

## Runner, the Irish Scrapper

Christian Courier

November 4, 2002

by Harry der Nederlanden

Besides the lectures held in the main auditorium, the conference on Runner's legacy also offered quite a number of short sessions focusing on different disciplines. Three or four would be running at the same time, so there was no way to visit all of them, nor would anyone have the patience to read through such a long report. But no matter, for in CC we will keep coming back to the central themes hammered out by Runner, not because we are his "disciples" but because anyone approaching world events and culture with a Christian worldview will almost certainly have been influenced by the ideas he promoted so enthusiastically. Among the list of organizations impacted by Runner and company, Christian Courier also takes a place.

### Runner No Solo Act

The influence that the CRC community exercises in Canada and the U.S. – through almost any and all of the institutions it has founded and through the writings of individuals these have educated and employed – has to some extent been shaped by the Kuyperian vision of Runner. But, as Seerveld said, "He was no solo act." He was part of a tradition that preceded him and a community that supported him and worked alongside of him. (And Runner was not always easy to work alongside of).

We have often sought to define the nature and the criteria of such influence too narrowly, quickly detecting synthesis, syncretism and nature-grace dualism elsewhere (for the uninitiated: these are all tests for impurities). This, too, is part of the Runner legacy. Runner's son and namesake, invited to speak at the conference, scolded some of us, perhaps most of us, for not remaining true to his father's legacy, for example, by (mis)interpreting Scripture to allow for women in

office and homosexual unions. In this, he was following in his father's footsteps, defying protocol to speak the truth as he sees it. That's a mixed blessing.

Most of us would not want to draw the circle that tight, not any more. During the first week I came to Calvin as a mature student (1967), when I began talking about some ideas of Nick Wolterstorff with some of Runner's boys, I was quickly informed that "he is not one of us." It was one of those moments that lodges in your head. I was

quite aware at the time that Wolterstorff was not a “Dooyeweerdian,” but I felt quite sure that he was indeed “one of us.”

### He Relished A Good Intellectual Scrap

There was a little of the Irish scrapper in Runner. He relished a good intellectual scrap, and he could get in some pretty good licks at “those other guys” teaching down the hall or in the seminary. And many of us imitated him; in fact, some of us became caricatures of him, attacking other professors in the classroom when they committed a dualism. Some of this was not bad – the stuff of academic debate since scholarship began – but some of it was. Some of it was sectarian.

But this does not belong to the heart of Runner’s teaching, which was ecumenical in the best sense of the word. Although ecclesiastical creeds might continue to divide Christ-believers, Runner believed that if Christians were directed by biblical principles in the field where they worked, they would soon discover the true source of their unity beneath denominational differences.

Although technical Dooyeweerdian philosophy has not traveled far beyond Dutch Reformed circles, the worldview emphasis in which Runner excelled did. Men like Charles Colson and John Bolt work cooperatively with predominantly Roman Catholic thinkers, for example. Christian colleges of various traditions in North America are looking to Calvin as a model and adapting an academic structure rooted in worldview thinking. The International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education has been led by two men, both associated with Dordt College, John Vander Stelt and John B. Hulst, who were gripped by the same vision, and IAPCHE has encouraged Christian scholars in Africa, Latin America, India and many other parts of the world.

As it becomes global, “Runner’s legacy” will almost certainly change, for if it is indeed a part of God’s mission, it is the legacy, not of Runner’s spirit, but of the Holy Spirit. So let it be.

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Runner Conference Reflects On A 50-Year Legacy

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by Harry der Nederlanden

Over 40 years after they sat in his classes as students, they still speak of him with deep emotion – and gratitude – for the profound impact he had not just on their academic careers but on their lives. Some 75 scholars and others gathered at Redeemer University College on October 4 and 5 to reflect on the legacy of Dr. H. Evan Runner. The conference, planned after his death last March, was sponsored by the Institute for Christian Studies (in many ways fathered by him), Redeemer, King’s, Dordt, Trinity and Calvin colleges, where he made the halls resonate with Calvinistic philosophizing for 30 years.

