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Summary

Today the reformed theologian dr. J. Koopmans (1905–1945) is especially remembered as the person who spoke to society and the government during the occupation of The Netherlands by the Germans by means of the pamphlet *Bijna te laat!* (*Almost too late!*) The study *The voice of the church in the theology of dr. J. Koopmans* investigates whether, and if so: how Koopmans' public speaking is anchored in his theology.

In the *first chapter* the main question for our investigation is formulated, after which several sub questions are unfolded. The main question for our research is: is Koopmans' view on the voice of the church anchored in his entire theology? If so, how does this become visible? These questions are split up into sub questions regarding Koopmans' view on society, the church and the relationship between these two. An overview of the publications which have up till now been dedicated to Koopmans' theology is also presented here. This part rounds off with a description of the employed method.

The *second chapter* offers a description of the life of Koopmans. In it his work as a minister in two congregations in Zeeland (1928–1938), his work as secretary of the Dutch Christian Student Society (1938–1941) and his ministry in Amsterdam (1941–1945) are discussed in this respective order. His most important publications are mentioned and his involvement in the Dutch resistance against the occupying forces also comes into view.

Chapter three discusses Koopmans' explanation of the second article of the Dutch Confession of Faith (1561). The previously mentioned article deals with the way in which knowledge of God is acquired. Koopmans initiates his discussion of this article with the comment that this article also has political implications. In the discussion about natural theology, Koopmans sides with Barth, who strictly wants to speak proceeding from God's revelation in Christ in theology and rejects all other sources of knowledge. Yet Koopmans emphasizes that article 2 does not speak about natural theology; for this article mentions two means which God employs to make himself known to man. Koopmans' exposition gives occasion to discuss his thoughts regarding the relationship between God's providence and his work of grace. God's providence encompasses God's real work and wants to lead to it. God's providential work is not neutral, but has this aim: that man will use the given time and opportunity to come to Christ. Koopmans preferably speaks about God's patience and calls matters like people and government, gifts which

proceed from God's patience. When Koopmans states that the aim of a people is to become a church, it appears that these gifts have no value in themselves. His view on God's work of providence proves to provide him with a critical instrument with which he is able to detect all kinds of ideologies and refute them by means of arguments. Subsequently, it becomes evident that Koopmans sums up the entire voice of the church under the term 'preaching'. This is related to the characteristic nature of the Bible. It is a book from another world, from God's future. It also becomes clear that Koopmans joins knowledge of good and evil inextricably to God's revelation. Without the Word of God, Man does not know what is good and evil.

In conclusion Koopmans' explanation of article 36 of the Dutch Confession of Faith is discussed. This article speaks about the calling of the government. Koopmans prefers the use of the term government above the term state. For when we use the term government, it remains apparent that the government consists of people who have been called to this office and are to be held accountable for their policy. In his discussion of article 36, Koopmans makes Calvin's speaking about the calling of the government up to date. It is the government's calling to safeguard the opportunity of the church to proclaim the Word of God. He realizes that reality fails to comply with his ideas, but despite this, he still adheres to them. In this way he attempts to ensure that Christian citizens will never forget their calling with respect to the government, but that it will continually be under the attention of the church.

The *fourth chapter* is dedicated to Koopmans' sermon preached on August 27, 1939. On this Lord's Day after the Molotov-Ribbentrop-pact had been signed, Koopmans read Psalm 2 with the congregation. On the following Monday, the mobilization of the Dutch army was about to begin. In this sermon it becomes evident how Koopmans regards the congregation and the pastor. The aim of his homiletics seems to be that the influence of the preacher in the sermon should be as small as possible. For above all, the congregation needs to be more deeply rooted in the Scriptures. Koopmans uses clear language in his sermon, but does not support a certain political view. It becomes apparent that the opinions which he expresses are not moral, but eschatological judgements. That is to say: while listening to the Scriptures, he places the events of the end of August 1939 in the light of God's judgement. His view on the Scriptures as a Word which views the present from the perspective of God's future, makes him look critically in all directions – also in

the direction of his hearers and of the Dutch government with her policy of neutrality.

Chapter five discusses *Almost too late!* (1940) and the Outcry against sterilization (1943). Against the background of Koopmans' decisive stand which has been discussed in chapter 3 (there is no knowledge of good and evil outside the scope of God's revelation), it is an intriguing question how he employs this in these public texts. How does he address readers who do not share his faith? Is there a basic principle from which he can address them? Besides an appeal to the Scriptures in *Almost too late!*, Koopmans also appeals to the conscience. What is this conscience when we see that Koopmans does not accept a knowledge of good and evil without the revelation of God? It becomes apparent that this is related to Koopmans' view on the work of God's providence. He reasons starting from Matthew 6:33 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.' During the Dutch Rebellion Christians sought freedom of religion and faith. God then gave them a free country. This is and remains a bonus from God. God's blessing is effective around the church. According to Koopmans humanity is an 'atmosphere surrounding the church'. The conscience which Koopmans appeals to, must be viewed in this context : a bonus from God surrounding a church which sought the Kingdom of God. In the Outcry against sterilization, Koopmans aims at Seyss-Inquart because of the sterilization measures for Jews with mixed marriages. In this case Koopmans completely founds his arguments on the Bible.

Chapter six makes up the balance: what is the intrinsic contribution of this research? It is evident that Koopmans' public texts are firmly anchored in his theology. Particularly his view on the relationship between providence and grace appear to be an important foundation sustaining his contribution to the discussion in the public area. God is at work in this world with the intention that people will find Him in Christ. When the church addresses society, she does not enter an empty world, but she proclaims God, who draws near to her from reality.

Translation: Thera Tanis-Baars