HERMENEUTICS OF THE TRANSCENDENT. FROM THE IMAGE OF INCARCERATION TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF IN SAINT JOHN CASSIAN' S WORK

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Abstract: *As the images is showed as a mirror of the imaginary and the image of the icon as a paradigm of the religious imaginary, the hermeneutics of the transcendent in Saint John Cassian's work does nothing more than to present and analyze the image of the incarceration by mortification of the sin and the image with the reconstruction of the ontological self by virtue. The antinomic images of the sacred and of the profane are chronicled from the perspective of elevating and spectacular symbols. Crossing the path from mytho-analysis to mytho-criticism, from the Eastern icon to the Christomorphisation imaginary and from Western figurative art to the Christological imaginary incorporated within the ontological reality of the immanent in relation to the transcendent, the Christomorphisation of the imaginary and the vocation of transcending the self in the symbolic spatiality of the redemptive sacrifice makes Saint John Cassian's work a genuine sacred creation with its roots in the soteriologic symbolism.*

Keywords – *image, hermeneutics, transcendental, mystical.*

By presenting the mirror of the anthropologic imaginary from the perspective of the religious imaginary paradigm, of the image as symbol and icon, as inspirational topos and key resort of the connection between the artistic conscious and the moral one and the connection between the sacred, reality and imaginary (image as time, the catalyzing topos of eternity, the eros as archetypical valence of the sacred), this work highlights the aspects of the imaginary (meditative and contemplative, but also mystical and transcendental) from the perspective of the spectacular symbol isomorphism (light, numinous, Sophianic), as well as of the meta-aesthetic categories of the sacred and the profane in the narrative imaginary. Sophianic – as principle of the Christic light, the image of the mystical flight – as indirect manifestation of completeness and light, especially the messianic role of the Cassianic text – as canon-text for the western and eastern mystics, the motive of the time and purifying fire with the mortification of the sins and their inner burning with virtue, bring a close-up view of the Christic image in the anthropology of John Cassian's isihast text.

And as *spiritual science*[1] is clearly different from the other sciences with the fact that its finality or purpose is not a transient, ephemeral one, but a spiritual and eternal one, then it can be said that the image as mirror of the transcendent leads to a biblical and patristic, historical, literary and allegorical hermeneutics of the Cassianic text. Spiritual science can be a *practical* one (πρακτική) – *of the deeds* consisting in *bettering the habits* and in *cleaning the sins* (*que emendatione morum et uitiorum purgatione perficitur*), and a *theoretical* one (θεωρητική) consisting in *the contemplation of the heavenly ones* and in *perceiving the meanings of the most sacred ones*: *que in contemplatione diuinarum rerum et sacratissimorum sensuum cognitione consistit.* (CASSIEN, 1958: 184) And so as to get to know the meaning of the most sacred ones and to the contemplation of the god-like ones, respectively to the *theoretical*

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[1] By the statement *spiritual science* it is understood *the spiritual knowledge* of the transcendental numinous and Sophianic.

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science, the patristic literature interpreter shall first have to fall in with the *practical* one, as: „*practice can be assumed without theory, but theory without practice under no circumstances can it be learned"*.[1] (CASSIAN, 1990: 552) This is why in *spiritual science* there are identified two steps to the high peak of science: *the step of spiritual practice* and *the step of the divine contemplation.* The second step cannot be reached but with practice: „*In vain longs to know God the one who does not avoid contact with vices*"[2]. (CASSIAN, 1990: 552).

So as to reach *the divine contemplation* which directly sends to *illumination* it must first be assumed *the practice of spiritual science*. In this respect, John Cassian also mentions the two grounds of *the practical completeness*: *ascertaining the nature of the vices and knowing the methods to push them away*: „*Nam primus eius est modus, ut omnium natura uitiorum et curationis ratio cognoscatur. Secundus, ut ita discernatur ordo uirtutum earumque perfectione mens nostra formetur...*". (CASSIEN, 1958: 184) Thus, the human mind can be formed after their completeness and stop serving them out of constraint, but out of pleasuring: „*Quo enim modo uel uirtutum rationem, qui secundus in actuali disciplina gradus est, uel rerum spiritalium et caelestium sacramenta, quae in theoriae gradu sublimiore consistunt, ualebit adtingere, qui naturam uitiorum suorum nec potuit intellegere nec enisus est extirpare?*"[3] (CASSIEN, 1958: 184-185)