Although it was planned primarily as a conference at which scholars from different disciplines would speak of the influence of Runner’s ideas (openly borrowed for the most part from Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd), the organizers also scheduled an evening tribute or thanksgiving service for the man, which drew several hundred additional people from the area. Calvin Seerveld, recently retired from the ICS, led the service with a meditation on Isaiah 54 and Jeremiah 31

In his reflection, Seerveld drew on the Old testament passages to remind us that it is necessary for followers of the Lord to feel estranged, excluded, at odds with their time. Yet, those Israelites who were captives in Babylon were told it is a time to sing. “God tells Jeremiah,” said Seerveld, “that it’s time to stop blaming others and to become a tsadik, giving out love and ideas.”

Runner, he suggested, was such a tsadik, and the presence of so many children of faith testifies to the truth of God’s promises in Isaiah that he will bless the faithful. Hebrews 11, however, is not a list of heroes but of misfits. And we will be similarly blessed, not by living out of a Christian philosophy or worldview, but out of Jesus’ resurrection and the hope of his coming again.

### Prophetic Contribution

Gerald Vandezande, former Public Affairs Director of Citizens for Public Justice, celebrated Runner’s prophetic contribution to the early days of CPJ. He proclaimed an integral cultural vision that called for radical redemption and restoration of human affairs. He taught us, said Vandzande, that the most fundamental battle is not for the conservation of the church but for human society in its totality. He quoted from a speech Runner gave to the CLAC in 1967:

The most fundamental battle of our time is not to be thought of in the first place as one for the preservation of a familiar and so-called orthodox church organization, or of an abstract system of theological propositions. The struggle of our time goes much deeper: it is a struggle for the religious direction of human society in its totality.

## The Battle Of Our Time

“The battle of our time – as indeed of any time – is to determine which spirit is to give direction to our civilization. A church organization, or a world of Christian theological activity, standing alone within a culture all the other activities of which are directed by an anti-Christian spirit must remain impotent and has become irrelevant, and it will in the long run fade away. Even to preserve the organized church therefore we must fight for an integral Christian society.

Either there is a quickening of faith, which senses the religious unity of life, or there is the quiet accommodation, in almost imperceptible stages, to a way of life which does not, cannot, hear the Good Shepherd’s voice. This is the quiet of the dead.”

Vandezande challenged those present to follow Runner’s legacy and to work for a true pluralism that breaks with the dogmas of humanism. Runner proposed that we develop a society “where the fact of a plurality of faiths ... is recognized, and the totalitarian demand a faith makes upon him who confesses it to give order to the whole of his life will be accepted in a straightforward way.”

Vandezande challenged us to persist “both in the basic direction of our daily life and in the diverse structures of our society.

“This God-ordained responsibility is our common calling,” he concluded. “It is our cultural ministry for the common good.”

Harry Antonides, former director of Research and Education for the CLAC, recalled the early days of the CLAC; in a desire to be led by Christian principles, the founders recognized a kindred spirit in Runner. Twice they invited him to give the keynote speech for CLAC conventions. He sought to instill in all who would listen that Christ is Lord of all and that we are engaged in a battle of the spirits. Those who came to hear him, said Antonides, may not have understood every nuance, but they understood the spirit out of which Runner spoke and they cherished his vision as good news for a broken world.

### H. Evan Runner Chair in Philosophy Established

At the opening ceremonies of the conference, Justin Cooper, President of Redeemer, announced that Redeemer has been given a special endowment to enable it to establish a H. Evan Runner Chair in Philosophy. Last year, the ICS similarly honored Runner, naming a chair in the history of philosophy after him. Bob Sweetman, the first to occupy the ICS chair, gave the summing up lecture at the conference.

The opening lecture was given by Al Wolters, Professor of Theology at Redeemer, who pointed out that he began his career in the chair in the history of philosophy at the ICS intended for Runner. It was Runner, said Wolters, who originally steered him toward philosophy, and he owed to the club mentored by Runner, the Groen Club, the commitment that has motivated him.

Yet, paradoxically, he pointed out, Runner would be regarded as an academic failure in scholarly circles, for he never published anything in his field after his dissertation. Everything he did publish was written for a general audience for speeches at special occasions. Although celebrated as a teacher, his pedagogy was poor: he seldom followed the syllabus (course outline) and he never completed it. In fact, if it hadn't been for the Canadian students, he'd have lost his position at Calvin.

Nevertheless, he had a huge impact on several generations of students, especially Canadians, and he inspired many with a Christian vision of the academic enterprise. What he taught was not so much philosophy as worldview, using this as a springboard to launch students to reform all of culture.

