

BOEKBESPREKINGEN - COMPTES RENDUS

Heinrich STIRNIMANN, *Grund und Gründer des Alls. Augustins Gebet in den Selbstgesprächen*. Freiburg (Schweiz), Universitätsverlag, 1992, 148 S.

Augustine's *Soliloquies* were written at Cassiciacum when he was still a catechumen. The work is an inner dialogue and contains a long prayer (I,1,2-6) which is a personal, creative performance that can be compared to the *Confessions*. The style of this prayer is prose, but with poetical and rhetorical riches. In his introduction S. pays attention to the figures of speech and Neoplatonism. One finds indeed many Neoplatonic concepts in the *Soliloquies*. As S. states, ancient philosophy had primarily to do with amazement and being deeply moved by reality, but this is not necessarily in flat contradiction with Augustine's recent conversion to Christianity. There are also specific Christian elements in his prayer, and an attentive reading shows no less than 39 references to the New Testament. Conversion is the main theme of the prayer. Later it became a prayer for enlightenment as can be seen in Boethius, Anselm of Canterbury, Bonaventure, J. Duns Scotus, Johann von Tepl, J. H. Newman and, in our days, the musician Klaus Huber. The Latin text, its German translation, and an interesting commentary on each verse constitute the major part of this book. The commentary consists of observations on the composition and structure of the sentences, the Neoplatonic and Christian sources, and Augustine's biographical background. Although S. refers mostly to Plotinus, nevertheless he warns the reader of the difference between Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity and Plotinus' doctrine of hypostases. He could have done this also concerning the Plotinian concept of Father (see P. AUBIN, *Plotin et le Christianisme. Triade plotinienne et Trinité chrétienne*, Paris, 1992, who calls attention to the fact that many ideas of Plotinus were generally accepted and cannot be ascribed to him alone). On the subject of the theme "Know thyself" I regret the absence of a reference to the three volumes of P. COURCELLE, *Connais-toi toi-même de Socrate à saint Bernard*, Paris, 1974-1975.