

Tilstra, Klaas

(1897–1985)

REINDER BRUINSMA

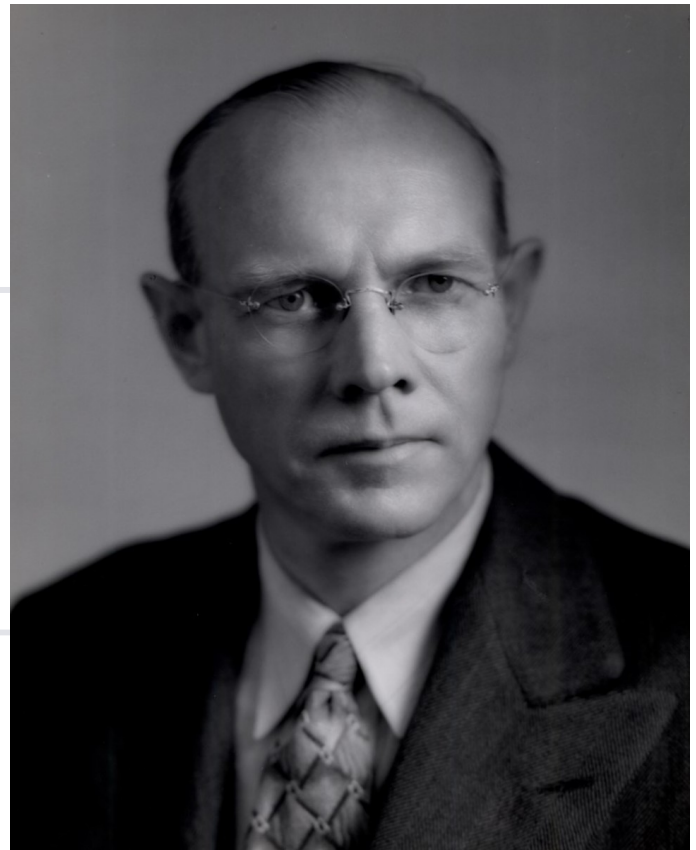
Reinder Bruinsma, Ph.D. (University of London), is a retired church administrator, scholar, and author. From September 2011 to early 2013 he served as the interim-president of the Adventist Church in Belgium and Luxembourg. Since then he has returned to his status as a retiree but remains active in preaching, lecturing, and writing.

Klaas Tilstra, an Adventist administrator and missionary, was born in 1897 in the Dutch province of Friesland (Frisia).¹ Shortly after his birth the family moved to Germany, but returned to the Netherlands in 1911, when Klaas' father bought a small farm in the province of Drenthe. Soon afterward Klaas left home. He joined the Dutch army and trained as a sergeant.

Klaas Tilstra converted to Adventism in 1919 and became a colporteur. When he worked in the southernmost part of the Netherlands, in and around the city of Heerlen, he befriended the Klingbeil family. Reinhold Gustav Klingbeil (1868–1928) was a prominent pioneer in the fledgling Adventist Church in the Netherlands and in Belgium. Tilstra would later marry one of Klingbeil's daughters and, after her death, remarry with another of their daughters.

Tilstra was called to the mission field in 1928. He served at Ambon, an island of the Moluccans, and in a number of other places in the archipelago of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia).

In 1948 Tilstra received a call to become the president of the Adventist Church in the Netherlands. He asked for a study leave in the United States before assuming his post, which was granted to him. He served as the president of the Netherlands Union from 1949 until 1953. Tilstra played an important role in the process of diminishing the German influence in the Dutch Adventist Church,² and in actively promoting an Americanization of the church.



Klaas Tilstra

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Following his service in the Netherlands, Tilstra returned to the mission field. He worked in New Guinea until his retirement. He then moved to California, where he died on February 6, 1986.³

SOURCES

Klingbeil Tilstra, Albertine. *A Dutchman Bound for Paradise*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980.

van Rijn, H. G. "Ons Duitse Erfgoed." *Advent*, November-December 1986/January 1987.

———. *100 Jaar Adventkerk in Nederland*. Bosch en Duin: Advent Pers, 1987.

NOTES

1. H. G. van Rijn, *100 Jaar Adventkerk in Nederland* (Bosch en Duin: Advent Pers, 1987), 84, 85.
2. H. G. van Rijn, "Ons Duitse Erfgoed," *Advent*, November-December 1986/January 1987.
3. Albertine Klingbeil Tilstra, *A Dutchman Bound for Paradise* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 94–124.

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