By using the allegory, John Cassian shall point out the fact that the one who desired to know the things from his exterior shall first have to understand himself, to know the purpose of his existence and its finality. Or, in order to reach such a finality one shall first have to resort to *putting away the harmful ones* by the means of four works: *tearing, destruction, loss* and *spreading*, while in *the completeness of the virtues* there are necessary only two - *building* and *seeding*: „*In expulsione enim moxiarum rerum quattuor esse necessaria designauit, id est euellere, destruere, disperdere, dissipare, in perficiendis uero uirtutibus et his quae ad iustitiam pertinent adquirendis aedificare tantummodo atque plantare. Vnde liquido patet difficiliue conuelli atque eradicari inolitas corporis atque animae passiones quam spiritales extrui plantarique uirtutes*". (CASSIEN, 1958: 184) And even if this *practice* is built on *knowing the nature of the vices and discerning the line of the virtues*, it carries in itself several arts and disciplines of which three are quite clearly distinguished in the Cassianic perspective: *asceticism*, *learning* and *philanthropy*. (CASSIEN, 1990: 553)

Making a clear distinction between *imitation* and *admiration*, John Cassian shall identify tqo parts of the *theoretical science* namely: *the historic interpretation* (*historicam interpretationem*) and *the spiritual understanding* (*intellegentiam spiritalem*).[4] Or, the branches of spiritual understanding are three: *tropology* (*tropologia*), *allegory* (*allegoria*) and *anagogy* (*anagoge*): „*nunc autem fratres, si uenero ad uos linguis loquens, quid uobis prodero, nisi uobis loquar aut in reuelatione*

[1] „*…πρακτική absque theoretica possideri potest, theoretica uero sine actuali omnimodis non potest adprehendi*"
[2] „*Frustra igitur ad conspectum dei tendit qui uitiorum contagia non declinat*".
[3] „*But how will he manage to reach to the basis of the virtues, which is the second step in practical discipline, or to the spiritual and heavenly ones, which are found on the highest step of theory, the one who couldn't understand the nature of his vices and did not strive to step away from them?*".
[4] Also see *Solomon's Parables* 31, 21: *omnes enim qui apud eam sunt uestiti sunt dupliciter*.

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aut in scientia aut in prophetia aut in doctrina?" (I CORINTENI, 14:6)[1] Making reference to the vetero and neo-testamentary texts, the author of *The Spiritual Conversations* shall explain the sublime part of *theoretical science* by analyzing several versicles which refer to the three branches of spiritual understanding. He shall explain *the historical interpretation*[2] as means of knowing past and seen things in which there is no hidden meaning, only the one given by the words spoken, but also as an allegorical method of *the spiritual understanding* of the historical text which must always take into consideration *the rule of the context*. The *allegory*[3] field includes those truths said under a figurative form, in mysterious ways and most of the times given through parables. *Allegory* expresses through a historical story spiritual meanings. *Anagogy*[4] is „*the part of the spiritual understanding ascending from the spiritual secrets to the highest and most sacred ones"*. (CASSIAN, 1990: 553) This is mostly used in practical pieces of advice leading to divine contemplation. *Tropology*[5] is the moral explanation which „*leads to a clean life and to the practical behaviour principles*" (CASSIAN, 1990: 553). This is how we distinguish with a close look if the ones showed by the practical judgement are useful or moral.

So as to reach the light of complete science, to the gifted knowledge of the light transcending the human character, there shall be first put aside all vices, especially pride or empty glory, which means that without a total embracement of the practical or moral discipline and without acquiring a purity of the heart one could never reach the knowledge of *spiritual science*:[6] „*quam hi tantum qui non aliorum docentum uerbis, sed propriorum actuum uirtute perfecti sunt post multa operum ac laborum stipendia iam quasi in praemio consequuntur*" (CASSIEN, 1958: 192). Thus, the understanding of the Law is not acquired only by meditating upon it, so that, later on, by getting to the science of psalm singing to also understand what it is sung:[7] „*Ille enim psallens intelleget quae canuntur, qui in uia inmaculata gressus puri cordis innititur*" (CASSIEN, 1958: 193). Hence, behold that in the Cassianic perspective it is again the man who desires to prepare his heart as a holy tent who shall later receive *the spiritual science* (*scientiae spiritalis sacrum*):[8] „*Inpossibile namque est animam, quae mundanis uel tenuiter distentionibus occupatur, donum scientiae promereri uel generatricem spiritalium sensum aut tenacem sacrarum fieri lectionum*". (CASSIEN, 1958: 193)

