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**H. Evan Runner: Man of God**

by JOHN HULTINK

H. EVAN RUNNER WAS a character. His personal traits and demeanor made quite an impression on a classroom full of freshman college students about to participate in their first course in philosophy. In my mind’s eye, I can still see him standing there behind the lectern, twirling his glasses and gesticulating. By the time I arrived at Calvin College in the Fall of ’64, Runner had been teaching there for 13 years and had perfected his technique. He was a natural teacher. And what a teacher he was. A gifted communicator.

Runner had no difficulty making our first day in his philosophy class a memorable one. After some introductory remarks about what he hoped to achieve during the course of the semester, he informed the class that what he expected each student to achieve by the end of the term was to submit a paper answering the question, “WHAT IS A THING?” Can you believe it?! How do you answer a question like that? What thing? There are a million things. At first I thought that perhaps it was a trick question. Or perhaps one of those really deep questions a psychology professor once posed to his graduate students on their final exam when he wrote on the blackboard, “Why?”, and left the room, leaving the students to figure it out. After the better part of an hour’s reflection, the brightest student in the class wrote, “WHY NOT?”

handed in his exam paper and later received an A for his effort. It became apparent, during the course of the semester, that there would be no two-word answers to Runner’s enquiry, “WHAT IS A THING?”, when our professor began lecturing about the “structure of creation,” “cosmic morality,” “subject and object relationships,” and “anticipatory and retrocipatory moments.”

Well, at least I had an answer to the question what the difference is between high school and college. And 40 years later, as I write these words and am rapidly moving toward a “higher reality,” Evan Runner has achieved – I now also realize that no one other than God will ever have the definitive answer to what a “thing” really is. I like to think God and Evan Runner have by now had that discussion.

Runner’s classes were never boring. He constantly had our heads spinning, our hearts pumping and our spirits soaring. Runner was a man with a mission. That was another thing that was apparent that first day in his philosophy class. There was something else. Runner had no difficulty making our first day in his philosophy class a memorable one. After some introductory remarks about what he hoped to achieve during the course of the semester, he informed the class that what he expected each student to achieve by the end of the term was to submit a paper answering the question, “WHAT IS A THING?” Can you believe it?! How do you answer a question like that? What thing? There are a million things. At first I thought that perhaps it was a trick question. Or perhaps one of those really deep questions a psychology professor once posed to his graduate students on their final exam when he wrote on the blackboard, “Why?”, and left the room, leaving the students to figure it out. After the better part of an hour’s reflection, the brightest student in the class wrote, “WHY NOT?”

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**Runner, back row, fourth from the left, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.**
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About his experiences at the University of Pennsylvania, Runner stated the following:

"I was becoming a bit skeptical about the meaning of my life. At times the Spirit who propelled Evan Runner understood the terrifying struggle that we are taking here this day."

"Do I dare or don't I dare to let go of my faith?"

"I learned from that later how important it is to understand our deepest conflicts before we speak, sitting among our students. Runner was one of us. He knew our needs before we did; he understood our deepest conflicts before we gave voice to them; he already knew how we struggled in the depths of our being to attempt rational ideas together? And that's what modern rhetoric is unusual in the extreme."

"The students loved it. Here was a man who spoke, sitting among his students. Runner was a committed Christian teaching Christian students at a Christian liberal arts college. When Runner, the professor, stood in front of the class looking at all those students, he saw himself, so to speak, sitting among his students. Runner was one of us. He knew our needs before we did; he understood our deepest conflicts before we gave voice to them; he already knew how we struggled in the depths of our being to attempt rational ideas together? And that's what modern rhetoric is unusual in the extreme."

"The institution that became the exclusive, dominant voice of Christianity in the Western world for more than a millennium, the Roman Catholic church, and in a real sense, our Mother, got it fundamentally wrong. Under the influence of Greek philosophy, the Roman Catholic church developed a view of reality (life) which efectually a means to earn a livelihood for Evan Runner."

"What a day this is to be alive! How full of consequences for the life of future generations! How crucial for all the English-speaking nations, and even, as we hope, for far beyond! We come today introducing into the life of this nation and of this university a more weighty fact: the truth is that for the English-speaking world it is even a new, unheard of kind of institution."

"The emergence of this new thing means that a new concentration of forces is taking shape. It signifies a re-organization of human and material resources to accomplish a task not yet undertaken. There is a realignment with the avowed purpose of carrying out the Christian Mission in higher education in a manner and to a degree never hitherto attempted on our continent. This is a radical Christian proposal for radical times. Karl Marx is justly celebrated for his remark: 'To be radical is to go to the root of the question. Now the root of mankind is man.'"

"Since Marx, all of us are being driven more and more toward the realization that man is now going to have to be centered upon things which previously, if they have been given any consideration at all, have been considered only very incidentally and peripherally. This charting of a new course is so critical to the event we are witnessing here today as an historic event. Events of this kind are to be experienced only very infrequently. ... Today, on this high day of our own corporate life, what high privilege it is to be one of you! Such a rush of feelings and sentiments surges through us, now that we are come to this moment! Above all else, we are grateful to God on high, that He still, at a late hour in our history, graciously grants us the historical freedom to take this significant and decisive step that we are taking here today.
lively divided the life of the Christian into two compartments: the compartments of a) nature and b) grace. Among evangelical Christians this compartmentalization is better known as a) secular and b) religious. Opponents of Christianity never tire of pointing out that "religion" is for the church and, perhaps, for the home. But religion has no place in the public affairs of mankind. Runner radically broke with this dualistic view of life: this idea that there is a domain of nature, the secular domain, where Christians and non-christians have everything in common.

Runner coined the phrase: LIFE IS RELIGION. (The insight underlying this phrase did not originate with Runner; the phrase did.) The assertion that "Life is Religion" is based on the insight that faith is a human function. It is common fare for unbelievers to contend that Christians have faith. Laissevlers, atheists, agnostics, pagans do not. Such is not the case. Faith is as much a human function as is reasoning.

To live out of one's faith is man's inescapable condition. No one acquainted with the writings of Bertrand Russell would accuse Russell of being a Christian. But Russell wore his faith on his sleeve. Russell believed passionately in human freedom, human autonomy. Freedom and autonomy were the shrines at which Russell worshipped. In his book, Why I am not a Christian, Russell wrote an article entitled, "A Free Man's Worship." Is not this Russell's creed when he proclaims: "Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, we seek for that construction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, only to cherish, ere yet the blow fall, the lofty temple of destruction, omnipotent matter."

In an attempt to illustrate his keynote address at the opening of the Institute for Christian Studies is an academic enterprise that is based on a biblically informed understanding of man and the creation. At the heart of this "new" life lies our understanding of the LAW.

I have always considered the most important insight Dr. Runner taught to be his explanation of LAW. In his book The Relation of the Bible to Learning, he writes: "Law is every Word of God by which He has subjected the creation to His will or rule. Thus nothing other than the will of the Sovereign God for creation." It is on this understanding of Law that the Philosophy of the Law-Idea is based.

In an attempt to share his insight into God's law with his audience on the occasion of the opening of the ICS, Dr. Runner stated, "God's Law is God's Word. Because God is God, His every Word is Law. For the very first words of the Bible we hear, 'And God said, 'Let there be' this and that. All such creative words are the Law. The Law is what causes creatures and the whole creation to hang together; it determines the condition of all creaturely existence. It itself is concentrated in the religious Law of life; Walk before Me according to My commandments and live; recklessly and, in the heart of the creation. The Law determines what it means to live before God, or to die before God. The Jews were the people of God's choice. He made Himself known to them; to them He gave Himself. They were His people; He was their God. He was with them and for them. The Law simply gives expression to this covenantal fellowship. It is the Word of the living God by which people of His choice live before His face, by which they are enabled to bring all the potentialities and capacities which God Himself has in human existence, both individual and collective to the fullest and richest possible realization in a service of God. This is the Kingdom of God, and here is the true joie de vivre (joy of life) which makes one to dance before Jehovah."

The example used by R.B. Kuiper who tells the story of the - slightly peculiar old lady who went to visit a friend. "When her hostess disappeared into the kitchen for a few minutes, the peculiar old lady got out of her chair and walking about the salon, found a bowl of tropical fish behind the grand piano. In a sudden inspiration she reached her hand into the bowl, lifted out one of the fish and dropped him tenderly onto the rich carpeting that covered the floor. As she did so she muttered to herself, 'Wicked old woman, keeping you shut up in that little old bowl! I'm going to give you the freedom of this whole salon.'

