

THE PLEA BY THE HUMANIST
PETRUS MOSELLANUS FOR A KNOWLEDGE OF THE
THREE BIBLICAL LANGUAGES

A LOUVAIN PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

When Richard Crocus left the University of Leipzig in 1517, his outstanding pupil, Petrus Mosellanus, succeeded him as professor of Greek. The famous opening speech that Mosellanus delivered before commencing his lectures was published in August 1518 under the title, *De variarum linguarum cognitione paranda oratio* (1). A few months later, in the autumn of 1518, the speech had also become well known in Louvain. Around that same time, this university town in the old duchy of Brabant (in the Low Countries) had likewise become familiar with Erasmus' *Ratio verae theologiae* (2). Mosellanus was familiar with the earlier works and letters of this humanist from Rotterdam and had also begun to correspond with him. From these contacts he undoubtedly drew ideas and arguments in the formulation of his *Oratio*. In the same period, Louvain had also experienced the start up of the *Collegium Trilingue*, which was the result of the biblical humanists' aspirations as regards language instruction. The Louvain theologians had become somewhat concerned with the 'humanist offensive' that aspired to win over

(1) For a discussion on this speech we have based ourselves on a little known, but reliable, reprint that appeared in Jena in 1634: [P. MOSELLANUS], *Petri Mosellani Professoris olim Lipsiensis de variarum linguarum cognitione paranda oratio ante annos CXVI. Lipsiae habita et edita ex tenebris in lucem publici causa boni reproducta*,/- Genae, Sumtibus Reiffenbergianis, Typis Weidnerianis, 1634, 132 p., in 24°.

(2) [D. ERASMUS], *Ratio seu Compendium verae Theologiae per Des. Erasmum Roterodamum*, in ERASMUS VON ROTTERDAM, *In Novum Testamentum Praefationes. Vorreden zum Neuen Testament — Ratio. Theologische Methodenlehre. Übersetzt, eingeleitet und mit Anmerkungen versehen von G.B. WINKLER* (Ausgewählte Schriften, 3), Darmstadt, 1967, p. 117-494.