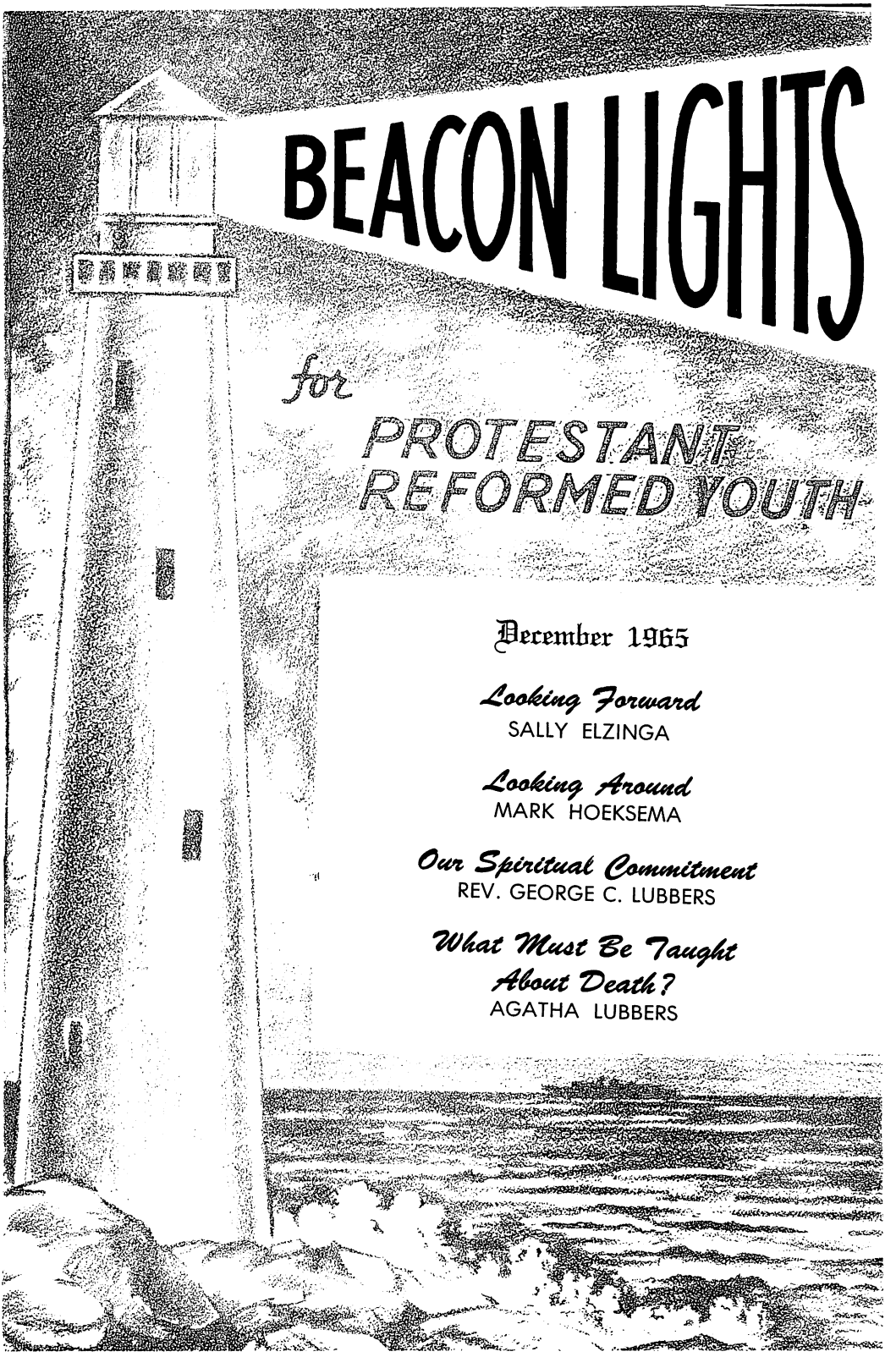

BEACON LIGHTS

for

PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

December 1965

Looking Forward
SALLY ELZINGA

Looking Around
MARK HOEKSEMA

Our Spiritual Commitment
REV. GEORGE C. LUBBERS

What Must Be Taught About Death?
AGATHA LUBBERS

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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

VOLUME XXV DECEMBER 1965 NUMBER 8

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Are You Reading?

Since Christmas vacation is a time of much leisure, you must find profitable ways to use this time. Certainly you remember that time is not your own, but rather that it belongs to God who made all things. Assuredly he will judge you as to how you use it. How, then, can you profitably use this spare time?

Reading, I feel, is one of the best ways to spend any extra time that you may have. The reason is very clear. When you read, your experience is broadened and spiritual life is enriched – in a word – you *learn* by reading. But, perhaps, you ask, what books shall I read? Let me suggest just a few. I will list them in order of precedence.

God fearing children do not have to be told to read the Bible. It has, of course, precedence over all other literature. It is The Book of Books! At Christmas time read the Gospel accounts of the birth of Christ, but, as you become a mature reader, trace this Son of God through the Old Testament. Read about his promise to the seed of the woman (His Church) in Genesis 3:15, His coming to earth prophesied profusely in the books of the major and minor prophets; follow Him through the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John until He is crucified, dead, and resurrected to ascend to heaven to be with His Father. Finally, look for Him on the clouds of heaven as you read His vision to the seer of Patmos in Revelation. Next let me suggest reading other than the Bible, namely, secondary reading.

Secondary reading means exactly what it says, i.e., reading that is second in importance in the life of a Christian. Much of this type of literature can be found within our own Protestant Reformed Churches. God has abundantly and uniquely blessed our churches with men who were gifted in explaining and interpreting His Word. One of these men was the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema who has written voluminously but lucidly on a wide variety of subjects dealing with the interpretation of God's Word. His book, *Mystery of Bethlehem*, makes spiritually enriching reading, even for young people. Another book by the same author, *The History of The Protestant Reformed Churches*, must be read by every young person in our churches. You are the offspring of that bitter but glorious history, do you not want to understand it?

