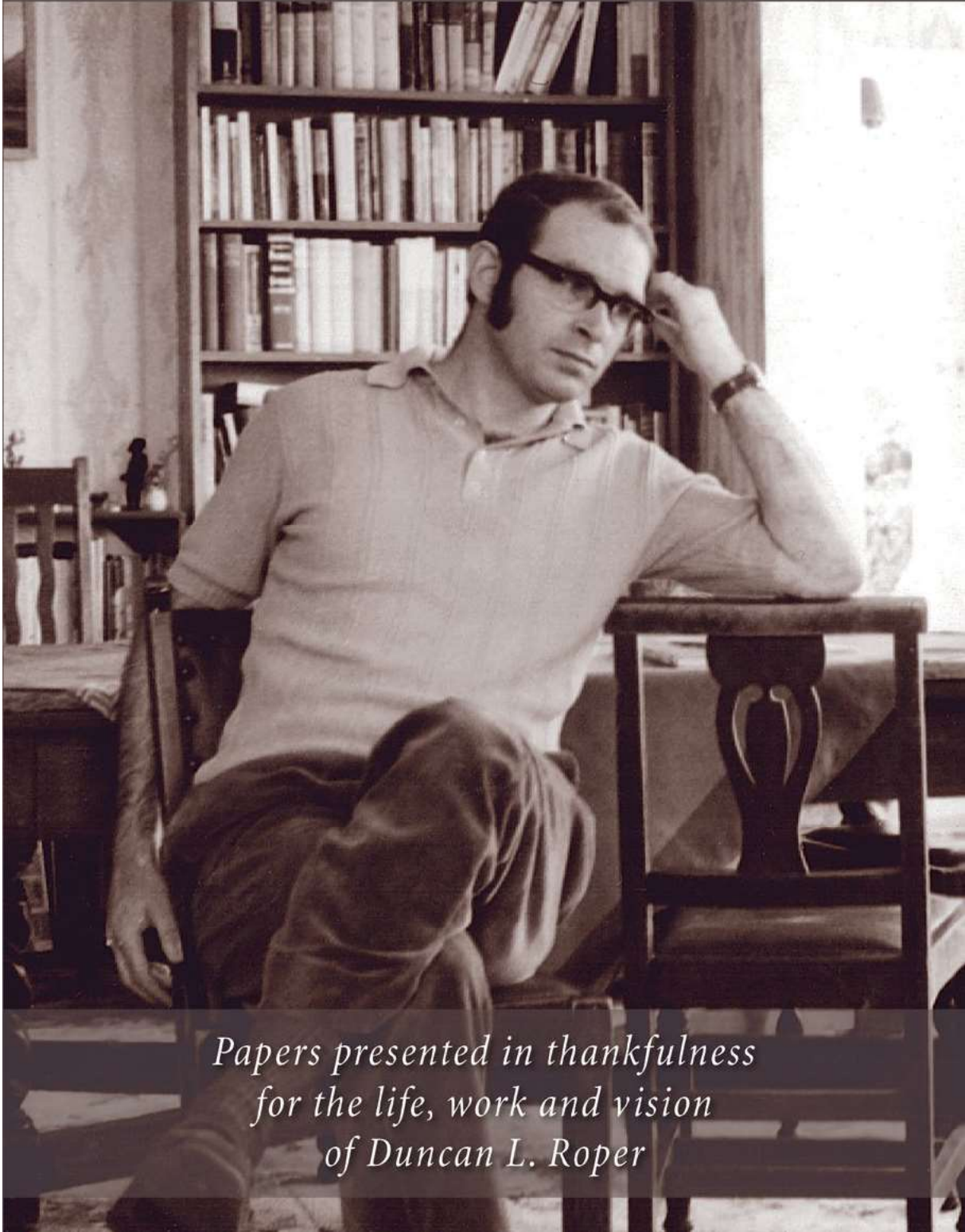


In a Reformational Key



*Papers presented in thankfulness
for the life, work and vision
of Duncan L. Roper*

In a Reformational Key: Papers presented in thankfulness for the life, work and vision of Duncan L. Roper

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Janse's anthropology and the development of Modal Theory

Chris Gousmett

ANTHEUNIS JANSE (1890-1960) HAS been considered the third founder of reformational philosophy alongside Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) and Dirk Vollenhoven (1892-1978), although only a handful of items mention Antheunis Janse¹ in all of the extensive literature in English. While almost unknown outside the Netherlands, within that country to this day his name is deeply respected by many.² However, apart from a few short articles, nothing of Janse has been published in English.³ For those unable to read Dutch, sadly, Janse has remained inaccessible and unknown.⁴

In this paper I attempt to bring to the English-speaking world something of the depth of insight and wisdom for which Janse was known in the Netherlands.

1 See for instance Dr B J van der Walt. Antheunis Janse of Biggekerke (1890-1960). Morning star of a 20th century reformation. *Koers* 69 (2004) 2:221-257. Anthony Tol discusses Janse's thought in relation to that of Vollenhoven: *Philosophy in the Making: D H Th Vollenhoven and the emergence of reformed philosophy*. Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 2010.

