

BASIL OF CAESAREA ON THE MEANING OF PREPOSITIONS AND CONJUNCTIONS

The fourth-century Greek theologian Basil of Caesarea devoted himself to explaining the meaning of prepositions and conjunctions in order to support his theological programme against his opponents in the church. He addresses the issue of what determines the meaning of prepositions and conjunctions. Beyond this, he finds it useful to show how a preposition can be used acceptably in a conjunctive role. In this paper, I will look closely at a few passages from his major treatise on theological language, *On the Holy Spirit*.

Basil became concerned with linguistic issues towards the latter part of his career. Since not much on the meaning of prepositions and conjunctions has survived from the ancient world apart from scattered remarks in a few grammatical texts (e.g. Apollonius Dyscolus), he gives us a unique window on the study of language in the Imperial period. Unlike the usual approaches adopted by philosophers and linguists today, Basil understands the meaning in terms of how the action expressed by the whole sentence containing 'and' or 'with' is performed.¹

My agenda in this paper is (i) to show that Basil has a (possibly) original approach in determining the meaning of prepositions and conjunctions, (ii) to discuss two problems for his approach, and (iii) to point out that these reflections owe much to the grammatical tradition.

I

First of all, we need some understanding of the theological issues involved. The treatise *On the Holy Spirit* is concerned with the uses of expressions in the doxology of the church, so the linguistic points I am interested in are worked into extensive exegetical and theological arguments. Basil wrote the treatise in response to local churchgoers unsettled by his switches in doxological and liturgical use of expressions which string together the names of the three persons of the Trinity. However, Basil also wrote in polemical response to the views of some of his major theological opponents who argue that the prepositions found in biblical and liturgical formulas show certain differences in degree of divinity among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The general theological argument of *On the Holy Spirit* boils down to two related claims about language. First, there is no rigid, one-to-one link between particular prepositions and conjunctions used in Scripture and the formulas of the Church, and particular theological claims regarding unity and equality of the persons of the Trinity. Second, in view of this flexibility of use, it is acceptable to use the prepositions 'with' (μετά or σύν) in place of 'in' (ἐν) or 'and' (καί) in the doxology of the church in order to express doctrinal orthodoxy.

The technical arguments of his opponents, the Neo-Arian theologian Aetius and his school, have to do with the interpretation of a few key prepositional phrases in the New Testament. For example, Aetius had argued that St Paul's use in 1 Cor. 8.6 of

¹ Contemporary philosophers and linguists adopt one of (at least) three basic positions on the issue of the meaning of conjunctions in natural languages: determination of meaning in terms of their contribution to truth conditions, in terms of their roles in inference (i.e. principles of logical implication involving the connective), or in terms of linguistic function.

'from whom' (ἐξ οὗ) with reference to God the Father and the use of 'through whom' (δι' οὗ) with reference to the Son shows a ranking of natures, which would support his subordinationist doctrine. The meaning of the prepositional phrases reflects a difference in the natures of Father and Son.

Basil counters with arguments on both exegetical and linguistic grounds. He charges his opponents with drawing on technical uses borrowed from the philosophers, and doing so in an inexpert and inconsistent way.² A more comprehensive view of biblical uses of prepositions does not support the Neo-Arian position, since the expressions which speak of divinity are not uniform. For example, in one passage (Rom. 11.36), three different prepositions are used (ἐκ, διὰ, εἰς) to speak of 'the Lord'.

I should mention at this point that besides the grammatical discussions, a sort of 'prepositional metaphysics', in which metaphysical notions of divinity are associated with prepositional phrases, is clearly present in some parts of the treatise.³ Scholars interested in the Platonism of the Church Fathers have talked a lot about Basil and 'prepositional metaphysics' in the Platonist tradition, but I will say little about it here.⁴

II

I have already mentioned Basil's claim that both 'with' and 'and' are expressions equally acceptable in the doxology of the Church, inasmuch as they are interchangeable in use and indifferently used in the writings of the New Testament.⁵ On the other hand, 'with' is preferable in religious uses of language, even to the more scripturally warranted use of 'and', in order to secure orthodox doctrines. Thus Basil claims that the usage (χρησις) of 'our fathers' licenses ecclesiastical use of the preposition 'with'.⁶

In the first key text (*Sp. Sanct.* 25.59; cf. 27.68, 25.60, 26.63), we find a description of 'and' that is semantic and not syntactic in character.⁷