Our churches are making history and developing the truths of the Word of God every day. This history and development is recorded in our periodicals, *Beacon Lights* and *The Standard Bearer*. *Beacon Lights*, it goes without saying, is for you, but *The Standard Bearer* also contains many articles that you can read, understand, and enjoy. In fact, the editor of *The Standard Bearer*, Prof. H. C. Hoeksema, wrote the following in an article entitled "New Readers".

> But who are *new readers*?
>
> Our children potentially!
>
> No, I do not refer to our little children: for they are not of an age to digest meat as yet. They must be fed milk. But I have in mind our bigger children, our teenagers, especially from, say, fourteen and fifteen years old and up.
>
> As a general rule, I dare say, our magazine is read very little by them.
>
> Yet what sound reason is there for such a situation?
>
> Our young people have *Beacon Lights*. To be sure, they should read their own magazine, perhaps more faithfully than they do. Yet there is not reason to exclude the *Standard Bearer* from their lives. (SB, Vol. XLI, Sept. 1, 1965)

Thus, you will agree that books and periodicals from our own churches will satisfy your reading appetites at least part of the time. Spend the rest of the time reading worthwhile literature from outside of our churches. I will suggest only a few, and will not even attempt to be exhaustive.

John Bunyan, a seventeenth century defender of the faith, was imprisoned for speaking harshly against the Church of England. He remained, with occasional intervals of freedom, for twelve years. In 1675, while in jail, he started his immortal work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This allegori-

cal book I recommend to you to read with discretion. (A child of God always reads with discretion when he reads the works of men.)

Another Englishman, Charles Spurgeon, wrote a plain book for plain people. This book, *John Ploughman's Talk,* is written in the terse, frank, and earthy style of an English plowboy. The author says he has discarded refined taste and dainty words for strong and proverbial expression and homely phrases. After you read it, I am sure that your pride will be crushed, and that you will have a better knowledge of yourself.

Still another Briton, C. S. Lewis, has written voluminously on a variety of subjects. His children's books, *The Tales of Narnia,* take on allegorical and symbolical significance when read by older children. The whole series numbers seven books, *viz., The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe, Prince Caspian, The Silver Chair, The Horse and His Boy, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, The Magician's Nephew,* and *The Last Battle.*

Now journey with me to our side of the Atlantic. Come with me to Pella, Iowa through the book *Roofs Over Strawtown* by S. E. Gosselink. Read this book and you will not only understand the Dutch in this area, but also you will come to a better understanding of the persecution these Christians endured in their homeland. From the Holland constituency in this country came Thea Van Halsema author of two books about John Calvin: *This Was John Calvin* and *Idelette.*

After you have read about Calvin, then, read *Here I Stand,* a biography of Martin Luther, by Roland H. Baynton. And after you have read about these two heroes of faith, continue to read about others in *Tales for Teens* by Faith Coxe Bailey. This little book contains many stories about John Huss, John Knox, John Wycliffe, and many others.

Finally, then, young people, I leave you with this thought: read to increase your knowledge of God, and it will not be said of you:

> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee. . . .
> Hosea 4:6

D.H.

Rev. Lubbers has called to my attention the fact that he did not write "The Answer" in June-July issue. The credit for this article must go to Rev. Van Baren.
The Editor

FEATURE

Beacon Lights presents a series of three articles in which the need for our own high school is presented from a student's point of view. Two appear in this issue, and the third will follow in a later issue.

(1) LOOKING FORWARD

Sally Elzinga — 9th grader at Hope P. R. Christian School

This article, in connection with our high school, is an attempt to look ahead to the things all of us in junior high in our Protestant Reformed grade schools will face sooner or later. Do we really want this school? In an article of this nature, some of the ideas will probably be repeated. However, this one will be with the view of looking ahead.

There are several reasons for a Protestant Reformed high school. In the first place, in our baptism form our parents take a vow to "promise and intend to see these children . . . brought up in the aforesaid doctrine or help or cause them to be instructed therein to the utmost of their power." When our parents are sending us to a Christian high school, are they fulfilling their vows? Possibly, but only if they are working "to the utmost of their power" to establish our own high school.

One of our former pastors in a lecture several years ago stated, "If you are going to build a Protestant Reformed man of your child you must use Protestant Reformed material." Isn't this true? How can we, covenant youth, be taught by men of another faith? The Bible repeatedly says

we must be taught in the truth. In our own school this would be accomplished. All our subjects would be taught from the infallible principle that God is the creator of all things, and, therefore, we do all things to glorify Him. In the present Christian high schools they do not teach this principle consistently for one day they teach creation, and the next day they teach that the world evolved through a long and somewhat magical biological process.

A Protestant Reformed high school will be beneficial to the Protestant Reformed Churches. The truth will be taught. The teachers will be of our own denomination, thus nothing contrary will be taught, if *they* use the Word of God as their guide and basis for every subject.

When we get to high school will our nine years of distinctly Protestant Reformed education be enough to make us strong enough to withstand the teachings of the Christian schools? Will we be s t r o n g enough to defend the truth?

When we think about a high school, it shouldn't be because we want to be separate because we go to a different church. If that is the case, it is useless to consider it. The real reason must be that we are instructed in the truth for as long as possible, to make us strong enough to defend the truth for the rest of our lives.

As I look around, I wonder what kind of friends we'll have. Will they be ones who generally like or go to the same type of activities we go to? In our own high school we would associate with young people from our own churches, we would have more things in common and so can become better friends because we go to the same type of activities. In our own school would we pursue worldly amusements? All our extracurricular activities would be controlled. We would never be left out because the entertainment is wrong.

These are some of my reasons for and ideas about a Protestant Reformed high school. Do *YOU* really want it?