2 See the PhD thesis on Janse by Geert van Dijk. *Het concrete is het wezenlijke. Het denken van A Janse van Biggekerke (1890-1960) over Gods verbond met mensen*. [The concrete is the real. The thought of A Janse of Biggekerke (1890-1960) concerning God's covenant with humanity.] Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Uitgevers, 2014.

3 Interestingly, though, two of his books, *Concerning the Justified*, and *The relation of Christian politics to that of the world*, have been translated into Spanish.

4 See some of my translations of Janse at <https://www.alloflifereedeemed.co.uk/janse.htm>.

Janse's life and the background to his thought

Antheunis Janse was born in 1890 in the village of Oostkapelle on the island of Walcheren, part of the southern province of Zeeland. His father died at the age of 33 when Janse was only nine. Janse then had to work on his grandfather's farm to help support the family (his mother and younger brother). As a result, he was able to attend school only in the winter. However, his evident abilities were noted by his uncle Adriaan de Visser, who then arranged for him to train as a school teacher when he reached the age of 17. Due to the gaps in his schooling, he had to work harder than the other students just to keep up. He graduated at the age of 20 and was appointed to a school at Schoondijke. He continued to study and gained his principal's diploma. He was appointed to the two-teacher Christian school at Biggekerke in 1917, eventually becoming known by the name which followed him for the rest of his life: Janse of Biggekerke.

On Armistice Day, 11 November 1918, the principal of the school died in the influenza epidemic which swept the world as the Great War was ending in Europe. Janse's wife Deborah Louwerse was also seriously ill. Janse was suddenly thrust into leadership of the school. He was to remain at this post for the next two and a half decades, until during the Second World War he had to leave his village, home and school.

While still a youth, Janse was persuaded to attend the youth group at the Gereformeerde Kerk. Until then Janse had attended the Hervormde Kerk, the state church of the Netherlands. He had found the pietistic, ethical preaching of the Hervormde Kerk unsatisfying, and was deeply captivated by what he learned in the youth group at the Gereformeerde Kerk. Janse eventually persuaded his mother and brother to join him in the Gereformeerde Kerk. Here he found a deeply spiritual and experiential Christian faith, along with an understanding of the Scriptures focused on the covenant, which came to shape everything he did, said and wrote.

At the age of 13 Janse obtained and read avidly a book recently published by Petrus Biesterveld (1863-1908), one of the professors at the Free University of Amsterdam, entitled *True Humanity: Where it is sought*

*and where it is to be found.*⁵ This philosophical book would challenge any reader, let alone a 13-year-old with limited schooling from a small rural village. But Janse devoured it, and cited its continuing influence on him in his own publications years later. This book was a presentation of the view that only in the Christian faith could true humanity be found: other religions, philosophies and political movements could never show what it meant to be truly human as the image-bearers of God, called to faith in Christ and fulfilment as members of the people of the covenant.

But the encounter which was to set him on the path to nationwide influence and renown came shortly after he became principal of the Christian school at Biggekerke.

In 1919 Dirk Vollenhoven had graduated from the Free University with a doctorate in philosophy, presenting a thesis on the philosophy of mathematics from a theistic point of view. This thesis was said to be so difficult that Vollenhoven's own supervisor confessed he was not able to understand all of it. By some turn of events a copy made its way to Janse's hands, and he read it avidly, despite the limitations of his own formal education. Janse wrote a letter to Vollenhoven, asking two things. First, as the thesis had not been formally published and was not available for purchase, could Vollenhoven please send Janse a copy as he had to return the copy he had borrowed? Secondly, could Vollenhoven answer some of the questions he had formed as a result of reading the thesis? Vollenhoven was apparently deeply astonished when he discovered from this lengthy letter – of some 20 pages – that the letter writer was not an academic philosopher or mathematician, but the principal of a two-teacher school in a small village only a short distance away. After graduation Vollenhoven had become the pastor in the village where Janse had been born, Oostkapelle.

From their first meeting a deep friendship developed between the two. Janse's long list of publications begins in 1919 with an article on mathematics written in collaboration with Vollenhoven. This is described in its introduction as "the fruit of correspondence" between

⁵ Petrus Biesterveld. *Het echt menselijke, hoe het is gezocht en waar het is te vinden*. Rotterdam: D A Daamen, 1902.

Janse and Vollenhoven. Janse would subsequently write many articles on educational matters, as well as on other subjects.

However, a significant change in their collaboration came about in 1923. Vollenhoven had been working hard in his pastorate in The Hague, and at the beginning of that year collapsed while preaching, being subsequently hospitalised for most of the remainder of 1923. Vollenhoven's illness – during which time he was unable to read or write – broke the contact between the two.

It was in that year that Janse published the first of his many books: *Eve's Daughters: Old Testament conceptions of the place of women in world history*. And later that same year, while Vollenhoven was convalescing, he also published a series of articles on anthropology: the theory of human nature, a theme to which he was to return in books and articles for the next twenty years. This was a theme which was to bring him much trouble, since he challenged the scholastic theology dominant in the ruling orthodoxy of the day.