Τῆς δὲ διὰ τοῦ καὶ συνδέσμου συμπλοκῆς τῶν ὀνομάτων, πολλὰ τὰ μαρτύρια. . . ὁ μὲν καὶ σύνδεσμος τὸ κοινὸν τῆς ἐνεργείας παρίστησιν· ἡ δὲ σὺν πρόθεσις τὴν κοινωνίαν πως συνενδείκνυται. Οἶον, ἐπλευσαν εἰς Μακεδονίαν Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος· ἀλλὰ καὶ Τυχικός καὶ Ὀνήσιμος ἀπεστάλησαν Κολοσσαεῦσιν· ἐκ τούτων, ὅτι μὲν ταῦτὸν ἐνήργησαν, μεμαθήκαμεν. Ἐὰν δὲ ἀκούσωμεν ὅτι συνέπλευσαν καὶ συναπεστάλησαν, ὅτι καὶ μετ' ἀλλήλων τὴν πρᾶξιν ἐπλήρωσαν προσημαδίχθημεν.

² There is more elucidation of this in V. H. Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilios von Cäsarea* (Göttingen, 1996), 212–18.

³ This is helpfully discussed by G. E. Sterling, 'Prepositional metaphysics in Jewish wisdom speculation and early Christian liturgical texts', in D. T. Runia and *idem*, *Wisdom and Logos. Studies in Jewish Thought in Honor of David Winston* (Atlanta, 1997), 219–38, at 219–20.

⁴ Basil charges his opponents with an appropriation of the Platonic theory of causes along with their use of the expressions characteristic of the standard catalogue of Platonic types of causes at *Sp. Sanct.* 3.5, 4.6. On 'die Prinzipienreihe der Platoniker' and how the Platonic tradition is taken up in the controversy of Basil with Aetius and Eunomius over the prepositions, there are useful accounts by H. Dörrie, 'Präpositionen und Metaphysik. Wechselwirkung zweier Prinzipienreihen', *Platonica Minora* (Berlin, 1976), 124–36, at 133–6, and W. Theiler, *Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Berlin, 1930), 23–34.

⁵ Cf. Basil, *Sp. Sanct.* 5.12, 25.58.

⁶ Basil claims to be firmly traditional in all points of language, as is apparent in his roll call of heroes *pro verbo* in *Sp. Sanct.* 29.71–5.

⁷ In this paper I think it harmless to deal with the Greek use of *καί* in the same way as English uses of 'and', although the use of 'with' in composition with verbs in the examples presents a minor complication.

That the conjoining of names [comes about] by means of the conjunction 'and', there are many testimonies [in the scriptures]. . . . The conjunction 'and' conveys the common performance of the action, while the preposition 'with' co-signifies the sharing [of the action] in some sense. For example, 'Paul and Timothy sailed to Macedonia', but also 'Tychicus and Onesimus were sent out to the Colossians'. From these [sentences], we learn that they performed the same [action]. But if we hear that they sailed together and were sent out together, we are taught additionally that they performed the action with one another.

Basil marks off the meaning of the conjunction 'and' from the meaning of the preposition 'with'. I take him to mean that these meanings are the standard meanings of 'and' and 'with'. The word 'and' does not express what 'with' expresses, although there is some overlap in what is expressed. The conjunction has a standard 'thin' meaning in contrast to the 'thick' meaning of the preposition: expressing the 'thick' meaning would standardly require the use of a preposition. (Basil does not make explicit the stronger claim that 'and' *cannot* express the 'thick' meaning in some uses.)

The passage strikes me as a bit misleading, in that there is some unclarity here in the description of the meaning of 'and'. I do not think that the idea is fundamentally about how 'and' conjoins names to constitute the subject (or the object) of the verb of a sentence. I would claim this despite his terminology of 'the conjoining of names' and even though his examples for 'and', in which two nominals are conjoined by 'and' ('Paul and Timothy'), might suggest that he has in mind something like the conjunction of names to form phrases within a sentence.