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[1] „*And now, brothers, if I came to you, speaking languages, what use could I be of, if I didn't speak to you – either in revelation, or in knowledge, or in foretelling, or in teaching?*" (revelation - allegory, knowledge – tropology, foretelling – anagaogy, teaching – historical interpretation).

[2] See Saint Apostle Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians* 4, 22: „*scriptum est enim quia Abraham duos filios habuit, unum de ancilla et alterum de libera*".

[3] See Saint Apostle Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians* 4, 23-24: "*...Sed qui de ancilla, secundum carnem natus est: qui autem de libera, per repromissionem...*".

[4] *Anagoge uero de spiritalibus mysteriis ad sublimiora quaedam et sacratiora caelorum secreta conscendens….*

[5] *Tropologia est moralis explanatio ad emundationem uitae et instructionem pertinens actualem.* Also see *Psalme* 147, 1-2: *Lauda Hierusalem dominum: lauda deum tuum Sion....*

[6] „*Only the ones complete not only with the words others taught them but also with the strength of their own deeds acquire it as a sort of award after having paid for it with many deeds and pains*".

[7] „*The one singing psalms shall understand what sings the one striving to walk with a chastely heart on the virtuous path*".

[8] „*It is impossible that the soul, even if only slightly under the influence of the worldly preoccupations, deserve the gift of science or to be procreator of spiritual meanings, or to incorporate anything after having read holy books*".

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The discipline of true science shall be reached by passing two great stages: *with the stable humiliation of the mind* (*humilitatem cordis inmobilem primitus cvonsequaris*) and *with the permanent care for holy texts* (*ad eam quae inluminat scientiam caritatis consummatione persucat*). (CASSIEN, 1958: 195). The stability of the mind humility leads to *illumination* by living the love for people, while totally giving oneself in continuous reading and meditation to the sacred ones shall certainly lead to the *completeness of spiritual science.* Given this thought, John Cassian shall compare *the holy shrine* with *the human mind* searching for the sacred. He shall show that „*this mind of the testamentary shrine*" (*qudammodo ex ea faciens testamenti habentem scilicet*), which bears in itself *the two stone plates* with the commandments (*duas tabulas lapideas*), shall take the interpreter to the eternity of the other two objects: *the heavenly manna* (*manna*), by which it is understood „heavenly and forevermore sweetness of the spiritual meanings of that angel-like bread" (*perpetua tenacitate conseruet, spiritalium scilicet sensum et angelici illius panis perennem caelestemque dulcedinem*) and *Aaron's mace* (*uirgam Aaron*), meaning „*the redemptive flag of our greatest and most genuine preast we have, Jesus Christ, a mace which, by cropping, shall always bring the harvest of immortal redemption*"[1] (CASSIAN, 1990: 559) This „*golden urn of a sincere and pure memory*" (*urnam quoque auream, hoc est memoriam puram atque sinceram*), which is the human mind, with the protection of the heavenly powers, of the two cherubim[2] guarding the top of its shrine, comes and makes man's work complete with the completeness of the spiritual science, putting it to shelter from all invasion of evil spirits:[3]

> Et ita mens tua non solum in arcam diuini testamenti, uerum etiam in regnum sacerdotale prouecta per indissolubilem puritatis affectum quodammodo absorta spiritalibus disviplinis illud inplebit pontificale mandatum, quod a legislatore ita praecipitur: *et de sanctis non egredietur, ne polluat sanctuarium dei*, id est cor suum, in quo iugiter habitaturum se dominus repromittit dicens: *inhabitabo in eis inter illos ambulabo*. (CASSIEN, 1958: 195)

