

111-F. PICTORALIA: STORIES ABOUT THE LIFE OF PROF DR K. SCHILDER.



*Prof K. Schilder
1890-1952*

His friends often called him Pic. As a student, he would sign off his correspondence as 'Pic'.

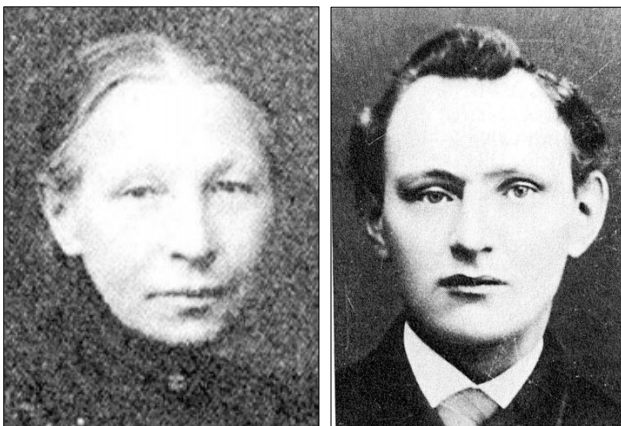
Pic is short for 'Pictor'. 'Pictor' is the Latin Word for 'Painter'. 'Painter' is the English translation of the Dutch word 'Schilder'.

Well, that should explain the title of this chapter: 'Pictorialia'. Here are a few interesting facts about Prof Dr Klaas Schilder, one of the greatest theologians of the previous century. He was the reformer God provided to play a pivotal role in **The Liberation** of 1944.

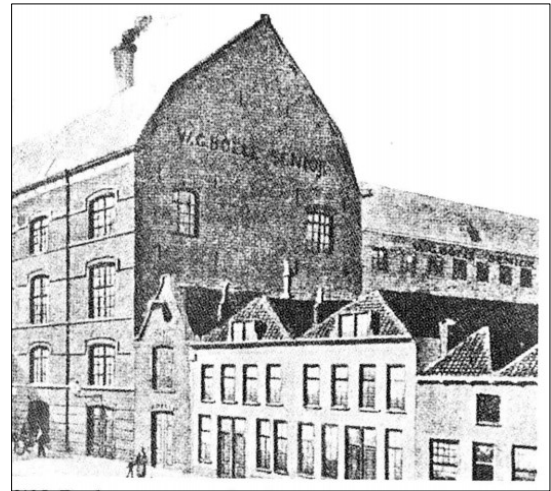
K. SCHILDER'S YOUTH

Who was this Dr 'Pictor', Dr Schilder? Klaas Schilder was born on 19 December 1890 and was the son of Johannes Schilder and Grietje Leijdekker. Grietje Leijdekker was Johannes' second wife. Elisabeth Nieuwenhuis, his first wife, died at the age of 29. Six months later, he married Grietje Leijdekker.

Father Johannes worked in a cigar factory. The factory was short of space, and many workers



Prof Schilder's mother: Grietje Leijdekker, 1854-1926, and father Johannes Schilder, 1860-1896 (36 yrs)



The cigar factory, where Schilder's father, Johannes, worked.

worked from home. Johannes made cigars in the same room where the family ate, cooked and slept. Obviously, this was not a very healthy and hygienic working environment. The family lived in the smell and dust of tobacco. He worked long hours. 90 – 100 hours a week was quite common in those days. Father Johannes earned only 10 guilders a week, not enough to provide for a growing family. He died at the age of 36 from the Spanish flu. Klaas was only six years old when his father died.

Four months later, their daughter Neeltje was born. Klaas' mother moved to a small home and experienced extreme poverty. She tried to make a living by sewing and ironing collars for shirts¹. She could not earn enough with that work. With the help of a friend, she got a job at a laundromat.

The oldest son, Hendrikus, was taken to a house for orphans at 12 as his mother could not provide for his growing needs. Klaas' young life was shaped by poverty and hardship. Often, he was looked down on because of his low socio-economic background, and it bothered him.