Rather, what he wants to say about the standard meaning of 'and' ('the common performance of the action') has to do with what the entire sentence means. In fact, the idea would be more precisely conveyed in terms of rephrasal into conjoined sentences, e. g. 'Paul sailed to Macedonia and Timothy sailed to Macedonia'.⁸

Accordingly, I would argue that the key to Basil's approach is understanding the meaning of 'and' and 'with' with respect to the action expressed by the whole sentence, not in terms of, say, linguistic function. As far as I know, this approach is unique. Basil does not explain the meaning of 'and' in terms of how it is used to string together two or more conjuncts (of whatever sort, sentences or verbs or names) in a sentence. This seems particularly striking to me in view of the evidence deep in the grammatical tradition of defining the category of conjunctions in terms of linguistic function.⁹

I think there some similarity between Basil's 'sentential' approach and the notion in modern linguistics of being syncategorematic: some expressions play a semantic role such that they make no contribution to the meaning of the sentence in their own right, but when construed together with another expression or expressions there can be a contribution to the meaning of the whole sentence. (Typical candidates for syncategorematic status are quantifier expressions, prepositions, conjunctions, and adverbs.) I would argue that Basil is thinking loosely along these lines, first taking the preposition or conjunction and forming a unit from the nominals taken together with

⁸ Modern linguists recognize two main forms of conjunction, phrasal conjunction and sentential conjunction ('and' is ambiguous between two distinct meanings which can be syntactically represented differently). My rephrasal into conjoined sentences would then express the sentential conjunction reading of 'Paul and Timothy sailed to Macedonia'. Further, I take it that the sentences 'Paul and Timothy sailed together to Macedonia' (the example Basil might have liked) and 'Paul together with Timothy sailed to Macedonia' both acceptably express the *phrasal* conjunction reading of 'Paul and Timothy sailed to Macedonia'.

⁹ Diogenes Laertius 7.58 reports a Stoic definition which says that conjunctions simply join up segments of discourse: the conjunctions are an undeclinable part of speech binding together the parts of speech. In fact, this definition contrasts with the semantic character of the definitions of most other Stoic parts of speech.

the preposition or conjunction, then taking the predicate along with the subject, and then looking at the joint contribution of these elements to the meaning of the sentence.

I offer two arguments for this view: (i) the focus on the action expressed by the sentence in the description of the signification of ‘and’ or ‘with’, and (ii) the use in the third and fourth examples of the verb (the subject expression is here left indefinite) in composition with the preposition. Hence Basil’s talk of what the conjunction or preposition expresses ‘by itself’ in the text is also misleading, in that he can hardly be saying that they express anything by themselves.

We need to take a closer look at the comparison of the standard meanings associated with the preposition and conjunction in this passage. Each expression is associated with a distinctive standard sense, such as one might find nowadays as the central sense in a dictionary entry: the ‘common performance of the action’ gives us agents merely doing the same thing. So in Basil’s ‘Macedonia voyage’ example, the idea is that Paul and Timothy are on a voyage headed for Macedonia, perhaps even travelling on the same ship to Macedonia.¹⁰ But we do not learn from the sentence that Paul and Timothy share common goals or engage in some apostolic seagoing talk. On the other hand, the sentences containing the preposition express not only performance of the same sort of thing but also doing it together. Paul and Timothy are on a mission to Macedonia. They sail together and would not leave port without each other. To sum up, sentences with the preposition express a ‘thick’ sense, while sentences with the conjunction express a ‘thin’ sense in their normal uses.¹¹

III

In passing, I will quickly bring up two problems that seem to me particularly troublesome for the linguistic theorizing in this passage. The first problem is that determining the meaning of prepositions or conjunctions in terms of the action of the whole sentence is unable, in Greek just as in English, to deal with the case of existential sentences.¹² For, obviously, existential sentences are not so easy to treat in terms of how the agents do what they do. For example, look at the following English sentences:

1. Paul and Timothy exist.
2. Paul exists together with Timothy.

Sentence (1) makes good sense, but (2) does not. Sentence (2) is odd, I suppose, because the straightforward meaning of ‘exist’ according to standard English usage does not give anything for Paul and Timothy to do, no action to perform, in

¹⁰ There is an Aristotelian ring to this biblical example, cf. texts about friends doing things together (σύν compounds) *Eth. Nic.* 1159b26–34 and 1172a3–8. The former text is particularly relevant in that friendship is defined by community (κοινωνία) and the example is of passengers aboard a ship.