Thus, learning by heart the texts of the Scripture has a *double fruition*: one of reading and memorizing and one of meditation. Hence, the interpreter's mind shall always be illuminated with the true spiritual science: „*unleashed from the entanglement of what we see and hear, especially in meditations over the night, when we think of them in silence, we understand them more clearly*". (CASSIAN, 1990: 560) The biblical and patristic hermeneutics interpreter shall first have to acquire the purity of the heart so as to be in capacity of preaching to others. In a first stage he shall have to strive „*to command to his mouth the deepest silence*", [4] to be „*eager to listen and dilatory in*

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[1] „*...id est summi uerique pontificis nostri Iesu Christi salutare uexillum, inmortalis memoriae semper uiridtate frondescens*".

[2] *Cherubim* in Greek meant *multitude of science*.

[3] „*Hence, our mind, representing not only a shrine for keeping the Old Testament, but even imperial priesthood, with the solid feeling of purity, somehow absorbed by spiritual teachings, shall accomplish that priest-like commandment formulated by the law giver as follows:* Thou shall not bear away from the holy bower so as not to do wrong to God's halidom, *that is not to do wrong to his heart, in which God promises to live forever...*".

[4] „*... ne studium lectionis ac desiderii tui labor uana elatione cassetur, ut indicas summum ori tuo silentium*". (CASSIEN, 1958: 193)

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speaking", [1] „ *to listen and receive with a tense mind and a silent mouth*" [2] all the silently wrapped preaches of the *Scriptures*. This is a first step in *practical discipline*:[3]

> Et ideo caeudum tibi est ne illorum ad docendum inciteris exemplis, qui peritiam disputandi ac sermonis afluentiam consecuti, quia possunt ea quae uoluerint ornate copioseque disserere scientiam spiritalem possidere creduntur ab his qui uim eius et qualitatem discernere non nouerunt. Aliud namque est facilitatem oris et nitorem habere sermonis et aliquid uenas ac medullas caelestium intrare disctorum ac profunda et abscondita sacramenta purissimo cordis oculo contemplari, quod nullatenus humana doctrina nec eruditio saecularis, sed sola puritas mentis per inluminationem sancti spiritus possidebit. (CASSIEN, 1958: 194-195)

Renewed and anchored in spiritual texts, the interpreter's mind shall be able to receive *the beauty of understanding the holy ones* (*sacratioris intellegentiae pulchritudo*). Once he advances in knowledge, he shall realize he cannot *measure its depth* (*nec subtilitatem eius deprehendere*) nor *indulge its brightness* (*nec fulgorem ualeant sustinere*). And, as it is known from the Law testimony, that „*per quod etiam omnia praecepta caelestia secundum mensuram status nostri ad omne hominum genus probemus extendi*", then surely „*pro capacitate enim humanorum sensum earum quoque species coaptatur et uel terrena carnalibus uel diuina spiritalibus adparebit*".[4] (CASSIEN, 1958: 197) Only thus the spiritual one shall keep away from *serving idols*,[5] *from pagan superstitions*,[6] from the Judaic law superstitions[7] and even from *heretic teachings*,[8] as the man chained by the pains of the body „*shall guard in health this law, but in its plain meaning, in its letter*"[9], while the man acquiring the purity of the heart „*shall guard it in a spiritual way*" (*spiritaliter obseruari*). (CASSIAN, 1990: 560)

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[1] „*... citus ad audientum, tardus autem ad loquendum*. (CASSIEN, 1958: 193) Also see Saint Apostle Jacob's *catholic Epistle* 1, 19.

[2] „ *… ut omnium seniorum instituta atque sententias intento corde et quasi muto ore suscipias ac diligenter in pectore tuo condens ad perficienda ea potius quam ad docenda festines*". (CASSIEN, 1958: 193)

[3] „*Because they can say nicely and with richness in their words what they desire, they believe to hold spiritual science but cannot distinguish between power and its characteristics. One thing is to have ease in your expression and brighness in words, and another to penetrate into the veins and marrow of the heavenly words, to look with a pure eye of the heart into the deep and hidden secrets, characteristics not given by human teaching and science of the time but only the purity of the mind and the illumination which comes from the Holy Ghost*".