Runner, who quotes this illustration in his book, The Relation of the Bible to Learning, goes on to note: "Of course, the fish promptly proceeded to expire. Why? Because it had been removed from that law area for which it had been created. And so it is also with man: he can be free to live as man only when he is in the Law-environment for which he was created. That 'environment' is the full range of the divine Law for the creation, is every Law-word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. In this sense, the Law is the condition of man's freedom."

D o you understand, dear readers? Do you comprehend what a priceless gift Evan Runner bequeathed to his students? By comparison, Bill Gates' wealth is but a piece of refuse.

The day young Evan stood in the park, considered his professor's proposal to abandon his Christian faith, and carved his initials into the grand piano. In a sudden inspiration she reached her hand into the bowl, lifted out one of the fish and dropped him tenderly onto the rich carpeting that covered the floor. As she did so she muttered to herself, 'Wicked old woman, keeping you shut up in that little old bowl! I'm going to give you the freedom of this whole salon.'

Runner bequeathed to his students? By comparison, Bill Gates' wealth is but a piece of refuse.

Thankful are they to have carved their initials thereon.

Thank you, dear professor, for taking us by the hand and leading us to that field where you opened our eyes to that exquisite treasure of the relationship of God's Word to learning and to life.

May you and Ellen, dear friends, rest in God. May we meet again, at Jesus' feet.

Runner helped his students to see that our lives are made of whole cloth. There are no seams, no dualisms. Either man stands in service of the true God or he worships an idol. But worship someone or something, he will. Therefore it is imperative for the Christians to discard the false dualism of nature and grace as articulated by the Catholic church. The whole man is religious and life in its entirety is a walk before the face of God, in obedience or disobedience. Nature and grace do not stand in opposition to each other. Faith (grace) is not a super-added gift. It is man's creative condition. At issue is whether that faith is directed at God or at an idol.

The insight that life in its entirety is religion (CORAM DEO), throws a "new" light on our understanding of the entire human enterprise. Once Runner convinced the Christian student that "Life is Religion" and that all men are at heart religious beings serving the true God or an idol, the question follows: "What implications does this have for a Christian worldview, a Christian philosophy? The answer is indeed radical; does indeed go to the root of the question. For fallen man it means that God's revelation of Himself must of necessity form the foundation of all human scholarship. Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd acknowledged this radical belief in their formulation of the "Philosophy of the Law-Idea." The foundation of their philosoph-
What I owe to Dr. Runner

by AL WOLTERS

IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT MY meeting with H. Evan Runner in 1961 represented a turning point in my life. I had just come as a sophomore to Calvin College, and I was at that time a declared agnostic in religion. I had decided to enroll in the preseminary program, in the mistaken belief that studying theology would somehow help me decide whether the claims of Christianity were true. I thought I had figured out for myself that there must be some Divine Being or God who had made the world, but I wasn’t sure whether this was the God of the Bible or not. At the age of 19 I was something of a rationalist, committed to the autonomy of theoretical thought.

What broke through my arrogance were two dramatic events. One was the sudden death of professor Henry Van Til, a man whom I knew only by reputation, but whose book The Calvinistic Concept of Culture had been highly recommended to me by my father. Van Til died after suffering a massive heart attack while lecturing in class. I was not in the class, but the sudden death of this respected man made a great impression on me. I guess it reminded me that the claims of Christianity could not be treated as mere intellectual puzzles, to be decided on by sovereign Reason, but concerned basic issues of life and death which required personal commitment.

The second event was my first attendance at the meetings of the notorious Groen Club, the student club mentored by Dr. Runner. Here I was exposed to the charismatic, indeed electrifying, teaching of this extraordinary professor of philosophy. I have since studied the history of philosophy, and I do not think that I can think of any other philosopher who can be compared to Runner in the religious intensity of his teaching. As a committed adherent of the reformational philosophy of D. H. T. Vollenhoven and Herman Dooyeweerd, he constantly hammered away at the basic point that human rationality is not autonomous, but is self-rooted in religious commitment. This was exactly the message that I needed to hear. I have a distinct memory of this point being explained at one of the Groen Club meetings by the president of the Groen Club at that time, the seminary student Jim Olthuis. He outlined on the blackboard the basic reformational point that human rationality or analytical functioning is one of a number of coordinate functions, all rooted in the religious heart, and that this analytical functioning, though important, was neither the beginning nor the end of the spectrum of kinds of human functioning. Somehow this fundamental point “clicked” in my mind and heart, and in the coming days or weeks I yielded to the claims of the gospel.

Thereafter I was a committed Christian and an ardent “Groen Clubber.” Thus, in the providence of God, Runner’s teaching was a significant factor in my coming to faith.

But it was not only my spiritual life’s direction which was affected by Runner and his teaching. I also owe him the basic intellectual framework which has guided my thinking and scholarship since that time. This is a framework which is decisively shaped by the reformational philosophy of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, a philosophy which in turn was an elaboration of the biblical worldview as understood by Dutch Neo-Calvinism. Runner thus provided me with intellectual tools by which I was enabled to enter the world of philosophy and scholarship in a way consonant with the fundamental life’s perspective of my upbringing in a Reformed home of Kuyperian persuasion. Themes like creation-fall-redemption, antithesis and common grace, life as religion, the good and the true, life as a perspective of my upbringing in a Dutch Reformed home of Kuyperian persuasion. All of this was done in the name of a cool rationality that left no room for passion.

But I am also personally indebted to Dr. Runner. He took a deep personal interest in me, as he did in so many of his students. He became a mentor and father figure to me. When I heard the news of President Kennedy’s assassination on November 22, 1963, my first reaction was to go to his house and to discuss this tragedy with him. In fact, I was at his house so frequently during my last year at Calvin that he and his wife Ellen invited me to move in altogether during the second semester. I became almost an adopted son of the family. Although in retrospect this was a decidedly mixed blessing (among other things it forced me to confront the fact that my revered professor had his failings as a husband and father), it highlighted the strong personal bond which was forged between us, a bond which lasted for decades thereafter. And even the negative sides of this close personal bonding taught me an important lesson: God’s strength is perfected in weakness.

I remember Dr. Runner as a man of God who had an extraordinary impact on my life. I thank God for leading my life in such a way that I met this apostle of reformational philosophy at a decisive moment in my life. He changed me forever.

Al Wolters, professor, Redeemer College

Man of Passion, Man of Conviction

by THEO PLANTINGA

H. EVAN RUNNER deeply influenced my thinking; many of his former students, who gathered at Redeemer College for a conference held on October 4-5, 2002 said the same. We had assembled to explore Runner’s life and legacy. It was an enriching experience.

Runner also influenced my choice of an occupation; I adopted his line of work. My choice of philosophy as a teaching field left me with many opportunities to ponder not just what he taught but also the way he taught it. The two words that come most readily to mind as embodying his teaching method are passion and conviction.

In both his manner and the content of his teaching, Runner swam against the stream. During my student days, it was widely believed that professors ought to remain cool and detached, neutral, objective approaches to lecture, cool and distant. They were supposed to be “objective” about everything. Professors were not so much in the business of asserting this or that or stating their convictions as seeing what was clearly the case, and perhaps pointing out to others who were capable of “seeing” it as well. All of this was done in the name of a cool rationality that left no room for passion.

Runner was the very antithesis of such a detached, neutral, objective approach to scholarship. In this regard he was reminiscent of Augustine (354-430), that passionate and deeply committed church father whose thinking has so deeply influenced the Calvinist tradition. Runner used to teach a course on Augustine, which I was lucky enough to take. In that course he became passionate about Augustine’s passion.

Other comparisons come to mind as well. Runner himself might have been uncomfortable with the analogy, but I cannot help but think of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) and his insistence on passionate intensity as a characteristic of genuine Christian religiosity. I would also point to Kierkegaard’s famous determination to “make things difficult” in an age when leading lights all around him were making things easier (see his Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 164-6). Runner, too, made things difficult for people, especially his students; often he wound up challenging them in a way that eventually led them to change their lives. Old goals would be abandoned, and new ones taken up.

I was quite young when I sat in his classes; I was only 17 when I started, and not yet 21 when I finished my studies at Calvin College. Young though I was, I remember being profoundly impressed by the passion and energy of the man, especially the way his rhetorical power grew as he got further and further into a lecture. He would start out modestly, and then it was as though he was set on fire by his own speaking. This process of self-energization is not something one can easily duplicate.