FEATURE

(2) LOOKING AROUND

Mark Hoeksema — Junior at East Christian High

I am a student at East Christian High School in Grand Rapids, the new branch of Christian High. I was asked to write this article to point out some of the faults of Christian High, and to show the need for our own high school. I do not want to do this in an overbearing, overly-critical way; I have no malice aforethought; but there are obvious faults with our present high schools, and I intend to point them out, even though I realize that this is the best we have and that we ought to be thankful for it.

To say the very least, the atmosphere at Christian High is not always very Christian at all. This is evident, first of all, with regard to the pupils. Their dress is not sloppy, not poor, but instead should be classified as worldly. They carry transistor radios with them and listen to the latest hits. They fly around in cars as much as possible, and right along with this goes smoking. Smoking was banned at the beginning of the 1964 school year, yet there are pupils who smoke before they are out of sight of school. There is a general "who-gives-a-rip" attitude at school. Some are there because they have to be, and some just for fun. Of course, these things do not apply to all of the students, but to too many of them.

The atmosphere in all of the classrooms is not good, either. Our teachers are supposed to be Christian, but sometimes you wouldn't be able to tell it from their conduct. I have had teachers who swore outright, or came as close to it as possible. Another gripe I have (and I am not the only one who feels this way!) is that there isn't a personal relationship between teacher and student. I realize that this is rather hard to achieve when a teacher has a great number of pupils, as is the case at Christian High, but this could be improved. One gets the feeling of being part of a giant assembly line in which each teacher adds a piece to one's education as one rushes past.

There are also several concrete things wrong with Christian High. First of all,

the teaching methods leave much to be desired. The teachers are not critical enough of bad things. True, once in a while an un-Reformed point will be criticized, but only briefly. A theory which should be picked apart and shown to be all wrong is usually mentioned only in passing and sometimes not at all. A teacher will say, "Now you understand why we can't agree with this," but the pupils very often *don't* know why. If the faulty theory is not criticized at all, the pupils will most likely swallow it, hook, line, and sinker. I think that sometimes our teachers either don't see the wrong in these things, or that maybe they don't want to see it. Our teachers are very intelligent and educated, but they teach us too much how to succeed in this life instead of in that to come. It is a rather sad situation when Christians accept and believe the wicked and ungodly theories of worldly men.

Right along with this go the things that are taught which contradict Scripture outright. A prime example of this is the teaching that creation took place during long periods of time instead of during six days. Usually we associate this theory with worldly men of science. I think that many of my readers would be shocked to learn that I personally know a teacher at Christian High who teaches this in Biology. Perhaps this isn't new to some of you, but it bears repeating. This teaching has no Scriptural basis and therefore should not be taught in a school that is supposed to be devoted to teaching Reformed truths.

Another thing which is accepted as commonplace is movie attendance. If you attend Christian High, you probably have been asked upon many occasions if you have seen a certain movie. When you reply in the negative, the person who has asked you looks at you as if to say, "What kind of odd-ball are you that you didn't even see such a great show?!" When you go on to explain that you don't go to movies because they are wrong, you are looked upon as even more queer. Drama is wrong — the reasons have often been pointed out, so I won't name them here; — yet Christian High sponsors a senior play every year!

Chapel is the biggest farce of all. Sometimes we have joke periods. In fact, some of the best jokes I have heard have been told in chapel. Sometimes the speaker will go so far as to try to apply his joke(s) to his "talk". Quite often we have a moralist such as Tom Skinner, who was once a gang leader in Harlem. We hear about the terrible things that happen in gang wars and then are told how efforts are being made to correct this situation . . . you know, make the world a better place in which to live. This is not stated in so many words, but it is rather obvious. Hand in hand with moralism goes Arminianism — the old familiar line: "Won't you accept Christ today?" One of these "Youth for Christ" types who goes around giving testimonies of how he let Jesus come into his life. Frequently someone talks about a Christian virtue and how to use it. Of course, this isn't wrong, but the speakers all too often don't go into the "why" of it . . . missing the point completely. Chapel is supposed to be the most important part of the day, yet quite often it fails dismally.

Then there is the matter of extra-curricular activities. While these cannot be termed school, they are approved and publicized by the school. We have no school-sponsored dances, for this would bring a storm of protest; but while they are not condoned, they are not condemned outright, either. Roller skating parties and hayrides are perfectly fine as such, but when the Chevrons (a popular combo from ECH) play at a roller skating party, this can hardly be called good Christian entertainment. The school paper also recommends entertainment which is not the best. There are such things advertised as the Smothers Brothers, Al Hirt, and other entertainment which a Christian should not attend. This does not exactly encourage the students to seek good entertainment.

I suppose that one could find many reasons why Christian High has reached this sad state of affairs, but every reason can be traced back to 1924. In 1924 the Christian Reformed Church departed from the truth, and from there time took over. In geometry, if a line is drawn at a slight angle to another line, the distance between them is not great. However, if you extend these lines, the farther you extend them, the greater the distance between them becomes. So it is with the church. If the church departs just a little from the straight line of the truth, she gets farther and farther

away as she progresses. This is what happened with the Christian Reformed Church and consequently with Christian High. If you take the first little step and say "A", you also say "B" and "C". This first little venture from the truth has grown and grown until there is very little left that can be called Christian in Christian High. These departures from the truth are minimized and de-emphasized, but to a reasonably intelligent observer they are quite obvious. If you have attended Christian High as I have done for the past couple of years, it's not hard to pick out the many faults that it has. Essentially, what Christian High is doing is drawing the world into the church as much as possible.