Janse was then struck by tragedy. In 1926 his beloved wife Debora died from complications after giving birth to their second son, Jan. Janse was heartbroken by this; but eventually, in 1929, he married again, to Francina Pieternella Fregeres. From that marriage came a further two boys and three girls, a family with seven children in all.

It was in 1933 that Vollenhoven published his first major book: *Calvinism and the Reformation of Philosophy*.⁶ This was followed two years later by the first volume of Dooyeweerd's trilogy, the *Philosophy of the Idea of Law*.⁷ By this time Janse was an established author: besides *Eve's Daughters* he had published many articles, and in 1931 appeared the book which brought him the greatest renown: *Concerning the Justified*, a study of biblical teaching with a wide-ranging scope. It is still the book for which he is most well known in the Netherlands.

By 1935, especially following the publication of Dooyeweerd's *Philosophy of the Idea of Law*, the growing interest and enthusiasm for this

6 D H Th Vollenhoven. *Calvinisme en de Reformatie der Wijsbegeerte*. Amsterdam: H J Paris, 1933.

7 H Dooyeweerd. *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*. Amsterdam: H J Paris, Volumes 1-3, 1935-1936. A revised edition was published in English as *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. Amsterdam: H J Paris, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed. Volumes 1-4, 1953-1958.

new philosophical approach led to the formation of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy. Janse, along with Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, served on the governing body of the Association.⁸ He also gave many lectures to the study groups formed to learn more of this approach, as well as to student groups, men's societies, young women's societies and educational groups. Janse set forth his views in the context of meetings of a great variety of organisations, formal and informal study circles found across the Netherlands. He travelled to many places from his small village in Walcheren, speaking to groups large and small. After each trip he returned home to his growing family and the classroom where he taught his beloved students.

It has been suggested that it was largely due to Janse's efforts to expound this new philosophy that it became so deeply rooted and widespread across the whole of the country. Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, though respected as academics and profound and insightful philosophers, never received the popular enthusiasm which greeted Janse. His manner of speaking, his writings, his whole approach was more accessible than that of the two academics.

Of these three it has been the work of Dooyeweerd which has become most widely known outside the Netherlands. His works are the most widely translated into English. Nevertheless, it was Vollenhoven's book, *Calvinism and the Reformation of Philosophy*, which formed the basis of Janse's approach,⁹ and it is the specifics of Vollenhoven's approach, rather than that of Dooyeweerd, which Janse expounds. Janse wrote the first popular-level introduction to reformational philosophy, which expounded Vollenhoven's approach.¹⁰

8 The secretary was K J Popma, J H Diemer was Treasurer, while K Dijk and Simon Gerrit de Graaf were the other members.

9 Vollenhoven wrote his own introduction to his philosophy, the *Isagoogè Philosophiae*, but this was intended originally as a text for his students. It has now been translated into English. *Introduction to Philosophy*. Edited by John H Kok and Anthony Tol. Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 2005.

10 This "Introduction" was published as a series of articles in the periodical "De School met de Bijbel" in 1938-1939. These were later collected and published in book form: A Janse. *Inleiding tot de calvinistische filosofie* [Introduction to Calvinist Philosophy]. Amsterdam: Buiten en Schipperheijn, 1982.

Janse was also a prolific writer and speaker in educational circles, well beyond the sphere of Christian schools. He participated in conferences open to staff from all types of schools, where he defended his Christian perspective on pedagogy, in opposition to what he saw as the psychologising of education. Janse's influence was such that in 1931, as a recognition of his contributions to education in the Netherlands, he was awarded the honour of Ridder (Knight) in the Order of Orange Nassau by Queen Wilhelmina.

But serious controversy was not too far away. Not only did Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, together with Janse, depart from the traditional scholastic philosophy influenced by Aquinas, they developed a systematic critique of its argument. And it was not the philosophers but the theologians who responded bitterly to this critique, because traditional theology was built on the foundations of scholastic philosophy. The battles between the scholastics and the growing movement of reformational thinking were bitter and prolonged, resulting at times in church synods having to deal with “deviant opinions,” allegations of departure from the confessions, the distortion of Scripture, and the publication of heresy.¹¹ Despite this, the movement for reformational philosophy expanded beyond the Netherlands and its initial basis in Reformed communities of Christians. But there were other major changes taking place in the 1930s. Due regard should also be given to the radical development in biblical exegesis which began taking root across the Netherlands, characterised by its promotion of a ‘redemptive-historical’ approach to the reading of the Scriptures¹²

11 The principal books opposing Janse, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven were: Rev. P Steen. *Philosophia Deformata* (a parody of the name of the reformational journal, *Philosophia Reformata*) Kampen: J H Kok, 1937; V Hepp. *Dreigende Deformatie* [Threatening Deformation]. Kampen: J H Kok, 1936-1937. There were also numerous articles opposing their views, including from Prof. H H Kuyper, Abraham Kuyper's son, a professor of theology at the Free University.