I find that in my own teaching I need to build up motivation, fire, conviction and passion for my topic beforehand. If I walk into the classroom with a low-key attitude, perhaps because I am preoccupied by other issues that were discussed in a committee meeting that just before my class, I will not be set afire out of it by my own words. But Runner seemed to carry within himself certain reserves of fuel that he could tap as the evening wore on and the lecture grew longer, with the intended dismissal time already behind us. A few folks might look impatiently at the clock, but Runner, on such
Have we, his former students, picked up the torch from him?

College. And although I had enjoyed good health and energy levels throughout my adult life, I was finally laid low by prostate cancer, for which I was taking a two-month course of radiation treatments. At the same time, I was trying to keep up my full teaching schedule. It worked, to a degree, most of the time. When I started out, friends in my cancer support group asked me whether I planned to drive myself to treatments, being that I was not considered too exhausted, as they had been when taking radiation. I told them that I not only planned to drive, but that I was just as eager to pass on the torch, to speak. And those former students were close to my heart. I recall a Sunday evening back in about 1965 when I entered Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, where Runner was then a member, and sat next to him. There were theatre-style seats in the church, and so I did not have the option of leaving a respectful distance between the esteemed professor and his humble student. I greeted him quietly and tried to prepare for worship. At once his passion for “education” these days, rather what I came to know of him personally over a period of nearly forty years.

Runner: The man and his message

dents sometimes clashed with one another on a rather basic level was also a sad difficulty that made it hard for him to draw up the balance sheet of his life. Should he side with one group against another? Or was old age the time to be magnanimous? These are not easy questions.

Could it be that his passion and conviction were also, to some degree, his undoing? Could they have led him to suspect a kind of personal betrayal when some of his former students followed theoretical paths of which he did not approve?

I remember that when members of my family would sit up late at night in my parents’ living room and thrash out issues, my dad (born the same year as Runner, and of the Kuyperian stock that Runner so much admired) used to get up at a certain point and announce that we would not be able to solve all the world’s problems that night, and therefore he was heading off to bed. We all need rest. Perhaps Runner also came to such a point in the end, knowing that tomorrow would be another day. But one day there would come a tomorrow when he would have to leave it all in the hands of a new generation. Wondrous, indeed, are the ways of the Lord.

Theo Plantinga, professor, Redeemer College

by KERRY HOLLINGSWORTH

ONE NEEDED ONLY to have spent five minutes in dialogue with Prof. Runner to be gripped by the singular passion that animated all that he did. Runner was typical of the way that Runner evoked during his career ran from the most important to the least important point. In summary, I will comment on the theme of the antithesis, an idea that was often misunderstood not only by the majority of Runner’s critics, but, on occasion, also by some of his followers as well.

FROM THE FIRST day of a long and close relationship with Runner I was struck by his encyclopedic grasp of the issues on an extensive range of subjects. It took a mind of enormous agility to be able to hold before it the breadth of the theoretical complexity that he typically presented for consideration. Further, he not only presented a prodigious range of material, but he often managed to convey that material through the medium of six different languages. He always showed his audience how to think about those issues by first tying them to the concrete realities from which they emerged, and secondly, by pedagogically moving from the most important to the least important point. In summary, he provided an incredibly broad-based, real education to his listeners and readers alike.

Indeed, contrary to the narrowly abstract and highly technical pursuits that pass for “education” these days, the way Runner presented things was seen to be so “out of joint” he was considered rather “odd” by many of the faculty and students alike. And
of course, he was odd, but seldom for the reasons offered. It was highly unusual for a teacher to grip the hearts and lives of students the way Runner did. It was highly unusual to remain influential through lifelong relationships with many of his students. It was highly unusual for one man to be able to unite a widely divergent group of students into a “Grooten Club,” and then into an Association For Reformed Scientific Studies, and then into an Institute For Christian Studies. But then, Runner was a highly unusual individual, but for all the right reasons.

As he allowed it, it was evident to me that this was a man gripped by a simply profound vision, the origin of which lay in a profoundly simple conviction. Runner’s penetrating insight into the order of things, and the charismatic authority with which he articulated this vision, was rooted in the unwavering conviction that there’s an absolute rule for all life, the unquestionable standard against which all things must be measured. For Runner, this is not only Runner’s case, but not in the most complicated and difficult questions of analysis, and not in the most trying times of his life. It was from this conviction that the core of his convictions followed, that all coherently meshed with each other, and that in each case called for a coherent response.

1. NO CONVICTION

was more fundamental to Runner’s life and work than the affirmation of the scriptural revelation of the heart as the root unity of human existence. It’s a theme repeatedly stated throughout all of the scriptures (cf. Prov. 4:23 “Out of the heart are the issues of life,” Psalms 33:15 “God has formed the hearts of all men”). This central idea that all things created find their concentration point in man’s heart, was of such certainty for Runner that he never failed to underscore its importance. Search any of his writings, listen to any of his speeches, recollect any one of his class sessions, and you will be confronted with this theme in a dozen different ways. Having spent some time recently working through his research materials, his notes, and personal papers, I was struck by how this theme flows throughout all his work. For Runner, this scripturally informed insight into the way that the process of man’s response to the order of creation was worked out in the life of the nations provided access to the real meaning of human experience that was simply not possible by any other means. And, having been gripped by this insight, it utterly reconstituted his vision of the order of things.

For Runner it was no longer possible to look upon the creation order and simply call it “nature,” or other expressions which reduce the richness of creation to some naturalistic idea. It was no longer possible to see man simply as a “rational animal,” some form of “organism,” the chance combination of elementary particles, or even the interaction of body, soul, and spirit. It was no longer possible to see the actions of creation as simply “the will to power,” the psychological drives of a “collective unconscious,” the convergence of economic interests, sociological interests, ethnic or national interests. It was no longer possible to see in the many divergent forms of analysis about the actions of mankind, Platonism, Scholasticism, Marxism, Subjectivism, Pragmatism, and a myriad other isms.

And it was certainly not possible to simply and uncritically embrace the historically formed cultural conditions of the present moment be they educational, social, political, economic, legal, aesthetic, or even ecclesiastical. Why? Because it followed that if you once understood that the life of man in the creation order of God was always either obedient response to the law of God, or rebellious disobedience, then even the simplest analysis of the human condition would immediately reveal all of those attempts cited above to reduce creatively life in God’s chosen place for man to nothing more than his so-called “natural” or “physical” side. For Runner, there was no question that man outside of the agreement between God and his creation in Christ would “naturally” persist in multiplying endless schemes whose real origin was always to be found in the “natural” structure of the “natural” world, and whose declared purpose and goal was his own self aggrandizement. The fact that any real engagement in the world always reveals this latter sort of behaviour, was for Runner proof that the natural man will indeed pursue any path, no matter how unproductive, no matter how destructive, provided that it is not that path lit by God’s Word.

Similarly, despite the best intentions of many, despite the fact that the “natural” man was capable of achieving all manner of good, and despite the fact that even after the fall man was still aware of God, the historical record in any given area declares that the “issues of life” that proceed from a darkened heart will invariably be a way of life opposed to the followers of The Way, The Truth, and The Life.

Runner was particularly sensitive to this never-ending battle between the Two WAYS. What became obvious to him was that the real goal in all this “natural” activity was, at bottom, a sophisticated way of avoiding confrontation with the Creator.

It was his sensitivity to the spirits of the age, and his rigorous insistence upon always grasping, maintaining a clear line between a sterile intellectualism that insists on declaring Religion out of bounds, and Runner’s insistence that in fact All Life is Religion, including the analysis, that often drew reactions from his critics. However, what was clear to Runner was that to many others often opaque. I believe that Runner was so gripped by what he saw as the transparently compelling truth (that the Word of God’s radical, technical theme) that he tended to assume that it ought also to be clear to those he debated. This of course was not always the case. In fact, if one reads in print the public debates that Runner pursued, for example, there was seldom a real meeting of the minds. Even Runner’s supporters assumed that he had won the day, his detractors assumed the contrary. The upshot was that neither side really learned much. While the passivity of the casuality to both sides was the failure to grasp what Runner considered to be one of the most important and far-reaching conclusions of the scriptures. At the same time, I witnessed on numerous occasions his bewildered frustration at the apparent inability of a number of otherwise Christian thinkers to move beyond their highly technical intellectualistic mode of discourse to the admission of any sort of religiously grounded position. It sometimes appeared that the message between the lines, so to speak, was that any time Runner began to stress the idea of deep level analysis, he was immediately dismissed as doing little more than “spiritualizing,” while his critics claimed to be practicing “real philosophy.” While cultural background and problems of tradition often obscured attention to the real issue, there was, always something intuitively powerful in the call to focus one’s thought and actions upon their ultimate ground. For those unsure of the nature of that ultimate ground, the experience of confrontation could be profoundly unsettling.