### What Made Him so Effective?

What made him so effective? asked Wolters.

Passion – Runner had a sense of mission, a missionary zeal and a prophetic style. The gospel was envisioned as a transforming power.

Erudition – Runner read very widely, far beyond his fields of expertise – the classics, theology and philosophy – so he could give his students guidance in various fields.

Strategic sense – Runner deployed his “troops” like a general, pointing them toward strategic disciplines.

Personal relationships – Runner established a deep bond with many of his students, creating disciples, counseling them on several levels.

The central themes of Runner's teaching, said Wolters, were not original with him but were borrowed from Dutch neo-Calvinism. His big theme was “Life is religion,” which meant no two realm theology, with reason supposedly neutral. Rationality is not what all humans have in common, because it is shaped by ones religion. What humans have in common is the law order upheld by God's (common) grace. In his faithfulness God upholds the structure of his creation; only the direction of our lives has been deflected by sin.

Runner invoked an overall picture of a constant but dynamic world order moving toward the restoration and consummation of creation.

This vision didn't just inspire academics; his teachings had an impact on Christian schools, the CLAC, the Christian Farmers Organization, as well as on the Christian

Reformed Church, and his influence has extended to other countries as well, to Korea and Japan. By way of the Center for Public Justice, it reaches even into the Bush administration on matters such as education vouchers and public funds for faith-based organizations.

Wolters summed up: "Runner burned with a holy zeal for the coming of God's Kingdom; he was a man of God who testified in person and in his teaching to the powerful grace of God."

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## The Runner Who Did Not Grow Weary

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by Hendrik Hart

H. Evan Runner died, 86 years old, on March 14, 2002 in Grand Rapids. He was one of those people who lived his name: Runner. Isaiah 40 says that God never grows weary and that those who wait on him shall, when they run, also not grow weary. H. Evan Runner lived his life as a runner bearing the torch of the Word of God without growing weary.

### A Spiritual Powerhouse

A little less than a year ago, some of us gathered at Calvin College for the event during which Robert Sweetman officially became the first occupant of the Runner Chair in the History of Philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies. Having this happen in Grand Rapids enabled the aging and frail Evan Runner to be present. As the event unfolded, so did Runner. Strength and vigor came back into him as memories allowed him to relive the years that he ran, bearing that torch. He lasted the whole afternoon and did not grow weary. Those of us who knew him, loved him, and owed so much to him, could easily recognize the spiritual powerhouse that he had been to us.

I first met Runner when in January of 1956 I entered his class in logic at Calvin College. My father had strongly encouraged me to make a course with Runner part of my experience as a student. And “an experience” it was. This somewhat eccentric, driven, and obviously gifted intellectual was not so much interested in the prescribed content of the course, but rather focused on getting us to grasp with our hearts what Nicholas Wolterstorff calls “Calvinism as world reformatory religion.” He taught us how religion in the light of God’s Word reforms all of creation.

The classroom was not enough for getting his students to grasp what Runner was after. Those of us who became seriously interested in learning more about “life is religion” joined his beloved Groen Club. The club was for many years a dynamic gathering place at Calvin College for students eager to study important writings in the tradition of Abraham Kuyper. It was named Groen Club after the 19th century Dutch leader of the “Re-awakening” of biblical religion in the Netherlands. Runner had come to know about Groen, Kuyper, and that body of literature when he had gone to the Free University in Amsterdam as a student. He did not go there because he was, as many have mistakenly thought, of Dutch parentage. His genetic roots were, in fact, Scotch-Irish/Welsh and Pennsylvania Dutch/English. But his spiritual roots came to be those of the 19th century Re-awakening and of the neo-Calvinism of Kuyper.

### Enormously Influential

Runner was an enormously influential and formative spiritual leader, whose charisma sparked a movement among students who heard in Runner’s message a calling that gave them an identity as Christian students. He appealed especially to students from Dutch families newly immigrated to Canada. In their new environment, they needed a new identity. Runner’s appeal to their Reformed heritage spoke to their hearts.