But one might say, "The situation can't be as bad as all that. The entire student body can't be beatniks; the teachers can't be downright worldly; everybody isn't movie-crazy, and chapel isn't so bad." No, I do not claim that Christian High is entirely bad and worldly. There are many pupils and teachers who are to be commended. This element keeps Christian High from deteriorating too rapidly. What I am claiming, however, is that there is too much of this departure too fast. This situation can never be improved, can never be stopped, and will continue to worsen. I think that I have given pretty conclusive evidence here that we need our own high school. I don't say that this would solve all of the present difficulties with a snap of the fingers, or that this high school would be some kind of Utopia, where everything would go exactly as we want it to. I don't even think that it could be perfect in every way in which Christian High has failed. But what I do mean to say is that it would proceed from a sound doctrinal basis. The one big reason why Christian High is so poor is that it got off on the wrong foot to begin with and has been deteriorating ever since. It was founded in 1921, and already in 1924 it was principally gone. If our school has a good basis, there will be none of this pupil delinquency and these false teachings. This is evident from our elementary schools.

But we must do more than just talk about the possibility of our own high school. We must act quickly so that our youth can get a sound Protestant Reformed education as soon as possible. I regret that I could not have the opportunity of going to this school, and I hope the people who do get to attend will consider it a privilege. But we must keep on with the work so that our high school will be ready for the next generation. Let's all put our shoulder to the wheel so that the instruction of church, home, and school may be harmoniously Reformed.

CRITIQUE

AGATHA LUBBERS

WHAT MUST BE TAUGHT ABOUT DEATH?

"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death . . ."
Revelation 6:8a

"There is a Reaper, whose name is Death,
And, with his sickle keen,
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,

And the flowers that grow between."
"The Reaper and the Flowers"
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

"The Doctor said that Death
was but a scientific fact:"
"The Ballad of Reading Gaol"
Oscar Wilde

These and many others are the words that have been written about the reality of death. To every man it is grim reality and is one that is thought of as little as possible. Against death, which is the last enemy for the Christian, man has a constant battle. For natural man the great goal in life is to create a society in which destruction, misery, pain, and death are eradicated; and yet, the reality of death stares every man squarely in the face every moment of his life on this earth.

The terrifying thought of death for natural man causes him to be concerned with the concept at every level of his existence. Even a periodical or professional journal like the Elementary School Journal published by the Department of Education of the University of Chicago features an article discussing the subject of death. In this article by Jeanne Marie Hair in the May, 1965, issue struggles with the reality of death. In this article entitled "What Shall We Teach About Death in Science Classes?" the writer makes a bold attempt to consider death as a cold objective fact but one cannot fail to detect a basic personal concern with the reality of death.

The writer indicates that the subject of death is definitely avoided by the educator. "Even though the belief is widespread that education should be a vital experience and preparation for all aspects of life, the end of living is neglected in the study of the life cycle." She suggests in this brief statement and throughout the article that education refuses to concern itself at the elementary level with the fact of death. She also suggests that death should be studied as an integral part of preparation for life and all its experiences.

Several possible reasons are given by the author of the article to explain the avoidance of death in the public school program for instruction. They are briefly summarized as follows: 1. Death is not considered an appropriate topic for consideration by the youngsters in the school programs. 2. Death is avoided because of religious overtones. 3. Death is avoided because of misgivings that undue morbidity would intrude into the treatment of the subject. 4. Death is not discussed because of psychological repercussions.

The author also gives several reasons why she believes death is an important topic in the school curriculum. 1. An understanding of the life cycle is not complete without an understanding of the characteristics, role, and necessity of death. 2. An understanding of the nature and significance of death is important to conservation and to ecological (comes from ecology, the biology dealing with the mutual relations between organisms and their environment) and health concepts. 3. An understanding of the scientific facts is needed to eliminate or prevent debilitating superstitions and fears in situations involving death. 4. Understanding and appreciation of life and living are increased and sharpened by conscious contrasts and comparisons to death and dying.

It is decidedly true that the child cannot help but observe death. He sees it all around him. The baby bird falls from the nest and dies. The flowers wilt and the petals fall to the ground or blow away. Each fall the leaves turn brown and fall to decay upon the ground. He may experience the sudden death of a brother, sister, Mother, or Father.

The question that the writer posits, however, is what to teach about death. Is it a subject which by its very nature must be left undiscussed? Is death such a negative reality that the educator and the scientist has no rational answer for its reality and its verified existence? Is it because the scientist lacks the tools and instruments to find an answer for the cessation of existence that he refuses to discuss this reality? Are the children too young to face stoically this reality and must they be sheltered from a discussion of this reality?

To me as a Christian educator this seems to be the very nature of the problem. The scientist, who relies on his science for every answer has no answer for the purpose of death. He only knows that death occurs; he knows that it is final; he knows that it is the end of organic tissue; he knows that he cannot bring that which is dead back to life; he sees the tissue break down and in

his attempts to save it he is only and always frustrated.

But here we read of an educator who wishes to teach what she can about death. She says that certain scientific facts are needed by the individual child to eliminate the fears that accompany death. A knowledge of these facts, she would argue, will make it possible for a man to go through life with sound mental hygiene and come to the end of life and not be afraid. The child she says will also understand and appreciate life if he compares it with death. He will undoubtedly get the most out of life if he knows what he must expect when the end of his biological existence must come.

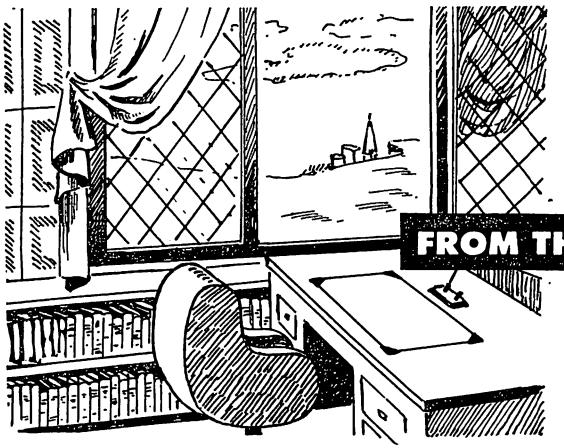
One feels instinctively that the writer of the article from which we quote is immovably lodged between the horns of a dilemma. To treat the subject is a must but how to do it and what to say is the problem.