As most of Runner’s colleagues had received their graduate training in secular universities where the very idea of a religious grounding to their respective disciplines was not considered, it was little wonder that many reacted so strongly. In a more perfect world one might argue that such reactions says more about their failure to confront themselves, than their success in confronting Runner. Whatever the case, I believe that no Runnerian theme needs more attention, research, and application than the idea of the heart as the concentration point of the life of man in the creation order of God.

2. PROF. RUNNER’S second conviction to do with what he saw as the transparency of the creation order. With breathless repetition he affirmed that analysis must begin with the recognition of the world as given in everyday experience, or there would simply be no limit to the fabrications that a natural heart would conceive. To see the proof of this pudding one needs only to examine any particular chunk of the contemporary world. In every case one is always presented with a multitude of conflicting answers. These conflicting answers to the nature of the phenomena in question emerge from a multitude of “faith communities,” each attempting to give expression to their respective views of the creation order. Again, for Runner, it was obvious that if man refused the scriptural view of creation, that man would create the world in his own image. In such an affirmation then, you find the reality not only Runner’s profoundly simple faith, but also its simply profound consequences.

Following from the above was the connected insight about the creation order as that context in which man, the creature of God, was to live, move, and have his being. Prof. Runner insisted that as this was God’s creation, there was necessarily a definite order to things, which meant there were limits to the realm of what was possible of things. Such limits circumscribed the boundaries of a man’s, a society’s, or a nation’s actions. They similarly circumscribed the boundaries of the activity construction. Regardless of what all the forces of the modern world told him about the outmoded nature of “traditional” or “Christian” thinking, he remained immovable in the conviction that the Word of the Lord would abide forever, and that long after the latest cultural trend or theoretical fad had inevitably run its course, there would be the structure of creation “reverting itself,” as Dooyeweerd had said, upon all those who were seek to transgress its limits.

Again, the clarity with which Runner himself saw the creation order, as well as the clarity which he thought was evident in the creation order those who had eyes to see, was rooted in this simple faith in the Word of God. Did not the Word make it clear in the opening remarks of the letter to the Romans that even
though there are many things about God that we cannot comprehend, there are nevertheless certain essential elements such as His divine nature and His eternal power that God made manifest in the creation order in such a way that it could be “clearly seen” (Ps. 14:5). Indeed, what God has made manifest about Himself is so “clearly seen,” the scriptures declare, that all men will be held accountable to God on the basis of that manifest clarity. And if the clarity of the creation order is not manifest either to our ordinary comprehension, or to the strictures of philosophical analysis, the problem does not lie in the murkiness or obscurity of what God has made, but rather, according to the scriptures, in the fact that men “will not have this God to rule over them,” and hence will find any conceivable way to “hold down the truth of God in unrighteousness.”

In these things Runner passionately believed, was passionately committed, and passionately declared. In fact he simply could not understand why the clarity of these matters was not obvious to every committed believer. I remember him many times shaking his head with a quizzical look, wondering, “How can they not get it?” The “they” was usually some individual or institutional spokesman who had taken him to task for allegedly not sticking to some purely technical philosophical point. Such sterile intellectualism always frustrated and grieved him profoundly. It was in these moments such as these that Runner confessed the childlike faith of this philosopher.

3. IF THE HEART is the concentration point of human experience, and if that experience is to be given form “coram Deo” in God’s creation, then there followed the conviction that the practice of life should be related to God’s people in the creation order placed them at

to deal with a concrete historical reality.

Nevertheless, for Runner, there was an important reason for proclaiming that “we ought to be developing a distinctive Christian philosophy, distinctive Christian political parties, Christian labor parties, Christian schools, Christian newspapers,” and the like. And that reason was, that such endeavors ought more properly to be seen as an end result rather than an up front principle. The concept of the antithesis was not some abstract principle that could be isolated as a “doctrine of separation” to whatever cultural formation one happened to run into. A given community does not become separate by virtue of some arbitrary principle imposed on it at the beginning of its formation. Rather, if we are living as true citizens of God’s creation, or, to use that word that Runner so much loved, as “citizens of the Kingdom,” then, more properly to be seen as whatever cultural horizon that the debates over that world stage with a view of that world that would be truly healing to the nations. By calling for such a position he was offering a view that truly penetrated to the heart of the matter, in whatever area that matter may be found.

IN CONCLUSION, H. Evan Runner was truly a unique man for the reasons above and a great many more besides. If what I have suggested above about these basic biblical themes is correct, then the fact that Runner is unique in the clarity with which he both held, and articulated these themes ought to raise a large red flag. If it is true that Runner struggled all his life to convey not only an utterly radical vision of the order of things, but also the radically systematic Christian philosophy of his teachers D. Th. Vollenhoven and Herman Dooyeweerd, then we need to ask why such commitment, energy, and insight has not had a greater impact on either his immediate Reformed community, or the Christian community at large.

Similarly, if we ask, whether the present state of those colleges which call themselves Christian exhibit the sort vision, and the sort of coherent systematic analysis that Runner spent his life calling for, then one can only conclude that there was so little evidence of this comprehensive Christian philosophy that Runner experienced was not at all to him. Runner’s critics were so caught up in the shock of his position that they underestimated the necessity of broadening their cultural horizons, and Runner was so caught up in his convictions that they should be correctly confronting the insights outlined in the first two sections above. Strictly speaking, then, the idea of separate Christian endeavors ought more properly to be seen as an end result. The great deal of bad press, that press resulted not so much from any confusion of ideas, but rather from the fact that it was so easy to take advantage of the “American mainstream.” That some young upstart Easterner had the gull to suggest that perhaps we should not only confront the religious foundations of their general cultural position, but also take the chance of them isolating themselves Christian, and so forth.

Runner in 1960 with Van Riessen, Rookmaaker and D. de Wit.
A Man to Remember; a Vision to Cherish

By HARRY ANTONIDES

H. EVAN RUNNER LEFT AN indelible mark on generations of students who took his philosophy courses at Calvin College, where he taught from 1951 until 1981. But less well known is his influence on the Christian Labour Association of Canada, a struggling organization founded at about the same time as Dr. Runner began his career at Calvin College. What brought the fledgling Canadian labour union and the American college professor together tells a lot about the vision that motivated this inspiring and gifted teacher.

Dr. Runner was hardly your average American college professor. Instead, his worldview had been shaped by the Bible and a school of Christian philosophy developed in the Netherlands. He was convinced that the Christian faith is not merely one dimension of life (among others) reserved for religion, like a special section devoted to matters of “religion.” For Dr. Runner, God’s Word, revealed in the Scriptures and incarnated in Christ, is the power of God by which everything exists and derives its meaning. This starting point implies that all of life is to be seen as service of God. There is no neutrality, or division between the so-called worldly and spiritual things.

As he would say in his characteristically succinct way: “Life is Religion.” Accordingly, every aspect of our existence in the world is to be seen as service of God. Life (among others) is reserved for religion, like a small section devoted to matters of “religion.”

For Dr. Runner’s consistent encouragement, management and advice we received from Dr. Runner between Vollenhoven and Glenn Andreas.

grown up with a dualistic notion of the Christian faith that a radical, all-inclusive understanding of biblical religion is true. Yet many students were captivated by the spirited teachings of this professor of philosophy. In the meantime, the CLAC had been founded, mostly by immigrants from the Netherlands who had been nurtured in the belief that our daily work and the affairs of a trade union also come within the purview of Christian service. There was an immediate rapport between the Christian trade unionists and Dr. Runner who saw that this newly founded organization was a real-life application of the worldview he was teaching in his philosophy courses.

The first years of the CLAC were difficult, but the work was begun in faith and hope — also in fear and trembling. There was a lot to learn about trade unionism in Canada, and large obstacles to overcome. One of the difficulties was that trade unions in Canada, apart from the Roman Catholic-inspired unions in Quebec, were deemed to be non-religious, neutral organizations. Unions, so it was thought, were merely bread and butter organizations to advance the material interests of workers, which had nothing to do with religion and faith. Consequently, the first applications of CLAC locals to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for official recognition were dismissed. The stumbling block was that references to biblical social principles in the CLAC’s constitution were considered to be discriminatory. This resulted in several years of delay, internal debates and divisions within CLAC.