¹¹ Simplicius, *In Cat.* 36.8–12 likewise thinks that ‘with’ in composition conveys a sense of community—perhaps Basil and Simplicius alike draw this from the grammatical tradition. In this passage Simplicius is arguing that what the Stoics call synonymous names are really just polynoms: ‘For the preposition “with”, which signifies [as part of the word “synonym”] a sharing in the same thing, is not appropriately used for these [names with the same denotation], as [we see in the examples] “to walk about together” and “to go on military campaign together”.’ Τούτοις [sc. τοῖς ὀνόμασι] γὰρ ἡ σύν πρόθεσις οὐχ ἀρμόττει, τοῦ αὐτοῦ κοινωνίαν σημαίνουσα, ὡς τὸ συμπεριπατεῖν καὶ συστρατεύεσθαι.

¹² Thanks to Bob Sharples and David Sedley for discussion of this point.

community--the presence of 'with' in (2) seems inappropriate.¹³ So maybe the right thing to say is that in some cases, Basil's theory does not work very well.

Perhaps the problem can be handled in another way. If we adopt the strategy of rephrasing (2), approximating more closely in English the preposition-in-composition structure of Basil's Greek examples expressing shared action, we obtain the sentence,

3. Paul and Timothy coexist.

Sentence (3) seems perfectly correct to me, yielding the additional information that we need about what Paul and Timothy are doing: they do not merely exist, they get along with each other or co-operate with each other in joint projects. (On the other hand, a sentence like 'Paul and Judas coexist' seems very odd indeed given what we know of them from the New Testament!) So we have managed to uphold the distinction between the meaning of the conjunction and the preposition, and I think that we can chalk up the incorrectness of (2) to nothing more than the linguistic idioms of standard English—a parallel sentence in Greek would be perfectly intelligible.¹⁴ But I think a problem remains for the theory insofar as for the existential sentence (1), there is no action (*ἐνεργεία*) which would go into determining the meaning of 'and'.

The second problem that springs to mind is the case of sentences which express shared action. In this case, by virtue of the meaning of the verb, the action involved must be treated as associative. For example, consider the following sentences:

- 4. Paul and Timothy shook hands.
- 5. Paul shook hands with Timothy.

Both sentences make good sense, in fact both sentences mean the same. It is of course quite impossible for the conjunction in sentence (4) to mean what it standardly means.

In essence, this would be a case which Basil never brings up for 'and', namely a case in which the conjunction 'and' diverges from its 'thin' standard meaning and assumes the 'thick' standard meaning of the preposition 'with' (the sharing of the action in some sense). As I point out in the next section, Basil frustratingly bypasses discussion of the philosophical significance of these sorts of uses of 'and'. But it is likely that he would pursue an explanation in terms of 'and' switching its own standard meaning for the meaning peculiar to another preposition or conjunction.

IV

Now let us examine a bit more of what Basil says about the meaning of prepositions and conjunctions, particularly the changes of meaning to which they are subject in some uses. In the second key text (*Sp. Sanct.* 25.59; cf. 5.12), Basil considers a use of the preposition 'with' that does not assume its standard 'thick' meaning but rather the 'thin' meaning normally assumed by the conjunction 'and'.

¹³ I do not wish to deny that some sentences which exhibit certain uses of the 'exist together with' predicate make good sense, e.g. sentences in environmental contexts like 'we exist together with all the other living beings on the planet'.

¹⁴ I will bypass the complicated question of whether ancient Greek or ancient Greek philosophy had a notion of bare existence as expressed by the Greek verb *εἶναι* and other constructions. Greek philosophical usage expresses 'coexistence' by the nominal *συνουσία* and its cognate verb *συνεῖμι*: the LSJ entries specify the first sense as 'to be with, to be together'.

Ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἀμφοτέρας ἐν τῇ τῶν πιστῶν χρήσει καταλαμβάνοντες τὰς ῥήσεις, ἀμφοτέrais κεκρήμεθα: τὴν μὲν δόξαν τῷ Πνεύματι ὁμοίως ἀφ' ἑκατέρας πληροῦσθαι πεπιστευκότες: τοὺς δὲ κακουργοῦντας τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐπιστομίζεσθαι μᾶλλον διὰ τῆς προκειμένης λέξεως, ἥτις τὴν δύναμιν τῶν Γραφῶν παραπλησίαν ἔχουσα, οὐκέτι ἐστὶν ὁμοίως τοῖς ἐναντίοις εὐεπιχείρητος (ἐστὶ δὲ αὕτη ἡ ἀντιλεγόμενη νῦν παρὰ τούτων) ἀντὶ τοῦ καὶ συνδέσμου παρειλημμένη. Ἰσον γάρ ἐστιν εἰπεῖν: Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιμόθεος, καὶ Παῦλος σὺν Τιμοθέῳ καὶ Σιλουανῷ. Ἡ γὰρ συμπλοκὴ τῶν ὀνομάτων δι' ἑκατέρας ὁμοίως τῆς ἐκφωνήσεως σώζεται. Εἰ τοίνυν, τοῦ Κυρίου εἰπόντος Πατέρα καὶ Υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα, αὐτὸς εἶποιμι Πατέρα καὶ Υἱὸν σὺν τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι, ἄλλο τι εἰρηκῶς κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν ἔσομαι;¹⁵

For when we examine the two expressions current in the speech of believers, we use both ['with' and 'and'], trusting that glory to the Spirit is rendered equally by means of either. But [we observe that] those who work against the Truth are silenced more through the word under discussion [i.e. 'with'], which is faithful to the sense of the Scriptures yet not so easily misused by opponents (this [expression] is the one presently denied by them) when pressed into service in place of the conjunction 'and'. For it is equivalent to say, 'Paul and Silvanus and Timothy', and 'Paul with Timothy and Silvanus', seeing that the conjoining of names is preserved equally by means of either expression. So then, although the Lord says 'Father and Son and Holy Spirit' [Matthew 28.19], if I myself should say 'Father and Son with the Holy Spirit', will I have said something different with respect to meaning?

Basil here says that what is said when one wishes to express the 'conjoining of names', which normally would require the standard use of the conjunction 'and', is expressed equally well by a special 'thin' use of the preposition 'with'. This special use of 'with', I would say, deletes the associative (joint activity) aspect of the standard meaning of 'with'. In contrast to the first key passage, the examples here do not give complete sentences.

Basil recognizes the quite sound point that the same word, used in the same language, can express different meanings. The additional observation in play here is that the different meanings that a word can express may coincide with meanings which another word expresses. However, this still leaves us with the question of what is the import of *choosing* to use the one expression rather than the other for certain purposes of speaking religious language. The idea is that 'with' is less prone to 'misuse', less likely to serve the theological arguments of his opponents, but Basil never tells us precisely why in this passage.

What is clear is that use of 'with' is thought more suitable than 'and' for promoting doctrinal orthodoxy. Why does Basil find 'with' more helpful for this purpose? The doctrinal point relevant to choices of expression in religious language concerns the divine status of and relations between the persons of the Trinity. Basil sets out in the treatise to establish his claim that the three divine persons are *inseparable* in the religious language of the Church, hence worthy of equal honour, hence equal in divinity.¹⁶ Now in its standard meaning, as discussed earlier in the paper, 'with' would be used in sentences which express some shared activity. So the 'linguistic inseparability' would amount to what is expressed by the preferred religious language, that whatever the divine persons do, such as creating something out of nothing at all, they do in community with one another and not separately.

¹⁵ The material in square brackets in the translation is added in order to clarify the text.

¹⁶ In all his theological treatises, Basil argues in one way or another for the belief that the persons of the Trinity are like and equal in nature.

V

I will conclude with a brief look at the background in ancient grammar.¹⁷ The grammarians had long studied the preservation of meaning in uses of indeclinable expressions. This in turn fed into the blend of theory of language and dogmatic concerns found in Basil.¹⁸

One key element of this blend is the idea that the different meanings that a word can express may coincide with meanings which another word expresses. This perfectly valid and harmless point seems to have been taken to the extreme by the Greek grammarians. The grammarians tend to understand the meaning of non-standard uses of expressions solely in terms of taking on the standard meaning of some other expression, for example the use of a preposition where a conjunction is normally used. The assumption seems to be that every non-standard meaning of an expression is the standard meaning of some other expression.