[4] „*All heavenly teachings extend to the entire human race, according to their state* [then for sure] *their meaning depends on the power of human understanding and shall become earthly for the body-like ones and godly for the spiritual ones*".

[5] „*... spiritus fornicationis decepit eos, et fornicati sunt a deo suo...*". (OSEEA, 4:12)

[6] „*May the fortunetellers come and redeem you after the signs on the sky, the ones looking at the stars and counting the moons si that from them they foretell your future*". (CASSIAN, 1990: 560)

[7] „*... despondi enim uos uni uiro uirginem castam exhibere Christo...*". (II CORINTHIANS, 11:3)

[8] „*Ego scio quia post discessionem meam intrabunt lupi graues in uos, non parcentes gregi, et ex uobis ipsis exsurgent uiri loquentes peruersa, ut abducant discipulos post se*". (SAINT APOSTLES' BOOK, 20, 29)

[9] „*Hoc ab homine carnalium adhuc obscenitatum passionisbus obligato secundum simplicem letterae sonum salubriter custoditur*". (CASSIEN, 1958: 197)

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In the Cassianic view, *worldly literature* or the profane literature is considered a barrier for redemption. Only spiritual science remains the appanage of the pure ones:[1]

> Vt ergo haec in te scientia spiritalis perpetua soliditate roboretur nec ea iam temporarie perfruaris sicut illi qui eam non suo studio, sed aliena relatione contingunt et uelet aerio ut ita dixerim adore percipiunt, sed ut sensibus tuis inuiscerata quodammodo et perspecta atque palpata condatur, illud omni obseruantia custodire te conuenit...(CASSIEN, 1958: 200)

On a necessary basis the mind of the biblical interpreter needs to be conquered by *inward joys* he must cultivate with much diligence and eagerness, determining it to be preoccupied with *the spiritual and godly ones* instead of *the meaningless and earthly ones*:[2] „*bibe aquas de tuis uasis et de puteorum tuorum fonte. Supereffluant tibi aquae de tuo fonte, in tuas autem plateas pertranseant aquae tuae*". (SOLOMON'S PARABLES, 5:15-16) And, hence, the mind of the one who reaches such a state in spiritual science sould not be proud of its exceeding diligence in spiritual science and should not fall again into the primordial sin, but should find *the right judgement* of its deeds:[3]

> Si itaque haec diligenter excepta et in recessu mentis condita atque indicta fuerint taciturnitate signata, postea ut uina quaedam suaue olentia et laetificantia cor hominis, cum sensuum canitie et patientiae fuerint uetustate decocta, cum magna sui fragrantia de uase tui pectoris proferentur et tamquam perennis fons de experientiae uenis et inriguis uirtutum meatibus redundabunt fluentaque continua uelut de quadam abysso tui cordis effundent. (CASSIEN, 1958: 201)

Without the experience of the deeds and with a heart full of pains no man shall ever teach himself of others. The words coming from some of them are useless and fruitless and shall not penetrate into their hearts. Thus it is impossible that *an impure soul* receive and talk forward *the complete science of spirituality*. In this respect, John Cassian shall make an analogy between the impure soul and a *filthy pot* in which nobody shall pour *finest honey*:[4]

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[1] „*Thus, so that all this spiritual science strengthens in you with unreplaceable powers and so that you do not use it in vain, so that the ones reaching it not with their study, but with an external connection and attain it, so to say, from the air after its smell, hence, to penetrate your senses as if born with them, as if something which can be seen or felt...*".

[2] „*Drink water from you well and from the waters running from your fountain. Do not let your wells spill on the path, nor your waters through the markets*".

[3] „*If they shall be received with care, if placed in the shelters of the mind and marked with the seal of silence, afterwards, as the old wine which perfumes and cheers the human mind, when they shall attain their own perfume with the age of the feelings and patience, then they shall be taken out from the vase of the firm chest and, as a drainless well, shall overflow from the veins of experience and from the forever crossed paths of the virtues and shall eternally flow as from an unmeasured depth of your heart*".