My purpose here is not to get into the details of that controversy, but to explain why the encouragement and advice we received from Dr. Runner was badly needed and deeply appreciated at that time. Most of us were not college educated and did not know much about philosophy. Nonetheless, we were immensely helped by Dr. Runner’s consistent encouragement, given at private gatherings and at public meetings. He was the keynote speaker at CLAC’s annual conventions in 1963 and 1967. On these occasions he would explain how worldviews, as shaped by one father or another, determine people’s deepest convictions about the purpose of life, morality, and everything else that matters.

In his address to CLAC’s 15th anniversary convention in 1967, Dr. Runner expressed his gratitude and admiration for what had been accomplished and urged his audience to persevere despite setbacks and opposition. This speech ranks as a classic Christian analysis of modern times and of the beliefs that lie at the root of Canadian and Western culture. It is safe to say that nothing similar had ever been said at a labour union convention in North America. Here were Christian workers showing a new way to work, and women listening with rapt attention to a learned philosopher who told them that their attempt to raise a Christian voice in the workplace and in society had historic significance.

In his speech, Dr. Runner also pointed out the differences that may be present in a workplace and related to one another in another organization.

Striving to live according to the Christian rule for life does not mean that we Christians have to carry a burden of sin, and to make all things new. But what does all this have to do with the way we work as a nurse, truck driver, electrician, nurse, labourer, or for that matter, a doctor, lawyer, teacher, politician?

In his speech, “Can Canada Tolerate the CLAC?” Dr. Runner spoke of the biblical view of life as an enduring battle of the spirits. He highlighted the difference between living in obedient service to God or in defiance of His will as revealed in the Bible. The implication is not that we should start religious wars all over again. Rather, we should strive for insight into the biblical teachings about justice, truth, and goodness. The summary of God’s law, to love God above all and the neighbour as ourselves, is a command that also applies to the way we work and relate to one another in the workplace.

For Dr. Runner, God’s Word, revealed in the Scriptures and incarnated in Christ, is the power of God by which everything exists and derives its meaning.
for refusing to pledge allegiance to a union whose constitution and practices they could not endorse. They may not have understood all the details of Dr. Runner’s lengthy speech. But they grasped its central theme not to rely on their own power but on the Lord’s faithfulness and on His blessing of work done in obedience to His Word.

Much has changed in the intervening years. It is good for us to look back and honour the memory of Dr. Runner. His prophetic teaching and writings have greatly benefited generations of students and scholars. But as we gratefully reflect on the life’s work of this Christian scholar we should recall that he also inspired and encouraged a community of struggling Christian workers and trade unionists in Canada.

Dr. Runner taught us in his inimitable and passionate way that our lives in the workaday trenches, too, have meaning beyond wages and benefits – as important as these are. In speaking a language that non-academic workers could understand, he demonstrated how Christian scholars can serve those who know that whatever humble task they perform, they may do it as unto the Lord.

It is with deep gratitude to God that we remember and honour this dedicated and gifted teacher who laboured among us. He helped us see more clearly what it means to be a Christ follower in these tumultuous times of great spiritual confusion. May his message given at these gatherings of Christian trade unionists more than three decades ago continue to guide and inspire this and future generations.

Harry Antonides, retired from the Work Research Foundation, lives in Toronto

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A web page of Dr. Runner’s downloadable writings is in the making. The address is:
www.h.evanrunner.com and www.h.evanrunner.org
Look for it in upcoming months.

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A Note of Personal Gratefulness

by CALVIN SEEVELD

H. EVAN RUNNER stopped breathing on March 14, 2002 A.D. Like a patriarch of our age he was full of years (86) and went to be with his Lord. Many of us remember him with deep gratefulness. Evan Runner was used by God’s Spirit to change our lives.

As a graduate of Wheaton College (1932-36) Runner went to Westminster Seminary to study under Cornelius Van Til, who pointed the young Runner to the Netherlands. Runner’s study at Kampen with Klaas Schilder was interrupted by the war years (1939-45); during that time he came to study ancient languages under the famed cultural humanist Werner Jaeger.

But the Harvard experience gradually paled, and after receiving a Th.M. from Westminster Seminary Runner went to study under D.H. Th. Vollenhoven in Amsterdam at the Free University. Prof. Vollenhoven, along with his brother-in-law Herman Dooyeweerd, were deepening Abraham Kuyper’s legacy of Reformation culture at work in postwar Netherlands into a sturdy christian philosophical systematics and historiography of philosophy. Runner received his Ph.D. for a dissertation under Vollenhoven in the Physics of Aristotle, but was imbued with the excited awareness that the Reformation Christian faith was blessed with the gift to permeate many cultural spheres of life.

During my last year as a student of literature and philosophy at Calvin College (1951-52) Runner first joined the philosophy department there with William Harry Jellema, Henry Stob, and Cecil de Boer. The vibrant teaching and unpredictable asides which happened in Runner’s classes that year were captivating. Runner gave colourful sweep to the history of philosophy and related it to the fact that creation is revelation of God which can be faithfully interpreted or undermined by reflective human response.

Runner also took me and my roommate Dewey Hoitenga (who had Runner as Latin high school teacher at Eastern Academy in New Jersey) aside to read Kant’s Kritik der reinen Vernunft in German one night a week in his home, for one semester. The next semester Runner got us to read a Dutch text. He gave students mentoring time.

So I followed in Runner’s tracks and went to the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam to study with Vollenhoven and eventually to marry a Dutch-born woman too. Evan Runner went on to a turbulent teaching presence at Calvin College and

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affected many, many students with the power of a dedicated child of God who wanted to bring christian philosophical wisdom unswervingly into all areas of life.

I remember Dr. Runner as a distracted man when he was trying to mow a lawn with a push mower, as a brilliant weaver of cultural historical background when giving an answer to a simple question, as a single minded person when it came to pursuit of the truth, as a bulwark of visionary support in forming the mind of the Christian Labour Association of Canada.

Runner’s failings were evident to his opponents, but his vision had a saintly perseverance which the LORD has used many times a hundredfold in disseminating the gospel that Jesus Christ alone is the fullness of wisdom and shalom. Runner’s students, Bernard Zylstra, Henk Hart, and James Olthuis (whose photos had places of honour in his Grand Rapids study) were the first itinerant professors of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto.

Evan Runner belonged to an age when education happened with students’ handwriting notes and typewriting papers for courses, in a day when professors did not have to publish or perish if they were inspiring teachers. Runner helped me to know what truly counts in academic work: thorough, wide research using various language sources; looking for an overview that unites specific insights; trusting that the Lord would patiently overlook our weaknesses as we struggled to be faithful servants in scholarship rather than provocateurs or just minding the store.

We who benefited from his life do not need to weep that he is gone to be whole with Jesus. Let us thank God for his life. And may the Holy Spirit refine the work of this gifted man to be a blessing by our carrying on the mission which dominated his life, and do it in winsome, healing ways with a generation which did not know him in person.

Calvin Seerveld, Senior Member in Philosophical Aesthetics, emeritus Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto
What H.E. Runner meant to me

by HENRY VANDER GOOT

OVER THE LAST several days I’ve reflected on what H.E. Runner meant to me. Three overlapping areas of influence on my life stand out clearly. They are Evan Runner as (1) spiritual model and mentor, Evan Runner as (2) teacher and professor, and Evan Runner as (3) friend.

Evan Runner came to us in Grand Rapids, in the Christian Reformed Church, from the conservative Presbyterian wing of American evangelicalism. He had “ticked the ivories” as a young boy at Billy Sunday rallies. He was educated at Wheaton College. He was ecclesiastically nurtured at Harold Ockenga’s church in Boston. He was educated theologically by J. Gresham Machen and Cornelius Van Til at Westminster Theological Seminary. This was the world from which Evan Runner hailed. It was a world characterized by evangelical commitment to Jesus Christ. As I think back on what Evan Runner meant to me, I would say this life-long, life-enduring witness of Christ tops the list and actually sums it all up.

Evan Runner came to Grand Rapids, to Calvin College, in 1951 as a Christian missionary. The Christian Reformed Church had never worn Christ on their sleeves. In fact many in the denomination made a big business out of fighting the fundamentalists. On the most basic religious level, Evan Runner was a stranger in a foreign land. He came to his own but his own received him not. As a student of his at Calvin College in the mid 60s, I confess to feeling quite cool about Evan Runner’s passionate witness to Christ. It was so obvious in how he prayed (so heartily and so spontaneously); in how he played hymns on the piano with such gusto; in how he pursued his vocation as a philosopher/teacher with evangelical zeal and fervor.