12 For a history of the origins of this movement in Biblical studies in The Netherlands, see the study by Sidney Greidanus. *Sola Scriptura: Problems and principles in preaching historical texts*. Toronto: Wedge, 1970. In North America this approach was championed by a Dutch migrant, Dr Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949), professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Seminary from 1893-1932. See for instance his book *The Pauline Eschatology*. Princeton University Press, 1930, reprinted Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1991.

This new and distinctive approach challenged the traditional focus on the Scriptures as a source book for texts to support doctrine, as the scholastics tended to use them, or as inspirational literature to feed the ‘inner life’ of the pious believer. This latter approach was well entrenched across the Netherlands and was particularly strong in Walcheren. Janse criticised this approach often and insistently. Instead, he asserted that the Scriptures were to be read as the covenant message of God who has come to redeem his creation in Christ, forming a covenant people as the body of those who reject the way of the world, and take another path of radical discipleship. This approach to preaching in the church took its point of departure from Kuyper’s ringing proclamation: “There is not a single inch of creation of which Christ does not declare: That belongs to Me!”¹³

The redemptive-historical approach, briefly put, sees the Scriptures as the narrative of the redemptive acts of God throughout human history, bringing all events to a climax at the ultimate self-redemptive act: the coming of Christ into the world to suffer, die and rise again triumphant, thus defeating the powers of evil at their root, while now in ascended glory ensuring his victory in the lives of his people. This message – and living out of this new root of life, to show forth the acts of God in grace and mercy until Christ comes again in glory to receive all things as his own inheritance – is the calling given to those who are his. The new earth to follow is the inheritance of those who remain faithful through all suffering and persecution; an earth where sorrow, suffering, evil, pain and death are absent forever.

While this vision of renewed Christianity may seem uncontroversial today in many Christian circles, in the Netherlands of the 1930s it was a challenge to the ruling scholastic theology, and it was the theologians who sought to defeat it. But it nevertheless resonated with the people to a much greater extent than the dry orthodoxy it replaced, especially in the contributions of prominent preachers such as Rev. Simon Gerrit de

13 Abraham Kuyper. *Sphere Sovereignty*. Address given at the opening of the Free University, Amsterdam, 20 October 1880. Translation by George Kamps at http://www.reformationalpublishingproject.com/pdf_books/Scanned_Books_PDF/SphereSovereignty_English.pdf. Also published in: *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Edited by James Bratt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Graaf (1889-1955), who made this redemptive-historical approach his own in a powerful way.¹⁴ It thus became known and loved throughout the land.

Not only was this new approach a challenge to scholastic theology; it also provided the confessional underpinnings of the new approach to philosophy developed by Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven and Janse. It was the academic deepening and strengthening of the redemptive-historical approach which both enabled that approach to be sustained in the face of its opponents, and in turn provided the faith-perspective which gave reformational philosophy a willing audience. Without the biblical-exegetical movement, the philosophical movement would have no doubt been of academic interest to many, but it would not perhaps have become allied so closely to the depth-vision of the broader Christian community. It is of considerable relevance for understanding the rise of this Christian philosophy that S G de Graaf was also a member of the board of the Association for Christian Philosophy at its inception.¹⁵

But there were other changes in the world, far more deadly and destructive than the scholastic attack on the new view of Scripture and philosophy. In the 1920s a new movement for change was on the rise in neighbouring Germany, and further away in Italy. And sensitive to this challenge, Janse was analysing and exposing the pagan assumptions of fascist thought with the power of argument and depth of insight.¹⁶

14 Rev. S G de Graaf is best known in the English-speaking world for the four-volume set *Promise and Deliverance*. Translated by H Evan Runner and Elizabeth Wichers Runner. Jordan Station: Paideia Press, 1977-1981. De Graaf also wrote a major study of the Belgic Confession, *Het Ware Geloof*. Kampen: J H Kok, 1954. Available in English translation as *The True Faith*, at <http://www.spindleworks.com/library/DeGraaf/DeGraafTheTrueFaith.pdf>. De Graaf's initial contributions to redemptive-historical interpretation, though valuable, still had their defects, as is understandable and perhaps unavoidable in the development of a completely new approach to Biblical exegesis. Subsequent contributors to this stream of interpretation have made and continue to make significant improvements.

15 Dr Al Wolters also draws attention in his review of *Promise and Deliverance* (*Vanguard*, November-December 1978) that a professor of philosophy, H Evan Runner, the most prominent advocate of this new school of philosophy in North America, chose to translate this volume rather than a work of philosophy, thus showing how he perceived this approach to the Scriptures as foundational to the spirit of reformational thought.

16 For instance, *Nationaal-Socialistische Fascisten-politiek gezien in den levensgang van Mussolini en in de propaganda zijner geestverwanten in Nederland*. [National Socialist Fascist politics seen in the course of Mussolini's life and in the propaganda of his spiritual

His analysis of fascism in both Italian and German forms broadened and deepened throughout the 1930s. It was from Janse that many of his readers learned to discern the spiritual evil within Nazi idolatry that would seek to overthrow and destroy the worship and service of the true God; evil which they would come to experience in such painful ways when in 1940 the German army invaded the Netherlands.