Klaas always spoke respectfully of his mother,

¹ In those days, the collar could be unbuttoned from the shirt so the shirt wouldn't need to be washed as often as the collars.

who provided for her children under extremely challenging circumstances.

Klaas attended a Christian primary school, and the teachers soon noticed his outstanding talents. His teacher and local minister tried to convince him and his mother to continue his language studies. It was not an easy decision as his mother was a widow, and money was scarce. With some financial help, he enrolled at the gymnasium (college) on 2 September 1903. A gymnasium college teaches ancient languages: Greek, Latin and Hebrew.

He was a very bright student. He effortlessly wrote Greek, Latin or German poetry without any mistakes.

Mathematics was not his favourite, and he scored very poorly in that subject. Not because he couldn't do it but 'because he had decided not to put any effort into this subject'. The teachers warned him sternly that he would fail if he didn't pull up his socks! The following semester, his marks were just fine...

During those years, he was a quiet and shy boy, modest, honest and loyal. He was always very helpful and happy to help his fellow students with their language or math problems. When socialising with fellow students in the evenings, he often left early to help his mother for a few more hours.

In 1907, one of the lecturers, Dr Gunnik, set up the music club TACMIA. He bought the instruments, and the students had to pay for



Klaas Schilder with his fellow students at the Reformed Gymnasium in Kampen

them with their own money. Klaas played the mandoline. It was a fun group of musicians.

The students were carefully watched for good behaviour. Reading a novel during the sermon at church was a big no-no! Some students habitually sat together in church and messed around, causing a stir. The elders firmly told the students to spread out: no sitting together!

During these years, Klaas developed from a shy, dreamy, introverted young student to a gifted young man with excellent prospects.

From the gymnasium, he went to the theological college in Kampen. Klaas always wanted to become a minister. At three, he was already standing on a foot stove² to 'preach.'



A foot stove, Klaas' 'pulpit' at the age of three. Wikipedia.

He studied at the Theological College from 1909-1914 and completed his studies 'Cum Laude' (straight A's).

These college years were difficult years for him. He struggled with deep questions of faith and the purpose of life. Trying to find answers, he read voraciously in philosophy, literature, and theology. He contributed many articles for the college's student magazines and developed an exceptionally captivating and artistic writing style, still a joy to read today. (If you know the language 😊)



Klaas towards the end of his gymnasium years. Initially, he was a very quiet and shy young man.

² They would put hot coals inside the stove to keep their feet warm.

K. SCHILDER'S MARRIAGE

Klaas married his fiancée, Anna Walter, on 18 June, 1914.

Anna was born on 3 March 1881 to parents Pieter and Trijntje Walter. At the age of 28, she started nursing in Amsterdam. Through her friendship with a girl who was courting Klaas Schilder's older brother, Arnold, she met Klaas.



Anna Walter and Klaas Schilder around the time they got engaged.

Friendship blossomed, and on 28 July 1913, when Anna was 32 years old, Klaas and Anna got engaged. She was ten years older than him! Five



Prof Schilder with daughter Jopie

months later, Anna resigned from her nursing job at a mental institution, and six months later – on 18 June 1914 – she and Klaas were married. God blessed their marriage with two sons and two daughters. Their youngest daughter was 12 years old when WW II broke out. Anna was then 58.

IN PRISON

Right from the beginning, well before WWII began, Prof Schilder took a leading role in resisting the German occupation, and soon the Germans arrested and imprisoned him for writing anti-German articles. This left Anna on her own for four months with their four children, ranging from 13 to 24 years of age.

The prisoners were allowed to correspond! One letter per week, limited to one sheet of paper... Anna was his main point of contact during those four months. All messages and any activity

needing to be organised had to be channelled through her!