This group of students became, one might say, a large stone that Runner plunged into the lake of Reformed North America, at first focused in colleges related to the Christian Reformed Church (Calvin, Dordt, and Trinity) and later during the turbulent late 1960s, spreading beyond denominational boundaries. The stone made waves, partly because of Runner’s charisma, partly because of the immense dedication among the ever growing number of students. The waves generated a movement now widely known as the Reformational movement. Initially it deeply influenced the Christian Labor Association of Canada and its legal arm, the Committee for Justice and Liberty (now CPJ). And it gave rise to the Institute for Christian Studies, because it gave people with vision for a Reformed Christian university in Canada a body of young eager beavers who came to its conferences and spread its message.

The waves were initially, and for a long time to come, waves of controversy. Runner’s dedication to world reformatory Reformed Christianity evoked resistance. But in an

influential speech in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1974, Nicholas Wolterstorff declared that a Reformational movement was a legitimate, indeed, an essential dimension of the Reformed Christian heritage. He counseled members of the movement to be less belligerent and invited opponents to become supporters.

### Wild Waves Died Down

The wild waves died down with this application of the oil of wisdom. But the ripple effect of waves remained. Runner's call to Reformational religion began to have effect beyond the movements that identified with him. Wolterstorff's affinity with the world reformatory spirit of Calvinism, the growing appeal of the approach to scholarship sought by the Institute for Christian Studies, and other factors contributed to the formation of other world reformatory expressions in the world of Christian academia. Calvin College's freshman program Christian Perspectives on Learning and its Calvin Center are examples of this. In a wider context, so is the Society for Christian Philosophers. These and others can in some sense be seen as blessings related in one way or another to Runner's inspiration even though he himself would have given them a different character.

Runner's impassioned plea for a Reformational embodiment of his beloved slogan "Life is Religion" created tension in the Christian Reformed Church, whose stronger orientation to the pietist and doctrinal emphases of its heritage did not sit easily with the young and inexperienced pace makers of the Reformational movement. Today most of the friction is gone, but some differences still remain.

### Often Misunderstood

The Institute for Christian Studies can today, with some justification, be seen as the most visible institutional embodiment of Runner's re-introduction of Reformational Christianity to the Reformed Christian tradition in North America. ICS is, in fact, unthinkable without Evan Runner as its spiritual father. His place in the history of ICS is so strong that no student can be part of that institution very

long without being introduced to the Runner legacy. All at ICS who take careful note of that legacy and how it has shaped their chosen place of study or work are grateful to God for Runner's version of *The Relation of the Bible to Learning*, as the book containing his classic set of 1959 Unionville summer conference lectures is entitled.

As a more traditional teacher and scholar in the academy, Runner has often been misunderstood. Having been a Junior Fellow at Harvard as a student, he held great promise for a flourishing career as scholar. But his devotion to shaping the hearts of a generation of students, in his eyes a necessity for the formation of a movement strong



enough to support a place like ICS, led him to make a self-conscious decision to put scholarship on a back burner. As one of those for whom he sacrificed career building, I can with hindsight only say that his decision was one that bore much fruit. Runner's legacy differs from that of the traditional successful scholar who has trained a next generation in the inner dynamic of his field of expertise. That is something he did not do. But he leaves a legacy nevertheless, one to which many a Reformational scholar will lay claim as a life changing redirection in spiritual vision. Those of us who thank God for having been given that heritage are therefore deeply grateful to God for the life of Evan Runner. And every institution of higher learning in the Reformed family of colleges whose strongest support comes from the Christian Reformed Church will agree that some part of its current positive identity has benefited from the life and work of Runner.

None of the above, important though it all is, has really deep value unless it touches down into the hearts of people and communities. Runner was blessed by God to have a singular ability to touch people in ways that permanently opened them up to a lasting and living relation with the Word and Spirit of God. I sometimes think that my father may have known that, when I was off to college, I had come to a stage in my still unformed life that was foreign to him. His pointing me to H. Evan Runner in January of 1956 was, seen against that background, an act of love. My father's advice provided me with a spiritual leader who could parent me as a scholar whose commitment to Christ still needed much formation before I could reach any kind of maturity as an academic. And I know I am one of

many who can say that we are thankful members of Runner's academic family in Christ

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Evan H. Runner Dies at 86

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by Phil de Haan

For many of his students, H. Evan Runner was more than just a professor of philosophy at Calvin. He was a mentor, a teacher, a prophet and a father. He was inspirational and confrontational. And he had a life-changing impact on Calvin students that causes ripple effects around the world yet today.