This is the very way it was at the beginning in the early years at Calvin College; this is the way it was in the 60s when I met him first between my junior year at Grand Rapids Christian High and my freshman year at Calvin College; this is the way it was at the time of his retirement from Calvin in 1981, by which time I had become his colleague; and this is increasingly the way it was during his final years on earth as an elder spokesman of the so-called “Reformational” way of thinking. For those of us who lived nearby in Grand Rapids, I believe we witnessed an Evan Runner who gradually spoke and said less and less, growing increasingly docile and emotional; increasingly thrown back on the everlasting promises of his personal faith in and commitment to Jesus Christ. Peace like a river attended his way. It was no surprise to me that at his wife’s funeral two years ago, we sang a song which I am sure Evan Runner sang frequently in his youth, “Jesus loves me; this I know; for the Bible tells me so.” I sincerely believe that this passion for Christ undergirded all of the elaborate philosophical and theological ideas Evan Runner taught us. And this too was the reason why he espoused those ideas as passionately as he did. H. Evan Runner could not separate his philosophy from his personal faith. He was a professor of Christ in his life and in his work.

This is also why Evan Runner opted for J. Gresham Machen, John Murray, and Cornelius Van Til, over liberal, UC Presbyterianism. This is, moreover, why he represented throughout his life a quite conservative Christian orthodoxy theologically, though he had become an accomplished philosopher in his own right. Moreover, though a militant advocate of Christian political action, a separate Christian political party, and a separate

Christian labor movement, Evan Runner voted for Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush; he always looked to Jesus Christ and kept his eye on those who cast their lot with him without shame.

Thus, too, passion for Christ is why Evan Runner became the major North American spokesperson of the Christian philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd and D.H. Th. Vollenhoven. (And this is also why, intra the Amsterdam school, Evan Runner preferred the spiritually pious Vollenhoven to the culturally sophisticated Dooyeweerd.)

Evan Runner truly preached Christ and the philosophy as he taught it. He believed fervently that Christ was not against philosophy and that Christ could even be advanced by philosophy in the context of the cultural complexities of modernity. He had a keen sense of what was required of scholarship in our place and time in history.

I believe that the famous Runnerian dictum “Life is RELIGION captures best Evan Runner’s own unique contributions to the Amsterdam school of thought. This theme reflects the evangelical foundations of Runner’s worldview. For Evan Runner philosophy is not about the true, the good and the beautiful. It is not about the margin of Christian excellence, or the Christian version of competence. For Evan Runner it is not about those magnificient “moments of truth” embedded in secular and humanist learning that indicate a common creation shared by all, a point of contact, so to speak. To put it in the old-fashioned lingo of the Christian Reformed Church, Runner was not a common grace thinker.

Rather, for Runner, everything in the final analysis is about the dynamic spiritual push in things towards, or away from, Christ, the center. The spiritual direction in things ultimately determines their meaning. The fact of Christ’s commitment takes precedence for Runner even on the philosophical level. His seminary colleague and friend, Francis Schaeffer, came eventually to “popularize” the Amsterdam school of thought for American evangelicalism. But I believe the unique contribution of Evan Runner to the Amsterdam school of thought is represented best by Runner’s “evangelicalization” of it, by the distinctively Runnerian insistence that we and our works are to be spiritually judged by the motive/motivational direction in which they tend rather than by the great structures they unfold. He taught me this and I stand with him on this insistence more strongly than ever in my life. It is the enduring legacy of H. Evan Runner for me.

Finally, Evan Runner was not only a teacher and spiritual mentor. He was also my friend.

Unionville conference in 1960.

The influence of H.E. Runner on my life stand what H.E. Runner meant to me.

By the sea of crystal, saints in glory stand. Myriads in number, drawn from every land. Robed in white apparel, washed in Jesus’ blood. They now reign in heaven with the lamb of God.

Henry Vander Goot, Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Runners with Henry Vander Goot at Dr. Runner’s retirement from Calvin College in 1981.

He already was that when I was his student in the mid 60s. He advised and comforted me when my mother died very prematurely, shortly after my college years. But friendship came to characterize our relationship increasingly when I became his colleague at Calvin College in the mid 70s, and even more so after his retirement in 1981. For years I visited him weekly at his home on Radcliff. In more recent years after he and his wife entered the Raybrook Manor, and after I left Calvin College for a business career, I saw him much less. But my regard and love for him increased as he modeled spiritual maturity and competency. When I once asked him how he felt about getting older and approaching death, he said to me, almost in the form of a reprimand, “I am fine with God and there’s nothing to fear.” Though he doubted the enduring significance of his accomplishments as a teacher and Christian philosopher, he never wavered about the fact that his life was hid with God in Christ. That indeed is the truly enduring element in what H.E. Runner meant to me.
Remembering Dad

by CATHY COLLINS

H. EVAN RUNNER had many important roles to fulfill in his lifetime. We have many tributes and articles written about him as teacher, scholar, mentor, philosopher, and modern day reformer. I am very proud of the work my father did. As I read all of the tributes that have been written about him I am more and more impressed by his important role in the lives of so many and in the advancement of God’s Kingdom. I am very humbled and honored by what he has accomplished. However, I have a different agenda today. I want to share about and give tribute to H. Evan Runner, “my dad”.

Dad met mom in the Netherlands in April 1947 and they were married on Dec. 16, 1947. Evan W. was born in 1950 and I came along in 1954. My sister Jocelyn was born in 1956. My first memory of my father (in fact, my first memory ever), is sitting at the breakfast table eating Rice Krispies (he liked his with fresh peaches). I said a proper “R” for the first time in my life. I don’t remember how old I was but I was still sitting in the high chair. My next memory is when I was 3 years old. We were moving from Ethel Street to Thomas Street. Mom took all of us kids to the new house to work on getting it ready to move into.

There wasn’t a phone yet, and there were workmen building a fence in back. I went next door to play with some neighborhood kids and mom

said to come home for lunch. I went “home” to Ethel Street, about 8 blocks. Dad was home. I told him that mom had said to come home for lunch so he fixed sandwiches and milk and we ate together. Soon after lunch mom came in upset because I hadn’t come to her at lunchtime and she was terrified frightened. Since she wasn’t able to call she didn’t know I was with dad.

One of the workmen figured out where I probably was. As I dwell on memories of dad, I remember that a lot of our family time centered around mealtime.

Dad always seemed to be there for breakfast and supper and many times even for lunch. He liked to fix breakfast (he made THE BEST soft-boiled eggs on toast on the planet!) and lunch and he always helped “get the coffee or tea”, and we shared our lives over meals. I find it quite appropriate that my first two memories in life include dad and a meal. Dad always helped do the dishes too.

My happiest memories of dad with me as a young girl are of going for walks in the park. We would walk hand in hand and he would stop and point out the flowers and the bugs. He would remark about how beautifully blue the sky was or how lovely the green grass was. Birds, squirrels, and chipmunks were all pointed out and appreciated too. Then he would push me on the swings. I felt like I could touch the sky! I LOVED to go to the park with my dad. Dad loved nature. He found a great inner peace in a bright blue sky, the deep green grass, a gorgeous flower, a sunset of sunrise, the waters of Lake Michigan lapping on the sand, or the vast midnight sky full of twinkling lights; the wonder of God’s creation. He made me “see” it, feel it, understand it, and love it too. Since my dad’s death I sit on the porch glider we used to sit on together and the beauty of my flowers makes me miss my father so much.

When he lived with me the last six months of his life we sat on that glider together as much as we could, holding hands and soaking up God’s creation.

Being “Dr. Runner’s kids” wasn’t easy. We had to present ourselves in a certain way. It wasn’t fun but people expected something specific from a professor’s family. That was the role we played to make his life and work easier. We were also expected to perform well in school. If I got a “B” on my report card, dad wanted to know why it wasn’t an “A”.

Many times dad’s students showed us aside and looked down on us as insignificant and “in the way” since they wanted his attention for the “important work” that they were doing for the kingdom. Well, dad didn’t have a lot of time to spend with us because his work was appointed by God and, yes, it was very important. I missed having that time and attention that I wanted from him. Dad, however, did NOT shove us aside as insignificant or in the way. We were VERY important to him, much more than I realized then. We carry his blood in our veins and he cared for us deeply. He didn’t always know how to show it or express it but he loved us and we were his very important work.