Letters to his professor colleagues, regards, thanks for gifts sent to him, warnings, directions, passing on tracts to the publisher, writing letters to numerous people worldwide, etc - he certainly kept her busy! She was his private secretary! Anna played a pivotal role in continuing Schilder's struggle with the hierarchical synod, which was sitting while he was in prison!

She sent him what she could – what the prison allowed! – and fulfilled all his requests. She wrote many letters to keep him up to date as best as possible about world political developments and church and family matters, always assuring him that the family was doing fine....

He hardly saw her during those four months as he advised her not to visit him in prison anymore. He thought this too humiliating for her.

IN HIDING

As soon as the authorities released Schilder from prison, he promptly continued warning the Dutch people wherever and whenever possible. After one and a half years of writing articles, sermons and speeches, the Germans decided it was high time to stop this, and they tried to arrest him again.

Thankfully, they failed. Schilder managed to disappear just in time and went into hiding (for two years).

His dear wife Anna resumed her duties as private secretary and errand girl.

She organised the printing of his tracts, passed on messages, visited other professors and friends, handled synod items for him, and kept him up to date on all current affairs.

Her input becomes clear from his correspondence with her. (Only a little of Anna's correspondence with her husband has survived.) Let me share some bits of this correspondence with you.

On 27 February 1944, her husband wrote:

'I am glad you understand and keep up with the issues. A disagreement in itself need not be bad, nor cause misery, but opposition from your loved ones at home, telling you that you did it all wrong,

that you should have done it differently, would make the struggle much more difficult! It was a great comfort to me that you never complained right through to this day (1944). May this remain that way.'

2 March 1944:

'Tomorrow it's your birthday. My hearty congratulations! You have suffered much sorrow, significant concerns enveloped you, you have shared in my lot of being on the run, in hiding then here, then there; and through all that you have, as far as I can see, despite difficulties and ups and downs, maintained a peace which, to be honest, has surprised me – and more, given me much joy. What meant the most for me and greatly encouraged me is that you kept your courage and trust through faith; I believe I have seen that grow.

We don't know what's ahead of us, but I hope we stay on the same page no matter what happens.

4 August 1944: (1 day after Synod deposed him)

'In this crucial hour, I sincerely thank you for your stand in this whole affair. You did not make it more difficult by doubt, fear or mistrust for a moment. That was a big task, and you have contributed much good.'

These little excerpts³ clearly show Anna's unwavering support for her husband during this difficult period.

In the words of the form for marriage, Anna faithfully kept her promise to '... assist him...never to forsake him but to be true to him always, in good days and bad, in riches and poverty, in health and sickness...'

SCHILDER'S WORK THROUGH 'DE REFORMATIE'

In 1920, before the war, when K. Schilder was a minister and married for six years, a church magazine called **De Reformatie** was started. This church magazine was set up in response to signs of deformation within the churches: fading inter-church boundaries, more hymns in the church

services, a new Bible translation and a revision of the confessions were some of the issues. Or, to use Rev I. de Wolf's words:

'We find a spirit of synthesis, which seeks cooperation and association with those who do not live obediently to Scriptures. There is a blurring of boundaries, a resting on past accomplishments without continuing the battle'.

At its beginning, **De Reformatie** had a long list of editors, all trying to combat the deformation within the churches. Regrettably, these editors didn't appear to be on the same page. From the word go, there was disunity within the editorial committee, reflecting the tensions in the broader church life. Although this list of editors *aimed* for reformation within the churches, there was disagreement on where to start and how to go about it.

For Reverend K. Schilder, however, the answer was simple: Reformation means returning to Scripture and the confessions! In the many articles he wrote for this church paper, he pointed out that those confessions set the direction of life in the modern age.

As time went on, he was allowed more space. He developed into a feared apologist and did not shy away from polemics. He tackled the issues head-



The manse where the Schilder family lived from 1933-1942

³ Letter excerpts translated from 'K. Schilder als gevangene en onderduiker' by W.G. de Vries

on. We often tend to ignore or sidestep sensitive issues to maintain the peace; Rev Schilder was not like that. He would speak up and interact with others if the truth was at stake. He aimed to maintain and build true unity, and he did it well.

