicative verb. But, as has been repeatedly seen and stated, the perfect form of its translation is specifically for the aid of English readers in understanding what the verb is saying: “Sometimes the progressive present is retroactive in its application, denoting that which has begun in the past and continues into the present. For want of a better name, we may call it the present of duration. This use is generally associated with an adverb of time, and may best be rendered by the English perfect.”\(^\text{18}\)

2. The identity of Jesus’ statement in John 8:58 with God’s revelation of Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14 is the primary issue of John 8:58.
   a. The argument presented by The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures is as follows:

\(^\text{17}\) Mounce, 249.
\(^\text{18}\) Dana and Mantey, 183.
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Attempting to identify Jesus with Jehovah, some say that ἐγὼ εἰμί (e-go’ ei-mi’) is the equivalent of the Hebrew expression ‘ani’ hu’, “I am he;” which is used by God. However, it is to be noted that this Hebrew expression is also used by man, as in 1 Chronicles 21:17.

Further attempting to identify Jesus with Jehovah, some try to use Exodus 3:14 (LXX) which reads: Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὄν (E-go’ ei-mi’ ho on), which means “I am The Being,” or, “I am the Existing One.” This attempt cannot be sustained because the expression in Exodus 3:14 is different from the expression in John 8:58. Throughout the Christian Greek Scriptures Jehovah and Jesus are never identified as being the same person. – See App 2A, 2E.

The first thing to do, therefore, is to actually look at the quote from Exodus 3:14, and then we will analyze its usage in the LXX and in I Chronicles 21:17, and as with the New Testament quotes, so too with the Old Testament, I will be quoting the English from the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.

(1) Exodus 3:14: “At this, God said to Moses: ‘I SHALL PROVE TO BE WHAT I SHALL PROVE TO BE.’ And he added: ‘This is what you are to say to the sons of Israel, ‘I SHALL PROVE TO BE has sent me to you.’” 20

Without any equivocation, this is one of the most non-legitimate translations I have ever read of the Hebrew text of Exodus 3:14. The following is the actual Hebrew text of Exodus 3:14:

The Hebrew that is translated in the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures as “I SHALL PROVE TO BE WHAT I SHALL PROVE TO BE,” is אַלֶֽהְיָֽה (‘ehyeh ‘asher ehyeh), and the verb in this passage is היה (hāyā). The definition of this verb is “to fall out, to come to pass, to become, to be, to exist, to come into being, and to be in existence.” 21 In the Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, after a very lengthy analysis of the verb היה (hāyā) as a whole, and then an analysis of its use in Exodus 3:14, we read the following:

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This situation suggests that the correct translation of Ex. 3:14 should be “I will be who I will be.” The ancient versions of Aquila and Theodotion understood the Hebrew text in this sense (ἔςομαι ἡς ἔςομαι – “I will be who I will be” in Greek – my translation and note). Such an interpretation is also supported by the appearance of the expression “I will be with you” in Ex. 3:12 (ἐξεῖ οὖν υἱὸς – ‘ehyeh ‘immāk – “I will be with you” – my Hebrew insertion, transliteration, and translation). This ‘ehyeh ‘im, the fundamental promise in the election relationship between God and his people, would then be taken up in v. 14 to explain the name and nature of Yahweh. It is not possible, however, to be really certain of what the formula means. All that is sure is that the author of Ex. 3:14 sought to derive the name Yahweh from the root ḫāyāh.22

Thus, even though there may be some uncertainty as to just exactly how the translation of בָּרָאָה אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא (‘ehyeh ḥasher ‘ehyeh) should read, the consensus by all reputable scholars is that “I will be who I will be” is the best translation that can be given. When we look in the Hebrew for an equivalent verb for the English word “to prove” as the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures uses it in Exodus 3:14 with the idea of God demonstrating to Moses that He is the God Who He says He is, we come up with the Hebrew verb נָסָה (nāsâ), which means “to test, to try, to attempt, assay, to tempt, and to prove.”23 And if we try to find a Hebrew verb that expresses the idea of “showing” somebody something, as here in Exodus 3:14 with the idea of “showing proof” of something, then the Hebrew verb that is used with that sense of meaning is רָאָה (rā’â), which means “to see” as its basic meaning, but in the Hiphil stem, it is translated as “to cause someone to see something,” as in Exodus 9:16: “But, in fact, for this cause I have kept you in existence, for the sake of showing you (בראת ה – har’ōtkā) my power and in order to have my name declared in all the earth” (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures). However, even though there is some discussion as to just how בָּרָאָה אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא (‘ehyeh ḥasher ‘ehyeh) should be translated, NO ONE WHO HAS ANY CREDIBLE UNDERSTANDING OF HEBREW WOULD THINK OF GIVING SUCH A TRANSLATION AS, “I SHALL PROVE TO BE WHAT I SHALL PROVE TO BE,” coming from the Hebrew verb בָּרָא (hāyāh). Thus, the translation given in the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures is a

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23 Francis Brown, 650.
fallacious fabrication of what the Hebrew phrase, אֶֽהְיֶ֖ה אֲשֶׁ֣ר אֶֽהְיֶ֑ה ('ehyeh 'šer 'ehyeh) actually means.