This must be understood in light of ancient theories of linguistic correctness.¹⁹ For their own purposes, the grammarians, being dedicated to the establishment of correct or pure uses of language, explained the linguistic norms (and irregularities) for uses of expressions. They eventually claimed authority not only for the literary language of classic texts, but also for ordinary spoken language.²⁰

When treating indeclinable expressions, the grammarians present sets of observations with Homeric examples about the possible replacements for conjunctions.²¹ They consider whether the meaning is preserved in sentences with substituted expressions and note other differences (e.g. syntactic changes). Out of a forest of loosely relevant material, I will put the spotlight on the Imperial grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus, who admits his debt to previous grammarians.²²

In a few passages, Apollonius discusses interchanges of meaning for prepositions and conjunctions (conjunctive uses of prepositions as well as prepositional uses of conjunctions). He argues towards the beginning of his treatise *On Conjunctions* (*Conj.* 214.4–20) that conjunctive uses of prepositions amount to a sort of homonymy; he subsequently contends (*Conj.* 214.20–5) that prepositions cannot be substituted for conjunctions without some grammatical changes to the sentence. In his largely

¹⁷ Grammatical studies were present at various stages of Basil's extensive education. I cover this in some detail in the first chapter of my 'Grammar, logic, and philosophy of language: the Stoic legacy in fourth-century patristics', Ph.D. thesis (London, 2000).

¹⁸ Basil recognizes the general application of the theory of 'semantic interchange' he draws upon (*Sp. Sanct.* 5.12): *Ὁ μόνον δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς θεολογίας αἱ χρήσεις τῶν φωνῶν ἐπαλλάττονται, ἀλλ' ἡδὲ καὶ πρὸς τὰ ὑπ' ἀλλήλων σημαίνοντα πολλάκις ἀντιμεθίστανται, ὅταν ἑτέρα τὴν τῆς ἑτέρας σημασίαν ἀντιλαμβάνη.*

¹⁹ Long before the Stoics, there was concern with the 'correctness of words' (*ὀνομάτων ὀρθότης*)—the correct relationship between a word and an object or state of affairs. I refer the reader to the fine contributions of E. Siebenborn, *Die Lehre von der Sprachrichtigkeit und ihren Kriterien. Studien zur antiken normativen Grammatik* (Amsterdam, 1976), 20–52, and C. Atherton, 'What every grammarian knows?', *CQ* 46 (1996), 239–60.

²⁰ Atherton (n. 19), 243ff.

²¹ I. Sluiter, 'Two problems in ancient medical commentaries', *CQ* 44 (1994), 270–5, at 274–5 points out that the linguistic phenomenon of one preposition being used in place of another was widely observed in both Greek and Roman grammar as one of the causes of solecism.

²² In the prologue to his treatise on conjunctions (*Conj.* 213.3–5), Apollonius reacts to his predecessors; some 'only catalogued the names of the conjunctions and the transformations (*μεταλήψεις*) from some conjunctions into other conjunctions, that is, those conjunctions which are equivalent in meaning to one another'. I. Sluiter, *Ancient Grammar in Context. Contributions to the Study of Ancient Linguistic Thought* (Amsterdam, 1990), 116 gives further references for 'transformation' (*μεταλήψεις*) in the grammarians.

extant treatise *On Syntax*, Apollonius (*Synt.* 457.12–458.5; cf. *Synt.* 481.3–8, *Adv.* 181.32–182.10) discusses some examples of conjunctive uses of prepositions: the prepositional phrase ‘from laziness’ (ἐκ τῆς ῥαθυμίας) is equivalent in meaning to the phrase with a conjunction (actually an improper preposition) ‘on account of laziness’ (ἐνεκα τῆς ῥαθυμίας). Apollonius claims that this use of a preposition is unusual yet does not alter the meaning of the phrase.

Further, a grammatical scholiast (Sch. in Dionys. Thr. [*Commentarius Heliodori*] 93.7–9; cf. Sch. Vat. in Dionys. Thr. 269.28–9) seems to be influenced by Apollonius or his sources on conjunctive uses of prepositions, using the same ‘sloth’ example. This is particularly helpful in that this text brings us much closer to the school-grammar which Basil studied.²³

In conclusion, I have tried to show in this paper one example of what Patristic texts have to offer to the study of ancient theory of language. The study of rhetoric, grammar, and other areas of linguistic interest are an important part of the extensive surviving literature of the Patristic era.²⁴

King's College London

DAVID G. ROBERTSON
djd_h_robertson@hotmail.com

²³ I demonstrate the significance of material in the scholia on Dionysius Thrax for the school-grammar of the fourth century in my London Ph.D. dissertation (n. 17), 15–18.

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