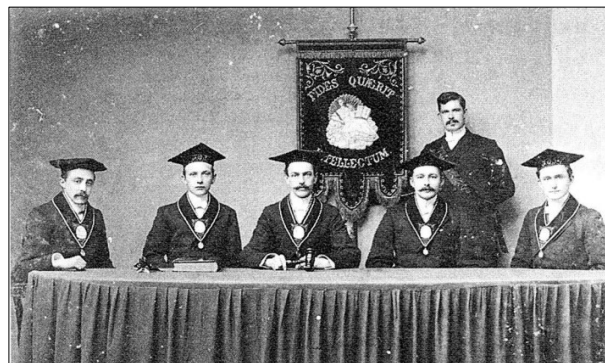
God had given this reformer exceptional gifts to be able to do the difficult task of reforming Christ's church in The Netherlands.

Over time his articles caused unease within the editorship of **De Reformatie**, and those editors resigned one after another, some of them even starting their own papers. Eventually (1937), Schilder was left alone at the helm. **De Reformatie** grew stronger with close to 4000 subscriptions, which, in those days, was very substantial! The church papers of 'the opposition' floundered and struggled financially.

At times, Schilder was ruthlessly and deceitfully attacked by his opponents. Once, he was at a friend's place on a Saturday as he was scheduled to preach in that congregation on Sunday. That Saturday he read an article in another church paper that was written *against* him. It was a horrible article. That Sunday morning, his friend asked him what he was going to preach about. Schilder answered that he had *intended* to preach on Revelation 22. However, the article he read that Saturday evening had upset him so much that he could not preach



De Reformatie. '...Schilder was left alone at the helm'



His boys...the needy students

about the tender material of Rev 22, so he changed it to a sermon on Micah 6.

Dishonest and underhanded attacks could bother him deeply. The service that Sunday morning lasted for two hours. Not unusual for him.

Besides preaching on Sundays, he would go doorknocking in the congregation to collect money for needy students. One brother handed him a 100 guilder note, which was a lot of money in those days. Back on the street, he told his friend: "This makes a new man of me; I could dance". How he loved the college and 'his boys', the students.

Schilder was a great organ music lover and a very competent player! He organised a fundraising appeal and managed to fund a new pipe organ for the Theological College.

Schilder was always on the go for the church and college. His daily schedule was 18 hrs work and 6 hours of sleep. It was not unusual for him to continue working through the night a few times a week.

Every week again, he filled the columns of **De Reformatie** in addition to all his 'normal' pastoral work.

Once, he had to send the publisher some *old* copy as he simply didn't have the time that week to write a new article. He apologised profusely: "It just didn't work for me this week," he wrote, "and you know I am not often guilty of this sort of thing." KS.

Schilder always did his best to maintain a good relationship with his publisher. Once, one of the articles he submitted was too long to be

published. Schilder offered a few suggestions on how to shorten it but finished by saying: "Whatever you do, brother is fine with me - just as long you are not angry with me". He would say that more often. It bothered him a lot if he thought someone was upset with him.

Every Sunday he was out preaching, which he loved best. He was not a great orator, but the content made up for it, and wherever he preached, the services were always well attended. In addition, he gave lectures and speeches on various topics and always spoke with great authority. His speeches were relevant and got to the heart of the matter. They proclaimed the Word and honoured and applied the confessions.

Nothing in the ecclesiastical or political domain escaped his eagle eye. He read all the church and political papers every week. He would take the papers along and cut out relevant articles while travelling.

He never went anywhere without books, so the suitcase he dragged along as he went to preach somewhere was heavy, and he was reluctant to let anyone else carry it.

