

PYTHAGORAS BYZANTINUS PROJECT
**Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism in Byzantine Thought
and Culture**

WORKSHOP
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Abstract

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**Pythagoras Cappadocorum:
Texts, Methods, Problems, Solutions**

The investigation of Pythagorean lore and its influence on the three Cappadocians—Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa—presents considerable challenges. Cappadocian theology stands within a complex line of (in)direct reception of Pythagorean and Platonic ideas, transmitted through the Philonic corpus and further developed in a Christian context by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, with an additional mediating role played by Gregory Thaumaturgus. However, in the cultural and religious milieu of the fourth century, Pythagorean thought had become integrated into Iamblichean Neoplatonism, which—particularly due to the negative legacy of Emperor Julian—was increasingly viewed as antagonistic by Orthodox Christian thinkers. This ambivalence is crucial: on the one hand, there is a positive reception of Pythagorean elements as part of the Alexandrian inheritance; on the other, a conscious rejection of such elements emerges in response to Julian’s project of enforced Neoplatonism and the projection of Pythagorean ideas onto heretical adversaries, such as Eunomius and the ‘spirit fighters’ (Pneumatomachoi). In this programmatic paper, I propose to examine the Cappadocian corpus for both direct and indirect references to Pythagoras and his legacy. I argue that Pythagorean influences are more pervasive than a surface reading might suggest. I will also outline the methodological difficulties in identifying such influences and suggest a framework for uncovering the Pythagorean substrate in Cappadocian theology.