Runner died of cancer on March 14, 2002. At his memorial service, held March 18 at Raybrook Manor, just across the street from the Calvin campus in Grand Rapids, Runner's former students attested to the zeal and zest that Runner brought to his teaching and to their scholarship.

Professor Al Wolters, of Canada's Redeemer University, said simply: "His students were much more than students. They became friends and disciples. I was one of those." Wolters noted that when he finished his thesis at the Free University in the Netherlands, where Runner had also taken his doctoral degree, he dedicated it to two people. One was his father. The other was Runner. "He was like a father to me," said Wolters. "And he was my one teacher, my magistro. I thank God for that.

Harry Fernhout, president of the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Toronto, noted that Runner in many ways was responsible for the creation of the ICS. In the 1950s, Runner gave inspirational leadership to the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (AACCS) in Canada, and he was also the teacher/mentor of virtually every one of the first generation of ICS faculty (Zylstra, Seerveld, Hart, Olthuis, Wolters). In 1967, this Association opened the Institute for Christian Studies, a Christian graduate school where faculty and students explore Runner's vision of an integral, interdisciplinary philosophy as a key component to a thorough Christian contribution to education and culture.

In fact, in April 2001 the ICS honored Runner's contribution to its founding with the creation of the H. Evan Runner Chair in the History of Philosophy, installing Dr. Robert Sweetman as the first holder of the new chair. At an event held on Calvin's campus to celebrate the new chair, which Runner, despite his already failing health, was able to attend, Calvin president Gaylen Byker paid tribute to the strength of Runner's vision for a thoroughly Christian approach to philosophy and noted that Calvin's new core is still shaped by his influences.

Indeed, in 1993 Runner was awarded the prestigious "Faith and Learning Award" by the Calvin Alumni Association. The award is granted by the Association to honor a current or former Calvin College faculty member who has successfully and consistently integrated faith and learning in the classroom. This recipient is a master teacher, making a significant impact on Calvin students in training for a life of service in God's Kingdom

### A Lasting Legacy

The award was fitting for, beyond the ICS, one of Runner's lasting legacies, and the one he nurtured with utmost fervor and verve, is likely to be the students who learned at his side in the late 1950s and into the 1960s. Many of them got an extra dose of

Runner's "life is religion" philosophy via the Groen Club, a student group formed to study in-depth issues related to philosophy, life and religion. Many of those students went on to become teachers themselves, in high schools, but also at a variety of colleges and universities, both secular and Christian. Several are at Calvin, including biology professor Uko Zylstra, a former Calvin student and Groen Club member who spoke at the service.

### Like A School Of Prophets

"Singing 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God' reminded me of the Groen Club," said Zylstra. "It seems like we sang that about every other meeting of the Groen Club. It was a favorite of Runner's. Zylstra noted that in many ways Runner was a prophet and the Groen Club was like a school of prophets. "It's interesting to me," he said, "that many of Runner's students went on to law school. He inspired them to make a difference outside of the institutional church."

John Vander Stelt, a retired Dordt College professor, delivered a brief meditation at the service, noting that one of Runner's favorite verses from the Bible was from 2 Corinthians 12:1: "When I am weak, then I am strong." Said Vander Stelt: "He sensed his limitations and his weaknesses. But he also knew the spirit of the Lord helps us in our weaknesses."

Runner was born January 28, 1916 in Oxford, Penn., and attended West Philadelphia High School and then Wheaton College in Illinois before going on to do graduate work at a number of institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania, Westminster Theological Seminary, Theologische Hogeschool in the Netherlands, Harvard Divinity School, Westminster Theological Seminary and the Free University in the Netherlands. He taught high school English and Latin from 1943-1945 at Eastern Academy in Paterson, N.J. and then taught at Calvin from 1951-1981.

He and his wife, the former Elizabeth Hendrika Wichers, were married from December 1947 until her death in September 2000. They have three children, Evan, Cathy and Jocelyn, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Plans are in the works to hold a conference in the Fall celebrating the spiritual and intellectual heritage Runner left us.

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Dr. Runner Sought to Live and Convey God's Truth

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(Sermon delivered by Dr. John C. Vander Stelt at the funeral service of Dr. Evan H. Runner, March 18, 2002)

One of Prof. Dr. H. Evan Runner's favorite texts, according to his family, is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." A verse he often quoted to me was Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 12:10: "For when I am weak, then I am strong." These two verses were in Runner's life inseparably linked in that the former is the secret of the latter.