Many other things seem to have a purpose and can be given some plausible, teleological answers by the secular scientist and educator but the purpose for death is a conundrum to them. The weakness and the destructibility of the biological organism are the only answers they seem to have. Questions concerning the characteristics, role and necessity of death will be categorically answered in terms of physical weakness and cessation of conscious existence as a person. Historical and evolutionary process simply demands a continuous cycle of lives. Some will possibly say that some must die so that others may live. This is part of the inevitable process.

The Christian educator is not stranded in the waste-land of inevitability. He also faces the fact of death but for him it is no conundrum. He can explain the reality of death from a biological point of view but he answers not in frustrated disgust, or stoical indifference. His answer is rooted in theological fact. His answer is rooted in revealed truth. He says: "The first man, Adam, fell. When he fell we all fell and whole creation with him into physical and eternal death.

The great mystery of godliness is legacy of the Christian educator. He receives grace to believe, to understand, and thereby to know that death is not the end; that there is a great purpose in the dying of mankind. For unsaved, reprobate man death means everlasting destruction and perdition; but for him, who has been redeemed in Christ, death has been swallowed up in victory. The last enemy death has been defeated by Christ, the captain of the redeemed Christian.

"O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who gives us the victory."



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. GEORGE C. LUBBERS

OUR SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT

There was a time many years ago when my father and my mother took upon themselves a very serious commitment. It was a commitment made within the Covenant of God, in which Covenant God promised, assured them that He would be to them a

gracious Father, and they in turn vowed that they would instruct me in the "aforesaid doctrine" to the utmost of their power!

Such was also the case with you, my dear youthful reader.

We were instructed, indoctrinated in the home, the church and in the school according to that commitment.

The commitment made by our parents constituted their baptismal vows in which they answered solemnly to three questions, which read as follows:

"First. Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are born and conceived in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of his Church ought to be baptized?

"Secondly. Whether you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and which is taught here in this Christian Church to be the true and perfect doctrine of salvation?

"Thirdly. Whether you promise and intend to see these children, when come to years of discretion (whereof you are either parent or witness) instructed and brought up to the utmost of your power?"

In these three questions to which our parents answered in the affirmative they made a solemn commitment concerning you and me.

Meanwhile it may interest you, as it ought, to know that our parents had made a commitment of faith and obedience prior to the baptismal vows which they uttered at the occasion of our having received the sign and seal of God's holy covenant concerning the righteousness which is by faith. I refer to two former occasions when our parents uttered solemn vows which involved us too. I do not know which was first in the case of our parents; it really makes no essential difference.

I will assume that they first stood up before the congregation of God and solemnly and truthfully answered in the affirmative to the following questions:

"Do you acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?

"Have you resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to lead a new, godly life?

"Will you submit to church government, and in case you should become delinquent (which may God graciously forbid) to church discipline?"

Their affirmative answer committed them to a strong position. It was not that of mere theory and practice; it was that of doctrine and life. It entailed the promise to submit to church discipline should they become delinquent.

Now we can number two commitments.

The first dealt with the personal relationship to their Lord Jesus Christ when they confessed their faith publicly in the church of Christ.

The second dealt with their committing us to the Lord as they had committed themselves to the Lord.

Hence, it is we and our children; as for me and my house we will serve the Lord!

However, there is still another commitment which your parents made concerning you, besides the one made at the occasion of your baptism. I refer to the one made at the occasion when our parents were united by the Lord in holy matrimony. Our parents agreed that one of the chief reasons for holy matrimony is "secondly. That they bring up the children, which the Lord shall give them, in the true knowledge and fear of God, to his glory and their salvation."

Now we can count three, cannot we?

There was a time when I had not yet publicly confessed my faith and answered solemnly to the threefold questions concerning doctrine, godly resolves, and Christian discipline. But I was committed. My father and mother had believingly said that I was "sanctified in Christ, and therefore as a member of His church ought to be baptized"! Thus also were you, my dear covenant youth.

Then there came the time when I, together with others, publicly, before the church of God, confessed faith. Yes, we had resolved to adhere to "this doctrine", and we had resolved "to reject all heresies repugnant thereto"! Somehow, only thus could we be assured of truly living godly lives. Did you take notice too of this "rejection of all heresies" repugnant to the faith when you made confession of faith? And if you have not yet publicly confessed your faith and asked permission to partake

of the Lord's Supper, do you intend to also take this matter prayerfully before the throne of grace in a godly resolution? You will then be a living witness and evidence of God's grace which has made you to be manifestly what your parents said they believed you were as a child of the covenant and a member of God's church when a wee infant.

We are committed to the warfare of the saints!

We confess the name of Christ! However, we do not neglect to reject all heresies repugnant to the doctrine. Can you detect these heresies? Can you detect them not only in their very evident form and brutal articulation, but can you detect them even as incipient heresies?

Yes, we are committed with a spiritual commitment so that we shall serve the Lord in spirit and in truth. All that which does not fit with the altar of God must be rejected. To this your minister and elders are committed. They have signed the "Formula of Subscription". All have committed themselves to the warfare: "We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same, by our public preaching or writing."

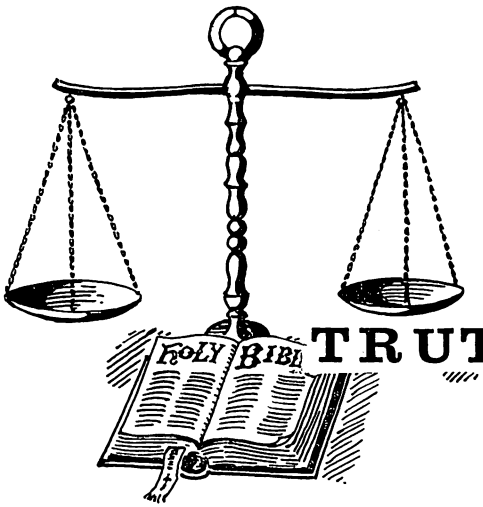
Let us not falter at the ramparts, but meet the enemy in the gate.