When I was 15 years old I went to my mom and told her that I didn’t think dad loved me. She said, “Oh yes, he loves you very much but he doesn’t know how to tell you. If you go to him and tell him that you love him you will see.” I went to dad and said, “Daddy, I love you”. He started to cry and reached for me and hugged me very tight and said, “Oh Cathy, I love you so much too!” It was what we both needed and since then we have both been able to communicate our love for each other without a problem.

Many of the lessons I learned from my father were taught by example. In the early days at Calvin College, (I was very young and impressionable), dad struggled through opposition and suffered from tension headaches. I watched as he kept on going. He did what he felt God called him to do and he did it with great zeal, despite the struggle. I learned that you do what God asks you to do and He gives you the strength and fire to keep going.

I learned that books were invaluable and reading opened up many new avenues of learning and adventure. Part of dad’s life ended when he had to give up most of his books after retirement. Music was an important part of life. Dad always had classical music on in the house. When dad lived with me I played his classical records for him and we sat together to enjoy them. I learned that people were important. My father could sit next to anyone and make conversation. He was interested in drawing them out. He always asked about their names, of what national origin they were, and about themselves. He was truly interested in people from all walks of life. He did not look down on people but was gracious and polite. He was very much a gentleman. He could disagree with you and you would never know it. Dad was sensitive in nature. If someone were hurt he would be upset. He wanted peace. When he heard a testimony of a non-Christian whose life was turned around and had accepted the Lord, dad was moved to tears. He was deeply troubled by ungodliness.

When the grandchildren were born, dad took on another role. He became Grandpa! My daughter, Kristi, was the first grandchild. Mom and dad
came over often and helped with Kristi who had colic the first three months of her life. Dad was the only one who could get her to burp and hold her in a way that made her comfortable and keep her from crying. This brought about dad telling me that one of his most treasured memories was holding me and walking back and forth in the night with me on his shoulder when I was a baby and I had colic. He did the same with Kristi. He taught Kristi her first word “kijk” which is Dutch for “look”. He pointed out things for her to look at; then he would say, “kijk, Kristi, kijk”. Dad and mom had nine grandchildren in all; Kristi Michelle, Angela Renee, Kellie Nicole, Steven James, Philip Evan, Jeremy Daniel, Michael Jay, Anthony Robert, and Jacob Scott. They had three great-grandchildren, Elisabeth Jocelyn, Skylar Brei, and Legacy Elisabeth. Dad loved all of the babies and he felt a real sense of needing to bring each of them to a realization of who God is and that they need Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

Two incidents towards the end of dad’s life affected me like no other.

First, when my mom was near death she had several times of severe confusion. I had vacation so I spent several nights at their condo to help. One night at 3:00 a.m. dad woke me up to say he couldn’t find mom. We realized that she wasn’t in the condo and as I walked out into the hall to look for her my dad immediately clasped his hands together and bent his head and said, “Dear God, please help me find my wife.” I was SO impressed by that! The prayer was his first thought; not the last one and we should all learn a lesson from him. A nurse soon brought my mom back home. The second was also when my mom was dying. During the last few days of mom’s life, she was bedridden and she did NOT want dad to leave her. Dad spent two days straight in bed holding his wife. He only got up to eat and use the bathroom. In fact at one point I fed him bites of a sandwich so he didn’t have to get up because he refused to leave her. I love and respect my dad for that. What a witness he was to me. On September 16, 2001 dad came to my house to live. My husband, Ralph, and I decided that I would stay home and take care of dad. He had just been diagnosed with terminal lymphoma and the doctors guessed that he had two weeks to two months to live. My dad had dementia and was slowly losing his ability to remember and think. His world was closing in around him and unless he was with someone he had known for years, he was (in his mind) with strangers. He didn’t remember anyone being there to visit after just a few minutes, so he always felt alone. We wanted to make him totally comfortable in his last days. Jocelyn and her husband, Scott, and Evan and his wife, Mary helped a great deal by taking dad for the day or just a meal, and visiting with him at home. Grandchildren came to help out or just visit often. Together we took care of dad as a family. Kerry Hollings-worth stayed with dad many Tuesday evenings so Ralph and I could go out for a bite to eat together. Dad could no longer be left alone. As difficult as those last days were in some ways, I will always treasure the time I had with my father. It was a gift from God for me, because I finally got to spend the time with him that I had always longed for when I was young. We spent hours sitting side by side, holding hands and saying, “I love you.” If we weren’t sitting outdoors on the glider we were sitting on the couch in the living room where he could look out of the big picture window and see the trees, the flowers, and the sky. On March 10, 2002 we had to get him a hospital bed and give him pain medication. We put the hospital bed in the living room in front of the picture window. Dad was conscious until just a few hours before he died on March 14, 2002. My daughter Kristi and her two girls were there and dad kissed them all goodbye. Kerry and Marcia Hollingsworth had stopped to say goodbye and Marcia led us all in singing many of dad’s favorite hymns as he faded. The presence of God was wonderfully close! Evan and Mary, Jocelyn, and Ralph and I were all with him, holding his hands and three of the grandchildren, Angela, Michael, and Phillip, were also there when he passed into glory. A great man of faith had just received his reward. My father was a real person. He was not perfect. My purpose is not to glorify him but to share the stories and give tribute to him and the things that he taught me. He was a very humble man and would shy away from any glory given to him. He never understood the tremendous impact that he left on the world, his students, or his family.

He is greatly missed.

Remembering a Teacher, Mentor and Friend

by HARRY VAN DYKE

AS I MEDITATE ON what Dr. Runner had meant in my life and career, my thoughts are drawn to a number of Bible texts that capture the gist and quintessence of what he taught us.

(1) “The earth is the LORD’s, and the fullness thereof.” These words from Psalm 24 mark a central theme in Dr. Runner’s ministry among us. Over and over again, in many keys and melodies and with many examples, he emphasized the all-encompassing scope of God’s dealings with humankind—first of all in creation, and no less in the work of redemption. Jesus saves souls, hallelujah; yes, and He saves human relationships, human society, the world, the cosmos! Christ is lord over every aspect of created reality and lays claim to all of it. No one who heard Runner could mistake the breadth of his message.

(2) A favourite scripture of our teacher was the verse in Psalm 86: “Unite my heart to fear Thy Name.” This was perhaps the keynote of all of Dr. Runner’s classroom instruction, his guidance of the Grievous Runner’s Classroom, and his public addresses in Grand Rapids, soon in Edmonton, Sarnia, Toronto, and finally at Unionville and Bolton. His mind, heart and soul was attuned to the antithesis in human life, to the ceaseless struggle between obedience to God and rebellion against Him. The civic good performed by unbelievers was for him a gracious providence of God, a token that He had not abandoned His word to sinful destruction. Runner never tired of explaining that common grace, the prolongation of an orderly world, made antithetical living possible and manda- tory. He was trained under Machen, Van Til, Schilder and Vollenhoven, and as a graduate student he studied the early Church Fathers, the New England Puritans, Scottish Realism and, as an antidote, Dutch Neo-Calvinism. This preparation for his life’s work inoculated him, as it were, against “halfness” and compromise. It made him utterly averse to any talk of accommodation and adjustment.

When he was hired to teach philosophy at Calvin College and sat down with a senior member of the Department, he held forth with great enthu- siasm and conviction how philosophy ought NOT to be
taught at a Christian college. This amounted to indirect criticism of the whole approach then current at the college, and the older man took it very ill of the novice. Long before it became common currency, Runner preached the duty to work at integral Christian scholarship. That is not a question, he explained, of bringing together, somehow, the learned scholar and the Christian gentleman. Rather, it is the single-minded and whole-hearted endeavour of the person to think like a Christian from the word go. It is the holy task of grappling from the outset with the fundamental issues and concepts and methodologies of an academic discipline.

It is the calling of men and women who have been turned around in the pivot of their being and who are ready to drop vain imaginations, to surrender every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

(3) Evan Runner studied at Wheaton, Westminster and Harvard. But he also spent close to four years in Kampen and Amsterdam. And from his observation of Reformed life in the Netherlands, as it had been shaped by Groen van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper, young Runner came to the conclusion that the following biblical injunction was acutely relevant in the modern world: “Come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17). It pierced him deep that so many are indifferent to Revelation or oppose its voice in the public arena of North American society. For Christians to engage culture and participate in the life of their nation, he became convinced, they need to act as the Body of Christ and consort together in their own separate organizations. Only here can the Bible, and not the wisdom of man, be the first and foremost source of inspiration and the authoritative compass. Only here can involved Christians sharpen each other’s insights and build each other up. Only here can man-made ideologies be unmasked as unsafe guides and false prophecy.

