

## In Memoriam Antheunis Janse 1890-1960

D H Th Vollenhoven

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*(Translator identified only as vdM, who also added some notes, typescript in the Janse Archives, HDC, Amsterdam. INV157-122-10. Minor editing to improve style, and additional notes by Chris Gousmett)*

Since the publication of the last issue of the “Communications [**Mededelingen**],” Mr A Janse has been called away from us; on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March he died, almost 70 years old, at Breda.

Mr Janse was born at Oost-Kapelle.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter my acquaintance with him originates already from the years 1918-1921, when I was Minister there. Janse, serving Christian education since 1910, had just succeeded K Wielemaker as Principal of the school at Biggekerke.<sup>2</sup>

The personal contact between us began when he, after having worked himself through my doctoral dissertation, wrote me a long letter full of queries; therefore I sent him an invitation to visit me for a talk. His interest stimulated me: we conjointly published a paper on the activity of the soul in the study of arithmetics, and established a pedagogical study-club together with Mr B Laansma.

But it did not come to a deeper contact until I was already at The Hague. It was especially concerned with anthropology. For at this point Janse meanwhile had arrived at a more biblical vision of “the living soul,” which liberated me of a good deal of unprofitable traditional speculation.

This achievement did not stand by itself: Janse began to see ever more clearly that Holy Scripture speaks in concrete, and not in scientific language. And this insight did not bring him to a lower estimation of the value of the Bible, but to a higher estimation; in Holy Scripture God directs Himself to His people, saving and comforting, but also warning, threatening and punishing.

This, in my opinion, the only proper vision of Scripture, sharpened his eye for a true spiritual appreciation of the concrete situation. Nobody was able as he to make the old treasures of the Word-revelation, cleaned from the dust of scholasticism, to shine for those who still, or again, wished to live by the Scriptures – think of his “Concerning the Righteous.”<sup>3</sup> But he was also able –

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<sup>1</sup> Very small village in the island of Walcheren, Province of Zeeland (South West Holland).

<sup>2</sup> A two-teacher Christian school not far from Oost-Kapelle.

<sup>3</sup> Janse’s most popular book, **Van de Rechtvaardigen**. 1st Edition, Kampen: 1931. 2nd revised Edition, Rijswijk, 1962. [CG]

as his booklet on Lourens Ingelse witnesses,<sup>4</sup> to warn with true compassion against the substitution of childlike faith by internal experience, which certainly not exclusively, but yet also in Zeeland, means, in a literal sense, a deadly danger for many people. On the other side he turned sharply against false prophets and tendencies, especially then, when in the beginning these were not or scarcely distinguished: remember e.g. his criticisms of Karl Barth and Albert Schweizer and his protestation against the rage for uniform peaked caps as a refined precursor for national-socialistic methods.

His pithy and clear way of writing made many people reach for his books and papers: that the fresh, reformational stream of about 1930 also met with response among many students is not explicable without the influence of his writings. Therefore it was the sincere wish of many friends that his 25-years teacher's jubilee (1935) should not pass unnoticed.<sup>5</sup> In that time indeed he was not lacking appreciation, also from other sides: in 1931 Janse became Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau<sup>6</sup> and in 1934 he became a member of the Society of Sciences of Zeeland.

That he aimed above all at the reformation of praxis, does not mean that he did not have an eye for the importance of the analogical struggle at the scientific frontiers: here, too, he intensively joined his friends. In this way it was self-evident that he would be elected a member of the Board of the Society for Calvinistic Philosophy right from its establishment late in 1935.

Naturally his many-sided activities did not everywhere meet with sympathy: his brave resistance against the spirit of subjectivism brought to him, more than to others, not only opposition, but also indignity and scorn: some people even fancied they could do away with his scriptural insights as expressions of misunderstanding and self-conceit, with the help of "scientific" distinctions of synthetic construction.<sup>7</sup> When he suffered under this, it was still more because of God's people, than for himself.

In this way it is understandable, that when the war also did not spare our country, Janse felt this, more than others, above all as a judgement on a decay which had gradually penetrated, but came to light more and more

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<sup>4</sup> A Janse. **Lourens Ingelse. Een episode uit het godsdienstig leven op Walcheren omstreeks 1780** [Lourense Ingelse. An episode from the religious life of Walcheren around 1780]. 1st Edition, Goes, 1926. 2nd Edition, 1932. Reprint of articles which appeared earlier in the newspaper *De Zeeuw*. Ingelse was a deeply pietistic believer who wrote of his inner spiritual experiences while imprisoned. Janse saw this as a morbidly introspective and unhealthy spirituality which focused on personal experience rather than on life responsive to God. [CG]

<sup>5</sup> Professor Vollenhoven and Schilder went to Biggekerke to offer him (if I am not mistaken) the "Corpus Christianum" (complete collection of the works of the Church Fathers).

<sup>6</sup> The name of the Royal Family.

<sup>7</sup> This term in the mouth of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd always has the meaning: a synthesis of biblical and heathen thought.

clearly, although he rightly enough continued to signal the ungodly features of the German striving for domination.<sup>8</sup>

The evacuation of Southern Walcheren in 1942 forced him to leave the familiar surroundings, and to depart with his family to Breda. There, shortly afterwards, the first symptoms appeared of the disease which would sink him into the grave.<sup>9</sup> After liberation,<sup>10</sup> if I remember well, he therefore has visited the annual meeting of the Society only once more. And shortly afterwards he had to give up entirely his work as a member of the Board.

In the summer of 1948 I visited him once again. The mutual bond held us together as before. But the conversation caused him noticeable exertion, although I confined it exclusively to the growth of the common work, and let academic matters alone.

Because of this, only written communication remained possible, which, in addition, had to run via the members of his beautiful family, who, in these difficult years, found the opportunity to comfort his heart, in publishing more than once a collection of papers which while difficult to obtain, were not in the least outdated.

Through this turn of events he was in the background already for a considerable time, and thus not personally known to the younger generation of our circle. "Our" Mr Janse, however, will live on with the older people among us in grateful remembrance of the example of this simple and gentle, but, at the same time, brave righteous man, which will continue to strengthen them.

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<sup>8</sup> During the war Janse had become a controversial figure because he emphasised the Divine command to **subject** ourselves to the German authorities [Romans 13]. Some people even called him treacherous, and in October 1944 he was put in prison at Breda for some months at the instigation of some.

<sup>9</sup> Janse suffered from Parkinson's disease. [CG]

<sup>10</sup> After liberation of northern Holland (May 1945) he was sentenced before the tribunal, which declared him innocent, but yet deprived him of his voting rights for ten years.