(2) Exodus 3:14 (LXX): “And God spoke to Moses, saying, I am THE BEING; and he said, Thus shall ye say to the children of Israel, THE BEING has sent me to you.” In Greek, the phrase, “I am THE BEING,” is written as, ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν (egō eimi ho ōn), and with personal pronoun, ἐγώ (egō), attached to the verb, εἰμι (eimi), it is an emphatic assertion of identity – literally, “I myself am.” However, the next phrase, ὁ ὤν (ho ōn), is a very interesting Greek, grammatical construction. The Greek word ὁ (ho) is what is called a nominative, singular, masculine, present, active participle, from the verb εἰμι (eimi), which is the Greek verb that means “to be and to exist.” In addition, as has already been stated, “The present participle indicates action simultaneous with action of the main verb.” Thus, with εἰμι (eimi) being the first person singular, present active indicative of “to be” – literally, “I continually am” – the present active participle accentuates that ongoing, continuous action, and the definite article, ὁ (ho), is used to point out the specific identity of who “I am” actually is: “The purpose of the definite article is to identify, to limit, and, as the name implies, to make definite. Thus, when the article appears it emphasizes identity, and when it is absent the emphasis is usually quality and not specificity.” Therefore, the translation, “I am THE BEING,” may also be translated in an amplified manner, “I continually am THE CONTINUAL BEING,” and there is none other besides me! Therefore, when Jesus identified Himself in John 8:58 as ἐγώ εἰμι (egō eimi), and the context of this identification had to do with His statement, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born,” the Pharisees, who were not only familiar with the Hebrew text, but also the Greek Septuagint (LXX), clearly understood what He was saying, and that was, “I continually am THE CONTINUAL BEING,” and that is why in John 8:59 “they picked up stones to throw at Him” (John 8:59).

(3) 1 Chronicles 21:17 (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures): “And David proceeded to say to the [true] God: ‘Was it not I that said to make a numbering of the people, and is it not I that have sinned and have unquestionably done bad? As for these sheep, what have they done? O Jehovah my God, let your hand, please, come to be upon me and my father’s house; but not upon your people, for a scourge.’” The point to be made in

24 Summers & Sawyer, 97.

25 Ibid., 151.
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this verse by the translators of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures is that the Greek expression, ἐγώ εἰμι (egō eimi), is also used here by David, who was a mere man. The LXX translation, therefore follows with the usage of ἐγώ εἰμι (egō eimi): “And David said to God, Was it not I (ἐγώ εἰμι – egō eimi) that gave orders to number the people? and I am (ἐγώ εἰμι – egō eimi) the guilty one; I have greatly sinned: but these sheep, what have they done? O Lord God, let thy hand be upon me, and upon my father's house, and not on thy people for destruction, O Lord!” As stated, ἐγώ εἰμι (egō eimi) is not an exclusive term that Jesus used to focus on Himself for whatever reason at the various times He used it, but it was also used frequently throughout the New Testament by various people, as the examples above have demonstrated. Therefore, just the phrase, ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi), by itself, does not signify deity, but the context in which it is used does, and that is what we have seen throughout this analysis. Thus, in I Chronicles 21:17, David is using ἐγὼ εἰμί (egō eimi) to emphatically focus on his sin and failure, versus anything the people have done – he and he alone is responsible for the judgment falling upon his people, and he is begging God for deliverance for them.

b. The scholarly formatting and transliteration of the Greek from The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures, 1985 Edition.

(1) The formatting and transliteration of the Greek is certainly not the major issue of this writing, but rather the actual translation and interpretive analysis, which is, without any equivocation, is tragically misguided, misdirected, and utterly fallacious in so many areas. That is what must be focused on, but there are other things that are “telltale signs” of scholarly incompetency that would be overlooked by those who do know the difference, and with those small areas of incompetency, the larger areas eventually manifest in the translation and interpretive analysis.

(2) I would like to recommend, therefore, to all who read this the Society of Biblical Literature web site, on which you will find the most up to date transliteration for all scholarly, biblical, linguistic research that one might even think of. Their website is:


Once you are on the website, you want to The SBL Handbook of Style. However, the downside of this process is that in order to download this incredibly valuable research source, you must first join the Society of Biblical Literature. On the other hand, if you are a serious researcher and want to give a 150% effort of your research effort to the Lord for His glory, not yours, then I can tell you, without any reservation, the money you will
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pay for joining the SBL will be returned to you many times over in all that you will receive and gain through their research sources.

B. My desire, therefore, is that the Lord will use this small bit of research into His living and abiding Word to strengthen, encourage, uphold, and empower through His Holy Spirit, to be the man and woman of God He has called you to be in standing for His truth, and proclaiming it to a lost and self-destructive world, as well as to encourage your brethren who are “fighting the good fight of faith” (I Timothy 6:12).