

Foreword

It was my personal pleasure to serve as one of Margaret Sim's supervisors in the research lying behind this volume. (My colleague in Linguistics, Dr. Ronnie Cann, co-supervised the study.) I confess that when she first proposed investigating the function of the familiar Greek word ἵνα, I wondered what there was to discover. But Margaret's finished thesis proposal convinced me that she definitely had something to offer, and potentially something that could be of significance for exegesis of the New Testament and other Koine Greek texts. The finished thesis, revised here for publication, confirmed this, and I commend her study to anyone seriously interested in fathoming the subtleties of these Greek texts. To put her results in simplest terms, her study requires us to revise the lexical entries for this term, and, accordingly, to revise our understanding of quite a number of sentences in which the term is used in Koine texts. She contends, persuasively to my mind, that ἵνα should be understood to function more to signal that something is to be taken as the intention or aspiration of a given speaker or writer, rather than as a "word" to be translated simply as "in order that". This difference, though subtle in some instances, is important, and in some other cases makes a noteworthy difference in how we understand some sentences. Dr. Sim's study provides ample examples of this.

In addition to the specifics of her findings about the function of ἵνα, this study is a model of clarity, good sense, and thoroughness in the approach taken. By empirical analysis involving comparison with other texts, she tests, and shows dubious, some widely-touted notions, such as the oft-repeated claim that the frequency of ἵνα in the Gospel of John likely reflects the influence of underlying Aramaic syntax. Her selection of evidence, the care with which she handles it, the linguistic sophistication (so lightly worn) that she brings to the analysis, and her measured but effective argumentation all are admirable and exemplary. Indeed, this study would make good reading for those contemplating future PhD studies, as a model of careful and solid work.

I commend this study to all those involved in exegesis of the New Testament and other Koine texts. I urge also that future editions of lexica take account of Dr. Sim's findings. This is one of those studies whose results comprise genuine progress in scholarship. Its deceptively modest scope should not deter readers. For anyone who delights in solid research, careful analysis, cogent reasoning, and findings that must be reckoned with in the field, this study is highly recommended.

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