

Carl W. Conrad's Miss on 'Neohellenic Infinitive'

Prof Conrad, mentor of the Biblical-Greek chat group [see Google: B-Greek, Sat May 5 2007], in trying to controvert my statements (in [The Development of Greek and the New Testament, etc., pp. 218-26](#)) on causal ἵνα (e.g. Mk 4:12; Rm 5:20), while bringing no evidence whatsoever against the ample and weighty evidence (*i.a.* the great grammarian Apollonios Dyskolos!) I cite for the phenomenon, he simply asserts that he is unconvinced by my argument and satisfied with the "conventional" interpretation. His only argument—if it can be called such—for the assumed falsity of my position is:

I've read through this section in Caragounis and I find it unconvincing, particularly the designation of hINA + subj. in a "causal" category. I think that what we have here is simply the initial stages of the later Greek infinitive; the Modern Greek infinitive is NA + subj. and (however surprising it may seem to students of ancient Greek) the Modern Greek infinitive is conjugated for person and number -- and aspect is indicted by the tense/aspect-stem.

Prof Conrad's above statement is patently incorrect. As I have shown in [my above-mentioned book, e.g. pp. 169-74](#), the only infinitive still functioning in Neohellenic (apart from some set-expressions of ancient infinitives) is the second member of the perfective tenses both active and medio-passive: active perfect (ἔχω λύσει = 'I have loosened'); pluperfect (εἶχα λύσει = 'I had loosened'), and future perfect (θὰ ἔχω λύσει = 'I shall have loosened') as well as medio-passive: perfect (ἔχω λυθῆ = 'I have been loosened'), pluperfect (εἶχα λυθῆ = 'I had been loosened'), and future perfect (θὰ ἔχω λυθῆ = 'I shall have been loosened'). These forms are derived from the ancient Aorist infinitives λῦσαι and λυθῆναι respectively.

Because *i.a.* the infinitive did not give exact information (i.e. person and number) it could not withstand the inroads of the finite moods, and finally succumbed to them. The process is already visible in classical times, whereby the infinitive is sometimes resolved by means of a

conjunction (e.g. ἵνα) and the subjunctive to a dependent clause. This continues in Hellenistic (the NT has many such examples), Byzantine, and mediaeval times, during which period the infinitive dies out and is replaced by a dependent clause formed by **ὅτι** (a shortened form of ἵνα) + **subjunctive**.

It is this construction that Professor Conrad has mistaken for the “modern Greek infinitive”, which, moreover, he thinks is “NA + subj. and (however surprising it may seem to students of ancient Greek) the Modern Greek infinitive is conjugated for person and number”. This claim is thoroughly mistaken. The construction **ὅτι** + subj. is no modern Greek infinitive but the counterpart of ancient ἵνα + subj.!

This implies that Conrad’s rejection of my thesis is not based on any informed argumentation, but is simply his personal choice, a choice, moreover, that is based on mistaken premises.