When you and I were baptized the minister and your parents and the entire congregation bowed their hearts in fervent prayer, which ended ". . . and manfully fight against, and overcome sin, the devil and his whole dominion, to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify thee, and thy Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Ghost, the only true God. Amen"

Our parents, the congregation and the particular minister are no more here on earth. But our having been committed is in the book of remembrance before the Lord!

Truly, amazing commitments!

May it be for you and me as a nail in the holy place. . . .



TRUTH vs. ERROR

by REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

9. THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

8. ITS SUPRALAPSARIAN CHARACTER

To a certain extent we entered into the Supra-Infra question, pointing out that the Supra scheme is anything but an "extreme of squeamish timidity," that rather it, more than the Infra scheme, elevates the certainty and the sovereignty of the decrees of God. We also noted that the Supra view has never been confessionally condemned, not in the Anglican churches, not in the Presbyterian churches, not in the Reformed churches, nor in any churches which call themselves Calvinistic. We further indicated that of the main points at issue, the most

important include the distinction between the *end* God has in mind, and the *way* that He has in mind to take to that end. God ordained His people to glory. He also ordained that they reach glory through the wilderness of sin.

God foreknew His people with a knowledge of everlasting love. Then according to the foreknowledge of love He predestined conformed to the image of His Son all these people. Finally, whom He predestinated He also glorified. Certainly, it must be plain from Romans 8 that this foreordination of God puts His people in glory definitely prior to His prescience of their fall in Adam. Certainly this understanding of the truth is also in better agreement with the cases of Jacob and Esau mentioned in Romans 9:11 than the infralapsarian view, which has the divine decree regard them as fallen creatures.

There Paul wrote, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." Why did God give preference to Jacob? It must be evident that He did so simply because it was His purpose to do so, for He chose Jacob independently of any merit in him, in fact, His choice was before the children were born, before they could do any good or evil. Since it is true that "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the ages" (Ac. 15:18), that is, that He does in time only what He has decreed in His secret, eternal counsel, then it must have been in the divine mind from all eternity to put enmity between the seed of the serpent, Esau, and the seed of the woman, Jacob. It is a patent scriptural fact that divine election and reprobation, God's choosing some and rejecting others, were independent of any foreseen "good or evil" in the creature, and so irrespective of any merit or fall of man. It may also be noted that the language "the *purpose* of God according to *election*" furnishes evidence for the Calvinistic doctrine of *double* predestination, that there are *two* parts to the divine decree, that there must also be the purpose of God according to His sovereign *reprobation.* Romans 9:22 surely bears this out. "What if God willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction!"

Also the supralapsarian view is more in harmony with Romans 9:21 than is the Infra-view. For God, who has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass (Acts 4:27-28), in His eternal purpose contemplated His people first, not as sinful, fallen creatures, but, as noted in Romans 8:29-30, as glorified saints, as eternally predestinated conformed to the image of His Son. With that in mind, consider this: "Hath not the Potter power (authority) over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" Now that lump of clay to begin with is an unformed lump. But is it also to be regarded as a fallen mass or an unfallen lump? The latter, certainly; for if the whole mass of mankind were considered in the mind of Paul Infra-wise, as fallen, he would not have spoken of some vessels destined to be unto honor and some to dishonor, for under that scheme of predestination the whole mass of clay was already in a state of corruption and dishonor. Then the decree would be, for some, to leave them in and consign them to that dishonor, while for the others, to extricate them from dishonor and elevate them to honor. For this mass of unformed clay is the mass of creatureship not yet made and not yet considered as corrupted and fallen. But rather out of that mass God fitted some to destruction and others He beforehand prepared to glory. This view alone extols the certainty and sovereignty of God's decree as no other does.

This is also true in Ephesians 1. There, too, we find the distinction made between the end God had in mind and the means He ordained to realize that end. For from verses 3 to 6 we have God's first and highest purposes of His decree expressed. Then in verses 7 to 9 we have the decree of the means in which He fore-appointed the accomplishment of that purpose. Then we will understand what is meant by "being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh *all things* after the counsel of His own will" (v. 11). What things are these which God works? First, the things He has ordained to be the glorious end of His people, and second, the things He has ordained to be the wonderful means He will use to the accomplishment of His

own end. These *things* chiefly have *people* in view, contemplated first in an unfallen and glorified state (vv. 3-6) and then in a fallen and redeemed state (7-9).

This is what God worked in His counsel. He wrought it in eternity past. "He *hath* blessed us," "He *hath* chosen us" (v. 4), "*having* predestinated us unto the adoption of sons" (v. 5), "He *hath* made us accepted in the Beloved" One (v. 6). The means employed to accomplish this already determined counsel are our present enjoyment. "In whom we *have* redemption through His blood" (v. 7). That first and highest purpose of God revealed in vv. 3-6 is there declared full and complete without any dependence upon a foreview of the fall. Those "all things," which God works according to His counsel, follow from the elect's being eternally blessed in Christ, and those blessed ones being chosen in Him. These spiritual blessings wherewith He *has* blessed us, He has given us on much higher ground than that of being our Redeemer. He gave them to us from all eternity on the ground of Christ's being the Image of God, the Firstborn of every creature, and the Beginning of the New Creation of God! He chose us in Christ not as picked out of a fallen humanity, but with the end determined that we should be *holy*. God's election saw us first not as fallen, but as holy. This is not the imperfect holiness of this life, but the perfect and unchangeable holiness that neither unfallen Adam nor the unfallen angels had by nature. There in His decree He viewed us as holy, as having predestinated us to the adoption of sons (v. 5). That is, we were from the beginning of His decree considered as the sons of God in perfect communion and friendship with Him.