But it was this turn of events which ended up blighting Janse's legacy.

Janse had written often and intensely about the spiritual decay that was manifest in the churches, among the church leadership, among the ordinary members, and disseminated by the church newspapers. Janse argued that an appeal to subjective piety concerned with the inner life of the soul, rather than with obedient responsiveness to God, was a decline from biblical religion and would leave Christians defenceless against the Nazi idolatry. Janse exposed the psychologism making spiritual growth a matter of 'self-development', as well as the scholasticism that had such a deadening effect upon the lifegiving message of the Scriptures. He was deeply concerned about the sinful life he saw in the church: not in puritanical ways such as the obsessive focus upon Sabbath-keeping and outward observance of rules and rituals typical of Walcheren pietism, but in the lack of true conversion and repentance, in the deadness of worship, in the moralism and pietism which were empty substitutes for genuine spiritual life. Janse saw the deep spiritual roots of the decline of the Christian church, and sensed that its presumption merited nothing other than the judgement of God.

And in the German invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940 he perceived that judgement coming to fruition. Others may have shared that view privately and publicly, but it was the response Janse made publicly which was to mar his legacy. Janse had read deeply in the Old Testament prophets, and found in Jeremiah his key to understanding what believers should do: they should not engage in resistance against the Germans, he said, but settle down and get on with their lives as best they could

adherents in the Netherlands] Aalten, First edition, 1932. Second revised edition, 1932. *De nieuwe geest van de N. S. B.* [The new spirit of the NSB – the Dutch Nazi Party] Aalten, 1934. Other publications on politics include *Burgerlijke of Kerkelijke Politiek* [Civil or ecclesiastical politics]. Aalten, 1931, 2nd edition 1932. *De verhouding van Christelijke politiek tot de wereldsche* [The relation of Christian politics to that of the world]. Aalten, 1933.

(Jeremiah 29). They should be preparing themselves against the day when the Germans would surely commence persecuting the churches. He saw the Germans as having seized by force of arms the authority to rule within the Netherlands, this being the judgement of God on the sin of the people who had broken their covenant bond with God. The Dutch government, including the Queen, had fled to England, and so was unable to exercise actual rule in the Netherlands. He stated that “rule by radio broadcast” (referring to Radio Orange, set up in London to allow the Queen and the government in exile to give their support to the people of the Netherlands) was plainly a meaningless fiction. Naturally the Germans made it illegal to listen to these broadcasts. As a result, Janse said, armed resistance to the Germans was in fact rebellion against God, who had allowed the Germans to take control of the country.

Many of Janse’s supporters were unable to agree with this view, and Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd also refused to take his position.¹⁷ They had their own involvement in the resistance: Dooyeweerd by writing articles for underground newspapers and sheltering a Jewish woman in his own house, and Vollenhoven by offering similar support, including allowing his son to conceal a weapon in the house – which resulted in his son being imprisoned by the Germans, and released only with much effort from those interceding on his behalf.

By the end of the war Janse was living in the town of Breda.¹⁸ In 1942 the German authorities had ordered Janse and his family (along with many others) to leave Biggekerke, only a short distance from the North Sea coast. This was where Germans were constructing the Atlantic Wall for ‘Fortress Europe’, aimed at preventing an invasion by Britain; Janse’s house was taken by the Germans as accommodation. Janse was also by that time starting to suffer the initial stages of Parkinson’s disease. Little was he to know that when he left Biggekerke in 1942 he would never

17 Dooyeweerd wrote a detailed letter to Janse arguing that his position was not correctly applying legal principles to the situation. The letter is held in the Janse Archives at the Free University in the Historische Documentatie Centrum.

18 Janse had been offered accommodation in Breda by a friend, Rev. Bartus Telder, pastor of the church at Breda which was later to become prominent among the “Vrijgemaakte” congregations, not least because of Janse’s contributions to church life.

return, and no longer work as a teacher. He was pensioned off after the war, living at home in declining health.

Janse had a strong, biblically focused and logical position on the German occupation. It was undoubtedly a principled position, and one he held to steadfastly throughout the war. But it was deeply unpopular, and led many to turn against him with the same fervour with which they had earlier extolled him for his writings and speeches. When the Germans were expelled from the Netherlands it led to Janse's arrest on charges of collaboration with the enemy, and his imprisonment for ten months while awaiting trial. At his trial, however, he was cleared of collaboration, although his pronouncements that advised young people to cooperate with the German request for workers to go to Germany were considered quite unacceptable.

One of the charges was that Janse had distributed the Nazi school newspaper to his pupils, instead of destroying these newspapers as other teachers had done. But Janse argued that he gave the newspapers to his pupils and then talked them through what was written there to help them discern the spiritual evil which was being promoted. He saw this, justifiably, as a more appropriate pastoral and paedagogical response. As punishment he was deprived of voting rights for ten years.

