The establishment of the *Protestant Church in the Netherlands* in 2004 is an amazing event considering that it represented the merging of two confessional traditions that had been separated and even opposed to each other for a very long time. Although it is true that in the decades after World War II some approaches between the Lutherans and Reformed could be observed—here should be mentioned the Consensus between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the Dutch Reformed Church on the Lord’s Supper in 1956 and the *Leuenberg Agreement* of 1973—in the preceding centuries the Reformed and the Lutheran churches in the Netherlands lived almost without any connection between the two. In the rare times that there was contact, it was often marked by incomprehension and distrust.

Dutch Lutherans have been described as ‘those of the Confession’ to distinguish them from their Reformed fellow believers indicated as ‘those of the Religion.’ Since ‘the Confession’ indicates the Augsburg Confession, it can be clearly seen that the *Confessio Augustana* has functioned as a mark of separation between Lutheran and Reformed. However, this has not always been the case. In the early decades of the Reformation in the Netherlands, the Augsburg Confession was considered by many political and religious leaders as a banner under which the Reformation movement could be united in order to acquire some European prestige. That this ideal turned out to be unrealistic has to do not only with the incompatibility of learned theological ideas circulating in both traditions, but also with a lay piety in the Netherlands that could not recognize itself in all respects in the Augsburg Confession. The development of this Lutheran-Reformed tension makes a suitable subject for a ‘Festschrift’ dedicated to Christoph Burger, since the Festschrift’s overall theme represents the bandwidth between those two poles.
The text of the Augsburg Confession is quite directly related to the Netherlands, as the original Latin version had presumably been handed over by the Emperor to his main advisor, Count Henry of Nassau, to be kept at the imperial archives at Brussels. It remained there until 1569 when King Philip II, sovereign of the Netherlands, ordered it to be brought to Spain in order to destroy this “disastrous” writing. Although the director of the Brussels archives, Vigilius van Zwichem, was reluctant to give up the original text, this nevertheless happened after the king urged the Duke of Alva to hand it over.\(^1\) In the meantime, van Zwichem made some copies of this original and allowed others to do so as well, at the displeasure of the King who was apparently unaware that the Augsburg Confession had already been printed several times.\(^2\) In 1563 the nephew of Count Henry of Nassau, Prince William of Orange, discovered a copy of this original of the Augsburg Confession in Latin in the Nassau archives at Breda.\(^3\)

The first printed copy of the Augsburg Confession in Latin in the Netherlands appears to be the one made by G. Coppens van Diest in Antwerp 1566.\(^4\) This is an edition of the *Invariata* as the subtitle states: “now recently out of reverence and thus accurately and in good faith printed from the true copy.”\(^5\) This edition was referred to in a report for Cardinal Granvelle in November 1566 saying that an informant had seen a copy of the Augsburg Confession and its Apology by Melanchthon printed in Antwerp and which had been translated into Flemish as well.\(^6\) We do not know what German editions or translations into French were circulating in the Netherlands, but such editions could very well have been spread from abroad.

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\(^1\) See Th. Kolde, ‘Neue Augustanastudien,’ *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 17 (1906), 729–752, there 744–745.


\(^5\) “… nunc recens pietatis ergo accurate ac bona fide ex vero exemplari impressa”.