[4] „*Nobody pours into a filthy and bad smelling pot a fine perfume or good quality honey, or any precious liquid. A pot infused with a bad smell ruins the most pleasant perfume, without it being able to change the smell of the pot too much, as anything that is clean becomes easily dirty unlike what is dirty which cannot be cleaned. So was the vase of our chest, if it was not cleaned first from al the damage of the vices it shall not be worthy to receive this chrism (…) nor this spiritual science or the words of the Scripture which are sweeter than honey and honeycombs shall not be able to keep them unspoiled*".

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> Nemo enim in uas faetidum atque corruptum unguentum aliquod nobile eut mel optimum aut pretiosi quicquam liquoris infundit. Facilius enim quamuis odoratissimum myrum semel horrendis inbuta faetoribus testa contaminat quam ut aliquid ex eo suauitatis aut gratiae ipsa concipiat, quia multo citius munda corrumpuntur quam corrupta mundantur. (...) nec illam scientiam spiritalem et eloquia scripturam quae *dulciora* sunt *super mel et fauum*[1] inpolluta seruabit" (CASSIEN, 1958: 202)

Such interpreters cannot enter the *heart* of the Holy Scripture, that is in the *most secret and sacred meanings*, but can at the most control *the experience of the conversation and the adorned manner of speaking*.[2] The true spiritual science cannot be reached except for the one who truly honours God. And as "*all the treasures of science and wisdom are hidden in Christ*"[3], no man with an impure heart, without Christ in it, acquire *spiritual science.*[4] This shall be reached by *seeding into justice* that is by spreading justice in practical life, by *cutting down hope in life* that is by gathering the fruit of spiritual virtues, which also involves the elimination of bodily vices and by *mind illumination* with the knowledge of the light of the Truth. (CASSIAN, 1990:564) The interpreter not leaving the bodily vices and who moves away from the Truth cannot acquire under any circumstances *spiritual science*, but shall at the most be subjected to a *false science*[5] about God: [6]

> Quid enim prodest quempiam ornamentum eloquiorum caelestium et illam pretiosissimam scripturarum speciem consequi, si eam lutulentis operibus uel sensibus inhaerendo quasi inmundissimam terram subigendo confringat aut caenosis libidinum suarum polluat uolutabris? Fiet enim, ut id quod recte utentibus decori esse consueuit non solum istos ornare non possit, uerum etiam maioris caeni conluuione sordescat. (CASSIEN, 1958: 204-205)

This *genuine and spiritual science* is very far from *this century's scholarship*, which is stained „*with the filth of bodily vices, so we know that sometimes it wonderfully bloomed even with some of the most simple and unschooled ones*". (CASSIAN, 1990: 565) Hence, before gaining the completeness of spiritual science, the interpreter shall have to search for *true purity*: „*Nobody in which still reign the bodily passions, especially riot, shall not be able to acquire spiritual science (...), for in the heart of the kind one shall*

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[1] See *Psalm* 18, 11.

[2] „*Praedeximus namque huiusmodi homines disputandi tantum habere pertitiam et elocutionis ornatum, ceterum scripturarum uenas et arcana spiritalium sensum intrare non posse*". (CASSIEN, 1958: 203)

[3] „*Omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi...*" (COLOSENI, 2:3)

[4] „*Spiritus enim dei effugiet fictum, nec habitat in corpore subdito peccatis*". (SOLOMON'S WISDOM, 1:5, 4).

[5] τάς άντιθέσεις τής ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως. (I TIMOTEI 6, 20-21)

[6] „*Of what use is it for anyone to express with the richness of heavenly words and with that high appearance of the Scriptures, if by ugly feelings and deeds he sloshes the beauty of faith and stains it with the filth of its desires? Science, which is an adornment for the one using it right, not only is it incapable of embellishing them, but also fills them with even more filth*". Also see the book *Isus Sirah's Wisdom* 15, 9-10: „*It is not beautiful the laud in the sinner's mouth, as it is not sent to him from the Lord. For into wisdom shall His laud be spoken and the Lord shall make it right*" (*Ex ore enim peccatoris non est pulchra laudatio*) and *Solomon's Parables* 17, 16: „*What use are the money in the hands of a foul? He could gain wisdom but lacks in aptness*" (*... ut quid fuerunt diuitiae insipienti? Possidere enim sapientiam excors non poterit*).