As a result of his increasing weakness Janse became unable to speak in public (although few now wanted to hear him), and writing became increasingly difficult. Several of his books were published after the war, but for the most part these were compilations of articles published earlier in periodicals, or texts written earlier and still unpublished (for instance, his book on the catechism, *The Confession of the Church according to the Scriptures*).¹⁹

The other major upheaval of the war years was in church life. The arguments within the Gereformeerde Kerk had become increasingly bitter, and this led in 1944 to a split in the church. Janse chose to follow the minority faction, led by Klaas Schilder, into the Vrijgemaakte (Liberated) Reformed Churches (along with Bartus Telder, the pastor at Breda). It was “liberated” from what they saw as the tyranny of the

¹⁹ A Janse. *De belijdenis der kerk naar de Schriften*. Enschede: J Boersma, 1950. This was written in the 1930s.

Synod which had become dictatorial in ruling the church. Those who stayed were referred to by the “Liberated” as “Synodicals”. Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven stayed with the Synodical church, a decision which led a number of the Liberated believers to leave the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy shortly after the war. Janse, however, stayed on and continued to serve on the governing body of the association, until declining health forced him to give up that role some time after the war.²⁰ His ‘attitude’ towards the Germans during the war continued to affect his role. Dooyeweerd and Janse had never been close, but Vollenhoven, as a very close friend, could not agree with Janse. As a result there was a distinct cooling of their friendship, which only thawed as Janse declined even further in health. There were some warm meetings between them, but the frequency of correspondence, numbering in the hundreds each year before the war, declined markedly after the war to number only a handful. This was also true of the many others with whom Janse had had prolific correspondence. His poor health soon prevented him from writing, and his later letters were dictated to a member of his family. His new publications were almost solely restricted to brief articles for the local church newsletter.²¹

Janse’s declining health meant that he was not active in the Association, no longer giving lectures, writing very little, and with a besmirched reputation. He was scarcely known to the generation growing up after the war. He was, however, a much respected elder in the *Vrijgemaakte Kerk* in Breda, the first and only church office he was to hold. He died in 1960, survived by his second wife and his children.

Janse on anthropology

Janse wrote extensively on his views of anthropology. This was sparked by his interest in educational theory, leading him to the conviction that pedagogy depends on anthropology: that is, how you teach depends on what view you have of the person you are teaching. Janse became

²⁰ After the war Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven wanted Janse to leave the Board of the Association for Calvinist Philosophy because of his views on the German occupation, and it was only after fervent advocacy by his friend K J Popma that he was allowed to remain.

²¹ However, this newsletter from the Breda *Vrijgemaakte Kerk* became well known across the Netherlands and had a high subscription rate. It was the contributions by both Janse and the pastor of the church, Rev. Bartus Telder, which were widely appreciated.

convinced early in his career that the person being taught was the whole person, not a mind or an intellect. He often spoke of the child standing before you, a living, breathing human being, as the focus of educational activities, so that it was the whole person who was being educated. This person he then saw in biblical terms as a “living soul,” an epithet taken from Genesis 2:7. The first reference to this view I have found in Janse’s writings comes as early as the second article he published, “Psychologie der Schoolgemeenschap” [The psychology of the school community], in 1920.

In particular he objected to the use in scholasticism of a rationalistic method based on Aristotelian principles and made famous by Thomas Aquinas. One of scholastic theology’s basic ideas was that human nature is composed of two substances: a mortal body and an immortal soul, a composition of matter and spirit. Janse rejected this approach and championed a biblical perspective on the person: a whole being, created as such by God, who in death suffers a breaking apart – an unnatural condition, the consequence of sin – which will be restored again at the Resurrection.²² His views on the subject of “the living soul”, as he called the whole human person – becoming in death a “dead soul” – were developed with considerable detail and philosophical acuity. Having developed an approach that rejected the dualism of matter and spirit, the possibility arose of developing a truly Christian philosophy. Aristotelian dualism simply prevented the recognition that reality is of whole beings, created as such by God. Reality is not therefore a collection of things comprising a mixture of two incompatible and fundamentally different substances. There are human beings, horses, birds, trees, insects, angels: all were created as entities and exist in correlation with each other as the creation of God. Deeper analysis of these entities can disclose how they

22 It is relevant to note that while Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd almost never spoke of the resurrection of the dead and the life of the new earth to come, Janse frequently spoke of this as key to his anthropological views. For Dooyeweerd’s relative silence on this matter, see Peter J Steen. *The Structure of Herman Dooyeweerd’s Thought*. Toronto: Wedge, 1983. While Steen compares Dooyeweerd’s lack of attention given to this subject with K J Popma, who had much to say on these matters, he does not seem aware of Janse’s work in this area. While he cites two of Janse’s books in his bibliography, he does not discuss Janse’s views. It should also be noted that Popma was very much influenced by Janse in this and in other matters.

function in different ways.²³ It was these different ways of functioning which came to form the basis of the Christian philosophy jointly developed by Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd and Janse.