Now since the Lord has blessed us according to His purpose of election with *all* spiritual blessings, then there are not only those blessings just enumerated which belong particularly to the end He has in mind for us, but there are also those blessings which belong peculiarly to the means to secure that end. The latter blessings, however, *were* ordained us through and on consideration of the fall, and for us regarded not as holy in perfection, but as sinners to be redeemed and *so* brought to holy perfection and glory.

These blessings of God's eternal purpose, then, were first in His intention, and so are said to be "before the foundation of the world" (v. 4), i.e., they were ordained to us in Christ logically and spiritually before the consideration of laying the foundation of the universe. But His first intention He designed to be realized at the end of the world. Hence the "adoption" to which we were predestinated we yet await (Rom. 8:23). Whereas, the blessings of God's ordained means were next in His intention, and are given us in this life, for in this present time we *have* "the forgiveness of sins" through His blood. Those first blessings of His main purpose stand on the ground of Christ's person, as we have it, "blessed . . . in Christ . . . chosen in Him . . . accepted in the Beloved." But the blessings of His ordained means stand on the ground of Christ's work. The latter blessings God uses in a reconciling way to bridge the gap that because of sin separates from the ultimate blessings of His first intention.

So there are blessings which we receive "in Christ" (vv. 3, 4) as glorified, holy sons of God, and there are blessings which we receive "through Christ" (v. 7) as sinners with sins forgiven. The former blessings are ours in Christ as our Head. The latter are ours in Christ as our Saviour. This is the divine order. "Christ is the Head of the Church, and He is the Saviour of the Body" of Christ (5:23). "In the volume (the Head) of the Book (of Election) it is written of Me, 'Lo, I come (as Saviour!) to do Thy will, O God!'"

God chose Christ and foreordained Him (I Pet. 1:19) to be the sovereign end of His eternal purpose. Christ is the end of our election. He is God's Elect, God's Delight (Isa. 42:1). We are God's elect and Christ's delight (Pro. 8:31). Therefore our election is prior to any consideration of the fall of man, for we were viewed in Christ before we were viewed in Adam. The elect angels were never regarded in a fallen mass when they were chosen, for they never fell. So with elect men, they were regarded in the same unfallen lump of humanity when He chose them. Christ as God manifest in the flesh was chosen, but neither He nor His perfect humanity ever fell in Adam. Consequently, the people chosen in Him must be considered at that point of the decree at least as unfallen. Eve was given to Adam before sin entered. So the church

was given to Christ as bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh not as fallen, but as from the very first, glorified! God's purpose for His elect has a double reference. First, He ordained them to glory, and then with regard to the fall, to salvation. So His ordination of the reprobate has a double reference. He ordained them to destruction as creatures, and to condemnation as sinners.

(To be continued, D.V.)

NEWS from, for, and about our churches

KARLENE OOMKES

The consistory of our Hudsonville Church has granted to their pastor, Rev. G. Vos, his emeritation after laboring in their midst seventeen and a half years. Rev. Vos hopes to continue preaching among the various churches as long as the Lord permits him to do so. At a recent congregational meeting, the church extended a call to Rev. D. J. Engelsma.

Rev. B. Woudenberg accepted the call to our Lynden church. He preached his farewell sermon on November 14 and left with his family for Washington the following day. Rev. J. Heys was scheduled to install the pastor in his new congregation. Edgerton has extended the call to Rev. J. Kortering.

First Church has made a trio for missionary consisting of the Revs. Harbach, Kortering, and Schipper.

Concerning our Servicemen:

Ivan and Melvin Griess (Loveland) left in October for training in the Marine Reserves. Roger Kamphuis (Hope) and Richard Huizinga (Hudsonville) entered the armed forces of our country during the first part of November.

We have received the addresses of Robert Ekema (Redlands) and Aaron Schwarz (Loveland) who are presently stationed in Vietnam. They are as follows:

Pvt. E-2 Robert Ekema US 56384072
HHC 2BN (ABN) 502 JHF
1st BDE 101st ABH Division
A.P.O. California 96347

P.F.C. Aaron Schwarz
"D" Co. 1st BN.,
1st Marines, 1st MAr. Div.
Marine #16 c/o F.P.O.
San Francisco, California 96601

Called Home:

Mr. John Lanning (Hope) on November 7, at 52 years of age.

Membership Changes:

Redlands welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Reitsma into their midst from First; and First welcomed Mr. Peter Nobel from the Moline Christian Reformed Church and Mr. David Hop from Hudsonville.

Congratulations to:

Mrs. H. Mulder (First) who celebrated her 81st birthday on October 24; Mr. Albert Hoeksema (First) who celebrated his 82nd birthday on November 2; Mrs. R. DeVries (First) who celebrated her 88th birthday on November 7; Mrs. C. Wassink (Hull) who celebrated her 80th birthday on November 7; and also to Jim Langerak and Beverly Kamphuis (Hope) who were united in marriage on October 29; and Arnold Hibma and Violet Schut (Hudsonville) who spoke the marriage vows November 5.

For the Next Census:

A son, Michael James, born to Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Holstege (Hudsonville).

A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. John DeYoung (South Holland).

A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. John C. Busker (South Holland).

A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. Jay Bomers (Hope).

A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. Jack Van Dyke (Hope).

A son born to Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Holstege (Hudsonville).

Here and There

The Reformation Day Rally held at the Civic Auditorium on October 27 was a thrilling and enjoyable event for all those who were able to attend. The audience sat spellbound as Professor H. C. Hoeksema spoke on the subject "Our Reformed Heritage."

The Sunday School of Redlands invited the congregation to join them in the celebra-

tion of the Reformation by conducting a Song-Service following the morning service on October 31.

Rev. D. Engelsma addressed the student body of Loveland Christian School on "The Reformation".

On November 1, the Young People in Northwest Iowa sponsored a Reformation Day Program in Hull Church.