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reign wisdom and whoever shall fear God shall also find science with justice". (CASSIAN, 1990: 565)

Making reference to Saint Apostle Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians[1], John Cassian shall show the connection of the virtues leading to the attainment of the true spiritual science:[2]

> Qua coniugatione uirtutum euidentissime nos uoluit erudire de uigiliis atque ieiuniis ad castitatem, de castitate ad scientiam, de scientia ad longanimitatem, de longanimitate ad suauitatem, de suauitate ad spiritum sanctum, de spiritu sancto ad caritatis non fictae praemia perueniri. Cum igitur hac disciplina atque hoc ordine tu quoque perueneris ad scientiam spiritalem, habebis procul dubio sicut diximus non sterilem nec inertem, sed uiuidam fructuosamque doctrinam... (CASSIEN, 1958: 206)

Once acquired *the secrets of spiritual meanings*, they must not become deceit and love for empty praise. Such an interpreter is led more by the lack of wisdom rather than by wisdom: „*in aures inprudentis noli quicquam dicere, ne forte inrideat sapientes sermones tuos*" (*Say nothing in the ears of the unwise one so that he should not laugh at your wise words*). (SOLOMON'S PARABLES, 23: 9) And this is why these secrets of spiritual science must be revealed not to those interpreters who are careless and indifferent regarding the holy ones, to the outlaws who do not wish to redeem,[3] to the ones in a warm state and who are not under any pain whatsoever or to the fools who lack in senses, nor to the ones who shall not obey godly words, but "*to those overwhelmed by sadness and bitterness, repenting their past deeds, spilling them plentifully the joy of spiritual life (...) and warm them with the liquor of the redeeming word so that they should not be swallowed by a sea of sadness, drowned in the continuous bitterness and killing deceit"*. (CASSIAN, 1990: 566-567) It can thus be stated that spiritual knowledge can remain fruitless because of two reasons: „*either the one teaching another recommends what he did not do, thus using empty words, or bad and full of vices listeners no not receive in their harsh souls the redeeming and holy message of the spiritual man*". (CASSIAN, 1990: 567)

Thus, the image of the spiritual science as mirror of the archetype of paradigmatic knowledge of the religious imaginary is achieved with a hermeneutics of the text which makes the connection between the transcendent and the immanent. In Saint John Cassian's work there are presented to us and analyzed by choice the images of the incarceration by mortification and the images of reconstructing the ontological

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[1] See Saint Apostle Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians 6, 4-7 ş.u.: „*For in all we appear ourselves as servants of the Lord, in much patience, in trouble, in needs, in want, in beatings, in prison, in disturbance, in strives, in vigils, in fasting; in purity, in knowledge, in long-suffering patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love; in the word of the Truth, in God's power, with the weapons of justice, the ones from the right and the ones from the left...*".

[2] „*By connecting the virtues one to the other, he wanted to teach us very clearly that it is reached from vigil and fasting to purity, from purity to science, from science to long-suffering patience, from long-suffering patience to kindness, from kindness to the Holy Spirit, from the Holy Spirit to the reward of sincere love. Hence, when you, with this teaching and in this order shall also reach spiritual knowledge then, doubtless, as I said, shall have not an unworthy and empty science, but an alive and fruitful one, seed of the redeeming word*".

[3] „*The fool has not enough with the pleasures and there is no need for wisdom where there is no sense*". (CASSIAN, 1990: 566) Also see *Solomon's Parables* 19, 10 şi 18, 2: *Non expuiunt stulto deliciae, nec opus est sapientia ubi deest sensus. Magis enim ducitur insipientia* and *Solomon's Parables* 29, 19: *quia seruus durus non emendatibur uerbis: si enim et intellexerit, non oboediet...*

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self by virtue. The sacred and the profane are portrayed from the perspective of ascensolar and spectacular symbols. Mytho-analysis and mytho-criticism, the imaginary of the Christomorphization anf the Western figurative art of the Christilologic imaginary incorporated in the ontological reality of the immanent in relation to the transcendent form part of the Cassianic conception on biblical hermeneutics. The Christomorphization of the imaginary and the vocation of transcending the self in the symbolic spatiality of the redemptive sacrifice make Saint John Cassian's work a genuine sacred creation with its roots in soteriologic symbolism.

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