Janse's anthropology was significant in several ways:

- a. It was the most extensively elaborated anthropological view in the pre-war reformational movement, articulated in over a dozen books and articles on the subject, and supplemented by further mentions in the hundreds in other articles written by Janse.²⁴
- b. It was rooted in the developing 'redemptive-historical' approach to the interpretation of the Scriptures. Central to this was the conviction that the Scriptures did not provide primarily raw material for theology, but rather a covenantal word for the direction of the whole of life. The corollary of this is that Scripture does not speak theoretically about things, and so its use of terms such as 'soul' has no theoretical content.
- c. Janse engaged with contemporary biology and psychology in articulating his views. His theories were not kept inhouse, but were expressed in the wider academic community, and debated with Christian and non-Christian scholars alike.
- d. Janse explicitly worked out his views in terms of pedagogical theory, hence showing their connection with everyday life.
- e. Janse explicitly debated his views with theologians (including at the Free University) who held strongly to a scholastic dualistic anthropology of a substantial, immaterial immortal soul and a material mortal body.
- f. Janse followed on from the direction indicated in the last book written by Herman Bavinck, *Bijbelsche and Religieuze Psychologie* (1920), in which Bavinck abandoned the idea of the substantial immortal soul and stated that such a view had no basis in Scripture.

23 Janse's role in developing this form of analysis is still to be determined from deeper historical study of the sources, particularly the correspondence in the Janse archives in the HDC.

24 Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven never produced an extensively elaborated anthropology to compare with the works of Janse.

Janse's anthropology is marked throughout from its first inception by a focus on the term "living soul" in Genesis 2:7, "the man became a living soul", or "living being" in later translations – *nephesh hayyah* in the Hebrew. Janse interpreted this term to mean that it was the whole person who was the "living soul", and that 'soul' thereby encompassed everything there is to say about a person, including the bodily aspects of his or her existence. This focus came from the book by Bavinck mentioned earlier, but Janse developed this idea in much greater detail than Bavinck had done.

In one of his seminal works, *Man as a Living Soul* (1934, revised and expanded 1937), Janse examined a number of biblical passages which spoke of the soul and showed how these could not refer to a separate substantial entity, but only the whole bodily being viewed as it were from the outside, which we encounter in meeting each other. This 'soul' not only knows God and prays, praises and sings, but also eats (Leviticus 7:18), is hungry and suffers leanness (Psalm 106:15), is clapped in irons (Joseph, Psalm 105:18) and put in prison (Psalm 142:7). Souls must not touch any unclean thing such as a dead body. Janse cites many passages where *nephesh* is used in the Hebrew to show that it simply does not make sense to translate it as "soul" as traditionally understood.

Climactically, Janse then demonstrates that throughout, the Old Testament speaks of "dead souls"; that is, people who have died. The idea of a soul dying is of course incompatible with the traditional dualistic anthropology built on the concept of the immortality of the soul. By insisting on a precise understanding of this usage in the Old Testament, Janse arrived at the view that the whole person lives and the whole person dies, body and soul, internal and external, and the whole person is raised into immortality at the return of Christ. The dead person then is buried, the dead person is in the grave, while a believing person is also with Christ until the last day.

His pedagogy built on this focus on the 'living soul' as the person – in that sense, the children before him in class. He focused on teaching 'persons', not souls or minds.

Janse's anthropology and modal theory

What then is the connection between Janse's anthropology and the development of modal theory by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven? Janse's anthropological theory was a precursor, and a necessary (but not sufficient) basis of modal theory.

A fully developed statement of Dooyeweerd's modal theory appears only in his 1935 work *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*. Prior to that there are brief hints at what would become a modal theory, sometimes using the term "law-sphere" or "function", including "meaning-functions", to refer to what would become the "aspects". Verburg says that the developing usage was "modalities," then "law-spheres", then "aspects" as a more restricted explication of law-spheres, then "modal aspects" or "modal spheres". For instance, we find in Dooyeweerd's "The crisis in humanistic political theory" dating from 1931²⁵ the statement that the "natural sides of reality, too, are functional meaning-sides; they are refractions of the religious fullness of meaning in the root of the human race. The cosmic coherence between the law spheres, as given in the cosmic order of time, reveals itself primarily in a cosmic order, by dint of which the law-spheres 'found' (are a foundation for) each other according to their structure of general meaning."²⁶ Dooyeweerd then catalogues these law-spheres as: numerical, spatial, kinematic, biotic, sensory, analytic, historical, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, jural, moral, and faith. This list of aspects remains constant for Dooyeweerd, except for the later addition of the physical between the spatial and the kinematic.²⁷

The essence of the modal theory is that all of created reality functions in accordance with the modes, as either subject or object in each mode. There are extensive links between the modes in the anticipations and retrocitations to other modes on the scale. This can only happen if the

25 Herman Dooyeweerd. *De crisis der humanistische staatsleer in het licht eener calvinistische kosmologie en kennistheorie*. Amsterdam: Ten Have, 1931. ET: *The Crisis in Humanist Political Theory*. Jordan Stations: Paedeia Press, 2010.

