

FOR THE CAUSE *of the* SON OF GOD

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The Missionary Significance of the Belgic Confession

WES BREDENHOF

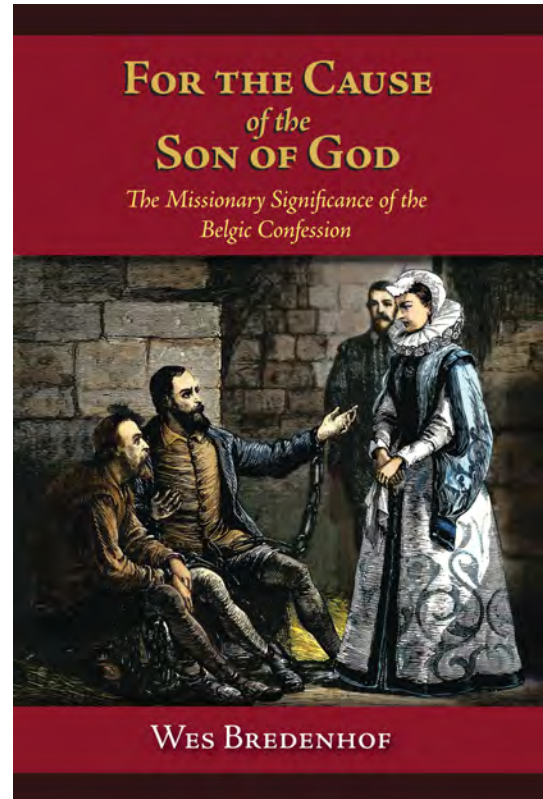
For the Cause of the Son of God ... will be welcomed by those who love the Reformed confessional witness to biblical truth and who are zealous for the world-wide preaching of the gospel. Dr. Joel Beeke

In the 1950s and especially the 1960s, discussions surfaced in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) about whether the Three Forms of Unity were liabilities or assets when it came to the church's missionary calling. A consensus developed that these documents had little to do with mission or missiology. The Belgic Confession was particularly singled out as being inadequate at best. *For the Cause of the Son of God* re-examines this question using more recent historiographical methods and insights into the context out of which the Belgic Confession emerged. This study argues that the Reformed churches of the Lowlands of the sixteenth century understood themselves to be living on a mission field, and this self-understanding is reflected in the content of the Belgic Confession. Furthermore, the case is made that, structurally, the Confession can be regarded as a contextualized witness. The contemporary missiological strengths and weaknesses of the Confession are considered in depth and an attempt is made to provide a missiological commentary on selected articles of the Confession. *For the Cause of the Son of God* also considers the use of the Confession by a seventeenth-century Reformed theorist of mission (Gisbertus Voetius) and a seventeenth-century Reformed practitioner of mission (Johannes Megapolensis). Attention is given to discussions of the Belgic Confession in the Christian Reformed Church in the 1950s-1980s; discussions which led to the development of the *Contemporary Testimony: Our World Belongs to God*. Finally, the book considers the relationship between Reformed missiology and the confessions, as well as the perennial issue of what it means to be a church ready to confess.

endorsement

For the Cause of the Son of God provides a well-researched, respectful and timely answer to the claim that predestinarian, creedal theology is detrimental to missions. As the author demonstrates, this nagging complaint against Reformation theology certainly finds no support in Guido de Brès' Belgic Confession. De Brès' life beat to a missionary pulse, his martyr's death sealed the authenticity of his ministry and his great confessional contribution to Christian thought abides as a summary of the kind of religion that inspires and enables men to do great things for God. In shedding much-needed light upon the relationship between Reformed theology and God-honoring missions the author has done a service to both. No one who is serious about theology or missions will want to be without Rev. Bredenhof's weighty contribution to the church.

—William Boekestein, *United Reformed Pastor, Carbondale, Pennsylvania;*
Author of Faithfulness under Fire: The Story of Guido de Brès



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