He once had a slight accident and fractured his shoulder blade. That Sunday, he had to preach in Bussum, some distance away. He would travel by train (third class!), dragging the heavy suitcase of books along. Some friends decided this was *not* good enough, so they collected some money so he could take a taxi instead of the train. Schilder,



Whenever prof Schilder travelled, he took a suitcase with reading material along.

however, wouldn't hear of it. He asked them to give *him* the money for the cab, and he would use it for needy students or the library instead. He would take the train, end of story! However, the brothers wouldn't give in. They were not at liberty to spend the money in any other way. Schilder gave in but regarded it as a



The theological college where K. Schilder studied as well as became a professor.

shameful waste of money. His students needed that money so much!

We could keep going and tell you more about this great reformer; so much about him is not well-known.

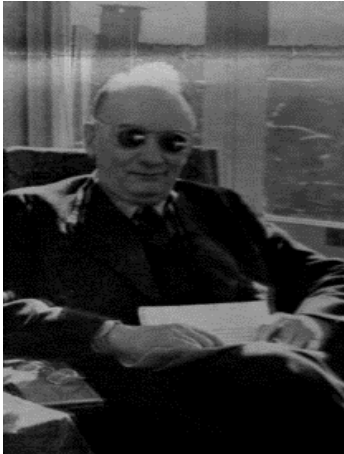
One last anecdote.

He once wrote an article titled '*At the Cemetery*'. In this article, he expressed his disgust about phrases such as 'here rests so and so', 'resting place' or 'rest in peace', which we read on many gravestones. He wrote: 'At the appropriate time, ask your family *not* to put those phrases on your gravestone. Instead, you should carve these words on your church doors!'

'Rest in Peace' on your church doors? Why? Because the true church, where the whole council



Inner court of the the college with a statue of Calvin.



K.S. Last photo before he died.

of God's mercy in Jesus Christ is faithfully preached Sunday after Sunday, is where you find peace and rest in the shadow of His wings and enjoy His loving kindness towards you. Ps 36.

It is part of the blessing every

Sunday: "...and give you peace..."

Instead, Schilder had these words carved in his work table. 'Here rests KS'. He sought rest, not in the grave, but in his work.

Let us continue to be genuinely thankful for what the Lord has given us in this reformer. To use the words of Hebr. 13:7 *Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the Word of God to you, whose faith follows, considering the outcome of their conduct.*



Prof K. Schilder's gravestone with the text: '...that they may be one.' John 17:21

THE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE IN KAMPEN

'And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also' 2 Tim 2:2.

In obedience to Paul's teaching, the churches of the First Secession instituted The Theological college in Kampen. The churches decided that the training of the ministry should not happen by government authorities, as had been the case for many years, but that this training was the sole responsibility of the churches.

The doors opened 6 December, 1854. Four ministers, T.F. de Haan, S. van Velsen, A. Brummelkamp and Helenius de Cock (son of Hendrik de Cock) were appointed as lecturers. The aim of the school was twofold: a thorough academic approach to theology and a solid practical training for the ministry. In contrast to many other colleges, the training in Kampen was based on the Three Forms of Unity. That small beginning in 1854 developed into a complete, well-functioning Theological School. Under God's blessing, and despite the ups and downs, the school had a positive and unifying influence on the churches.



'Open day'. People from all over the country flock to Kampen to support the college and listen to speeches.

The Liberation of 1944

The liberation of 1944 caused much division at the college. Some lecturers followed synod decisions, others followed the Liberation. The college building and library went to the 'synodicals'. Thankfully, another building could be purchased (Broederweg 15, see picture). With much enthusiasm and support from the churches, a new library was started as well.

The School was supported and much appreciated by the churches. Every year, at the beginning of a new academic year, many thousands of church members would go to the 'Kampen School-dag' (an annual open day where everyone was invited to show their love and support for the school and listen to speeches.)

Sadly, deformation caused a break between the FRCA and these churches. (Acts 20:18, art 45.) Again, the college and library stayed with the erring RCN. In 2021 the university moved to the city of Utrecht.



Entrance of the college