26 Herman Dooyeweerd. *The Crisis in Humanist Political Theory*, p. 80.

27 This addition was first made public by Dooyeweerd in 1950 in a lecture on "The modal structure of jural causality." Marcel E Verburg. *Herman Dooyeweerd. The Life and Work of a Christian Philosopher*. Jordan Station: Paedeia Press, 2015, p. 388.

modes are applicable to the whole creature functioning within all the modes.

Theories of the human person posit either that the person is entirely material – and all of the higher modes on the scale can be reduced to manifestations of the lower ones; for instance, thought and feeling are basically the result of chemical activity within organic matter – or that the person is a combination of two (or sometimes three) distinct kinds of reality, typically described as the material body and the immaterial (spiritual) soul. If analysed in terms of modal theory, this dualistic approach divides the modes on the scale into two at some point, typically between the biotic and the psychic modes, allocating these then to the two different kinds of reality within the person.

This dualism causes considerable problems in expressing a coherent view of the person, since there can no longer be any anticipations or retrocipations, as these then do not refer to aspects within the same reality, but only to aspects proper to one or other of these realities. Thus descriptions of bodily motion, for instance, do not work if we see them as economical (not using excessive motion to accomplish a task), or social (for instance, a kiss on the cheek or a shaking of hands) since the body is not seen to function in the economic or social modes. Similarly, it becomes problematic to speak of spatial extension with reference to higher reality; that is, the mind cannot be described as taking up space, since it does not function in the spatial mode. So our reference to 'head space' when needing to think is simply a manner of speaking, and cannot refer to a retrocipation to the spatial mode. As a manner of speaking, it can only then be seen as false or meaningless. This failure to recognise anticipations and retrocipations is the origin of the famous mediaeval debate about how many angels could dance on the head of a pin. If they do not function within the spatial mode then they do not take up space, and hence it can be argued that an infinite number of angels can dance in the same limited space – space simply does not apply to them.

The only alternative to this approach is to allocate the modal aspects not to the different components (body and soul), but to the joint phenomenon of a person being a body and soul in union. But this is impossible to maintain, since the modal aspects then do not apply in toto

to both body and soul, but only to the union between them. This then creates the problem of how the modal aspects can apply to a compound creature which is not a genuine unity, but only a temporary union between two different realities. What is that union? Can it be seen as a creaturely reality in its own respect if it is truly a combination of two different realities? Do the modes then apply only to the union and not to the components? But if so, how do the modes apply to a union made up of two components to which they do not apply?

This leads us to the conclusion that there are creaturely realities to which only some, or possibly none, of the modes apply. I contend that in this situation the modal theory simply dissolves into incoherence.

So the modal scale must apply in toto to human beings – all of them as subject, not object. And the necessary consequence of this must be that human beings are a unity – not a union of separate substances, but a genuine single entity.

This then is where Janse made his singular contribution to reformational philosophy at the most basic level, namely to enable the coherent development of the modal theory of creaturely being. I do not believe it is possible with our current knowledge of the early development of this philosophy to demonstrate a direct connection between Janse's views and this philosophical development, but in hindsight we can see that it was a necessary step.

So we see that in order for reformational philosophy to develop to a coherent state, it required a view of the human being as a unity. Janse was developing such a view as early as his incipient insights in 1920, which came to more extensive exposition in 1923 and after, well before either Vollenhoven or Dooyeweerd appear to have given attention to this matter. That this philosophy was able to develop to a coherent form then indicates that either the modal theory developed until it was realised that a different view of the human person was required, and the views of Janse were at hand to point the direction in which it should go; or, with the emerging views of Janse at hand, it was possible to see how this made a modal theory possible. The logic does not prove historical provenance, but it does demonstrate how both the unitary anthropology of Janse and the modal theory developed by Dooyeweerd (and in

somewhat different form, by Vollenhoven) were necessary for the future elaboration of the philosophy.

The subsequent disputes between the Reformational and the scholastically-minded staff of the VU (basically Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven versus the rest) focused to a large extent on the denial of the substantial, immaterial soul, and it was this issue which took the dispute all the way to the Synod of the GKN. While Janse was not explicitly involved in this dispute, not being a staff member of the VU or an office-bearer of the GKN, it has been argued that it was his views which were in the firing line, with Vollenhoven (mainly, with minimal focus on Dooyeweerd) as the proxy for Janse in the disputes. Janse engaged in polemics in his publications and via prodigious speaking and letter-writing, enduring heated and sometimes extremely personal *ad hominem* attacks (most famously by the wife of Dr H H Kuyper, who said in effect that a country bumpkin had no right to expound ideas at variance with those of academics and clergy).

The views of Janse on anthropology still have much to teach us and cover aspects of reformational theory which were never dealt with by either Vollenhoven or Dooyeweerd – nor, we can also argue, by any reformational author since. We still await a fresh anthropological theory to equal that of Janse, suitably updated to take account of developments since his day.

His views also have significance for our theories of knowledge, especially how we come to know other people, but that subject needs to wait for another day.

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