### Taken Aback By Curve-Ball Response

According to John 3:1-12, Nicodemus (i) is uneasy about the religious establishment and, therefore, meets with Jesus at night, (ii) knows that the Savior is a godly person, who performs miracles, (iii) is taken aback by the kind of curve-ball response of Jesus that, in order to see God's kingdom, one must be born again, and (iv) is rebuked for his inability to comprehend what Jesus is talking about. Then the Lord said,

No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send the son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:13-17)

Christ twice refers to himself here as "the Son of Man." Also in chapters 24-26 of Matthew, Jesus Christ, on the road and in the desert of suffering, is referred to -

no less than seven times - as "the Son of Man." In both Matthew and John, the Old Testament background for this expression is Daniel 7:13-14:

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approaches the ancient of days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Symbol of Weakness, Source Of Strength

The One “lifted up like a snake” in John 3:14 is the One Daniel envisioned returning in power and glory, the One Matthew and John saw as the ultimate symbol of weakness, the cross, and the One Paul often appealed to as the source of his strength as he ministered to God’s people in the wicked city of Corinth. Precisely in this most extreme form of victimization, a raised cross, “the Son of Man” is the victorious One!

In answer to the question of the high priest, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the blessed One?” Jesus replied, “I am. And you will see the son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Mark 14:62) After the resurrection of Jesus, Stephen, before being stoned to death, “full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’” (Acts 7:55-56)

When he was old and, for Christ’s sake, was imprisoned on the island of Patmos, John wrote,

And among the lampstands was someone, “like a son of man,” dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest,” and “I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one ‘like a son of man,’ with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.” (Rev. 1:13 and 14:14)

### The Verdict

Such is the LOVE of this “Son of Man” that John was compelled to write,

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what has been done has been done through God. (John 3:18-21)

H. Evan Runner knew for himself, and ceaselessly reminded others, that eternal life - experienced now already by all who believe in this only Son of the Father - that such life is, in our present situation, inseparably connected with suffering, weakness, and struggle, and that, because of God’s love revealed in the powerful Son of Man, we are never without hope. This knowledge enabled Paul to say, “What is sown in weakness, is raised in power.” (1 Cor. 15:43) God had said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:8), and Paul’s response

was, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.... For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor. 12:9-10)

The depth of John 3:16 is that God chose the weak, lowly, and foolish things of the world, to “nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him, except to boast in the Lord.” And this Lord is “the Son of Man!”

### Runner Beckoned Us To Illumine The World With God’s Light

This truth Dr. H. Evan Runner sought to live and convey, and this light he beckoned us to bathe in and illumine the world with. This is the secret of the charisma that propelled him, day and night, as father, friend, and mentor. This commitment motivated him to be a loving, at times stinging, gadfly, and to be faithful, not famous. Sensing his limitations, even weaknesses, he appealed to “the Spirit who helps us in our weakness,” as Paul said in Romans 8:26.

His struggle with loneliness, after his wife’s death, and his battle with rapidly-spreading cancer has now ended. Surrounded by his children and their families, his parting from this life was accompanied by songs of grace and life, holding each of his hands during the last day of his life, readings from the written Word, brief conversations with some local friends, and telephone calls from Steve, a grandson in Rock Valley, Iowa, and John Witte, Jr., his last full-time student, in Atlanta, Georgia.

The last time I visited with Dr. Runner was on Tuesday, February 12. During our 35-minute visit on the couch in the living room of Cathy’s house, he expressed his deep gratitude for the love of his family, the privilege of living in the home of his daughter, Cathy, and day and night being cared for by her. He wept when he talked about Ellen, his wife; Mr. Glenn Andreas, his life-long friend; and Dr. Bernard Zylstra, one of his students.

### Expressing His Joy in the Living Lord

During a five-minute telephone conversation I had with him from Sioux Center on March 13, the day before he died, he said that he was ready to go and that Ellen was going to meet him in about 30 minutes. He expressed his joy in the Living Lord and listened to what Christ said in John 14:6-7:

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

In response to his request, I prayed with him, “Now I lie me down to sleep and pray the Lord my soul to keep. Hold on to me, Lord, and to my family, and to all of us.” He concluded by saying with a remarkably strong, though weakened, voice, “Amen. Goodbye. Tot ziens [see you again].”