Professor H. Hanko was the speaker at the Mr. and Mrs. League held November 5 in Southwest Church.

On November 4, Rev. J. Heys showed his slides and spoke about his work among the church in Jamaica to the members of Loveland Church.

The Ladies League held their fall meeting November 11 at Southwest Church. Professor H. Hanko addressed them on the subject: "Racial Rioting and Signs of the Times."

Confession of Faith was recently made by Ted and Tim Pipe and Jim Slopsema (Southeast).

On November 12, Rev. and Mrs. H. Veldman held a social evening in Hope's church basement for all the young people of that congregation.

HELPS FOR BIBLE STUDY ON THE Book of GENESIS

by DAVID ENGELSMA

3) Any sense in which the famine can be said to have been for the good also of the heathen nations that felt its sting. At this time? In their generations? (Consider them once as "Gentiles.")

c. Is it essential to maintain that not things in themselves but God's purpose with all things determines whether they are good (saving) or bad (destroying) for men?

II. The Meeting

A. Some details.

1. About how much time has elapsed since the brothers sold Joseph? (cf. Gen. 37:2; 41:46; 41:29, 30; 45:11)
2. What explains the absence of Benjamin? (vs. 4)
   a. Does Jacob's great concern for Benjamin's welfare stem from a greater love for him than for the other ten boys? (cf. Gen. 42:38; 44:20, 27-31)
   b. If Jacob loves Benjamin more than the other ten sons, is this due to Jacob's preference for Rachel above Leah? (note the absolute "my wife" in Gen. 44:27)
   c. Is the inevitable preference of a father for the children of one wife over the children of the other wife (wives) and the resulting friction in the family a judgment of God upon the sin of bigamy and polygamy?
   d. Does it denote a radical, spiritual change in the sons of Leah and the concubines that, in distinction from their attitude over against Joseph, once, they are not irritated by Jacob's greater love for Benjamin?
3. Note the fulfilment of Joseph's dreams concerning his brothers' subjection to him. (cf. Gen. 37)
   a. They literally bow to him not once but several times.
   b. Even after they know him to be Joseph, they willingly prostrate themselves before him, acknowledging their servitude. (cf. Gen. 50:18)

B. The brothers.

1. What evidence is there both in chapter 42 and in subsequent chapters that the brothers have changed spiritually?

Questions: 1. Was Pharaoh converted to the true God by this experience, or does he merely refer to God as one of the many gods? See vss. 38, 39.
2. Did Joseph adopt the religious practices of Egypt, or did he remain a true stranger in the land?
3. How could it be right for him to marry a heathen wife?
4. What significance does this

have for us that God so plainly carries out His counsel in Joseph's life?

a. Does their readiness in vs. 21 to associate their present affliction with their sin against Joseph indicate that, already before this time, their consciences troubled them in the matter of Joseph? Or, is their reference to Joseph in vs. 13, "one is not," a deliberate lie, indicating that they, at this point, continue impenitent?

b. What does their immedate ascription of their troubles to God (vs. 28) signify?

c. Vs. 21 fills in a detail that chapter 37 omits — Joseph's intense and pitiable anguish when his life was hanging in the balance and while he was bartered. It serves to heighten our impression of the coldbloodedness of the brothers at that time and to point up the remarkable conformity of Joseph to Jesus Christ at this time when he could but does not avenge himself.

2. Does Reuben's resume (vs. 22) of his speech in Gen. 37:21, 22 accurately describe Reuben's motives at the time of the selling of Joseph?

a. Does not Reuben imply now that he had been concerned simply about Joseph and the sin of murdering him?

b. But does not Gen. 37, especially, vs. 30, indicate selfishness on Reuben's part, the ulterior motive of fearing, as the firstborn, to give account to Jacob?

c. Or, must we read Gen. 37 in the light of Gen. 42:22?

3. Some speculate that Joseph deliberately selected Simeon to remain in prison since Simeon had been the ringleader in the persecution of Joseph. This would naturally intensify in the brothers the conviction that God was chastising them for their sin against Joseph.

C. Joseph's dealings.

1. Why does Joseph so severely afflict his brothers?

a. What instances of this affliction can you cite in this chapter? in chapters 43 and 44?

b. What evidence is there in the chapter that Joseph, amazingly and by the grace of God, is not motivated by a desire for revenge?

c. Can Joseph, by this method, be finding out something concerning the brothers? Is he, possibly, playing the pedagogue? If so, what does he teach?

2. Through Joseph, what does the *Lord* d. to the brothers?

(It is worthwhile to put yourself in the brothers' shoes. Suppose yourself to have a clamoring conscience to begin with – the sin of selling Joseph had not yet been thoroughly confessed. Next, threatened with death by starvation, both personally and your family, you make a long, arduous trip to Egypt where the "sultan" not only hesitates to supply the all-important foodstuffs but accuses you of spying, a crime that means quick execution. Then, three days in prison to contemplate past sins, an uncertain future, and the painful prospect of taking Benjamin away from Jacob. The whole of the episode, extended over a year or more, was sore chastisement for the brothers by God, Who *had* heard Joseph's wails and marked the deafness of th brothers.)

3. Why does Joseph insist on his broth bringing Benjamin to Egypt?

4. Why was it a cause of fear that the purchase-money was found in the brothers' sacks? (cf. vs. 28 and vs. 35) Was it Joseph's intention to frighten them with this "refund?"

5. Apart now from Joseph's intention, God continues to make Jacob's way very hard also (Gen. 42:29-38).

a. Does Jacob's remark in vs. 36, ascribing responsibility to the brothers for Joseph's "death," imply suspicion or Jacob's part that the brothers had hand in Joseph's death?

b. What point was Reuben attempting to make in vs. 37? Certainly he did no suppose that the murder of his bo would enable Jacob to bear more easi the possible death or imprisonment Benjamin.

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