Of course everybody agrees that organizing separately holds for the church, and maybe also from the school. But Runner hammered it into us that this is a strategy which holds also for the university, the world of labour relations, the media and similar socio-cultural zones. Only in this way, he insisted, can Christ’s Body share its undiluted testimony with a lost and needy world, on an equal footing, in a directly relevant way, appropriate to the life zone in question.

The holder of the Chair will be expected to have a strong record of research and publications that give evidence of a thorough understanding of and ability to represent well this Reformed tradition of philosophy which Runner so eloquently and passionately presented. The Chair holder will also be someone who has the facility to communicate well to students, to fellow academics and to the wider Christian community. Runner hoped to be in a position to announce the first appointment to this Chair sometime later this spring.

The occupant will join a faculty, many of whom are familiar with the name, Evan Runner. At least four current faculty members—Hugh Cook, Theo Plantinga, Harry Van Dyke and Al Wolters—were students of Runner at Calvin and were shaped and inspired by his teaching. Several others—Justin Cooper, Jacob Ellens and Thea VanTil Rusthoven—were taught by Calinic Seerveld, another student of Runner. David Koyzis, as well as Cooper, was a student of Bernard Zylstra, yet another of Runner’s students.

These faculty members at Redeemer are among a whole coterie of pastors, teachers and Christian leaders in Ontario and Canada who passed through his classes and were captured by the Biblical vision of Christ’s all-encompassing lordship over all of life and culture. Hence there are fruitful points of convergence which permeated his account, inspiring students.

It is this vision which is Runner’s legacy, a mission to further and develop. When Runner spoke of the relation of the Bible to learning, it was the power of this message of the all-encompassing scope of Christ’s redemptive work to reclaim God’s fallen creation to Himself which permeated his account, inspiring students to move out and explore various realms of created reality, excising false dualisms and seeking an integrally Biblical understanding.

Since it is dedicated to teaching and scholarship in this tradition, Redeemer will make a congenial home for the Runner Chair, with its focus on training up undergraduate students and fostering ongoing Christian scholarship which benefits from and interacts with his insights. Hence there are fruitful points of convergence that could develop between the Centre and the professor who holds the Runner Chair. All in all, this is a tremendous prospect for the faculty and students, as well as the supporters, of Redeemer University College. The idea of Christ’s lordship over all of life and culture is not new for most of us. What will be new is someone with a fresh passion and vision who can lend this vision new energy and currency in our day, carrying on the legacy of H. Evan Runner into a new era.

Former student endows Redeemer’s H. Evan Runner Chair

by JUSTIN COOPER

Redeemer University College and its students have been given a very wonderful gift. The Runner Chair in philosophy has been given $1,500,000 by an anonymous donor whose intention is to enable Redeemer to honour the memory of the late Christian philosopher, H. Evan Runner, by establishing a faculty position whose holder will work in and carry forward the tradition of Christian philosophy in the line of Augustine, Calvin, Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven that Runner taught to several generations of students in a faithful and fruitful career at Calvin College.

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Dr. Cooper is president of Redeemer.
Runner’s global outreach

IN THE MID-SEVENTIES H. Evan Runner and his wife, Ellen, undertook the momentous task of translating from Dutch into English the 2000 page classic by S.G. De Graaf which became known as Promise and Deliverance. Why would a man of Runner’s stature stoop to do the somewhat lowly and technical work of a translation? Runner’s heart reached out to fellow Christians around the globe. In the introduction to De Graaf’s book he wrote: “Much has been written and said about the renewed interest in Christianity evident everywhere today, especially among young people. In many areas of the world, the issue comes down to choosing between Marx and Christ.”

Runner, who corresponded with students around the globe, realized that few books in the Dutch language would ever be translated to act out of faith toy with the idea of a compromise between Marx and Christ.”

It warmed his heart that Christianity presented its way to the countries he once longed to serve as a missionary. “Wherever men long for righteousness and peace,” Evan wrote in the introduction, “wherever they hunger and thirst to enter into Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Korean and so forth. “I am grateful to God,” Evan wrote, “that De Graaf’s Promise and Deliverance is now being presented to a worldwide reading public.” Runner lived to see P & D translated into Spanish, and during his lifetime, translations were begun into Japanese and Korean. It warmed his heart that Christianity presented itself as a “robust and earthy religion” would now make its way to the countries he once longed to serve as a missionary. “Wherever men long for righteousness and peace,” Evan wrote in the introduction, “wherever they hunger and thirst after Christ, it is absolutely imperative that they make its way to the countries he once longed to serve as a missionary.”

Letters of condolence

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r. Runner was a great blessing for many people and for many institutions. He was an enduring model of Christian piety and prophecy. He was a brilliant teacher and scholar. He was a remarkable mentor and counselor. He galvanized individuals electrified audiences with his erudition, wit, and charm. He galvanized individuals with his passion, power, and patience. He shaped institutions with his charisma, his keen, and contagious enthusiasm. He has left an indelible mark on many bodies of scholarship, and has shaped two generations of students who are now continuing in his tradition – and struggling to keep up with the high standards that he set.

Your father shaped me as a Christian scholar more than anyone else in my life. I your father, who corresponded with students around the globe, realized that few books in the Dutch language would ever be translated to act out of faith toy with the idea of a compromise between Marx and Christ.”

It warmed his heart that Christianity presented its way to the countries he once longed to serve as a missionary. “Wherever men long for righteousness and peace,” Evan wrote in the introduction, “wherever they hunger and thirst after Christ, it is absolutely imperative that they make its way to the countries he once longed to serve as a missionary.”

I am writing to express my condolences and the condolences of the whole Prison Fellowship family over the death of my dear friend and your beloved kind enough to give me the foreword he had written to a book on the life of Abraham Kuyper. It was at a time in my own personal spiritual journey when I was just beginning to read, and as it happened, it was exactly the book the words were needed to read; I became a disciple of Kuyper. You probably already know this from Now Shall We Live?

Introducing me to Kuyper, which has significantly shaped my ministry, was only one of the many things your dad did in my life. Whenever I would be in West Michigan, I got to know your dad during one of my very first trips to West Michigan. He was Dr. Runner was a scholar and teacher of the first rank. He was a much respected member of the Calvin and West Michigan community. But to me, he was more than that; I shall always be indebted to him for introducing me to Kuyper.

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The world lost a great and noble man, and heaven gained a lovely and learned saint. I, for one, shall cherish his memory and legacy. I hope that you will take comfort that he now resides happily with your mother, and will take pride in the extraordinary care that you furnished him in his twilight.

John Witte, Jr., Emory University

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I know how tough it is to lose one’s dad; I lost mine while I was in prison and this remains one of the most difficult experiences of my life. In your case however I shall always be indebted to him for introducing me to Kuyper.
Compiled by KERRY HOLLINGSWORTH

1916, Born 28th January, the only child of Howard and Sarah Watterson- Runner in Oxford, Pennsylvania.

1932, Graduates with Honors from West Philadelphia High School. He writes a section of the Commencement program.

1935, Studied Classical Greek and Philosophy for a year at the University of Pennsylvania. He took copious notes in Philosophy and began to dabble in Syriac.

1936, Graduates with Honors in Philosophy from Wheaton College. He earns an A for a paper on, *Plato’s Concept of Ideas*.

1936 - 1941, Attends Westminster Theological Seminary where he earns a Bachelor's degree in Theology. It is here that he sits under the teaching of Cornelius Van Til, Ned Stonehouse, and Edward Young. Van Til begins to direct Runner’s interest in the influence of Greek thought on a number of the second and third century Theological controversies.

1939, Runner travels to Kampen to study Theology for a year with Klaas Schilder. The outbreak of the War forces him to return after only six months.

1941 - 1945, On the 12th of March he receives an invitation to become a Junior Fellow of Harvard University, a very prestigious position. It is during this period that he becomes an assistant to Prof. Werner Jaeger, at the time, one of the world’s leading Classical Scholars. He maintains a lively and cordial relation with Jaeger right up until his departure to the Netherlands in the Fall of 1945. It is under Jaeger’s guidance that Runner’s lifelong interest in Greek Thought is brought to focus on the influence of Classical Greek Philosophy on the writings of the Early Church Fathers.

1941 - 1949, Publishes seven review articles including books by Dooyeweerd, Etienne Gilson, and Mels Ferre. The latter review precipitates a meeting and a number of cordial letters from Ferre.

1945, Runner is awarded a Masters degree in Theology from Westminster Theological Seminary.

1946, In the Fall Runner leaves for the Free University of Amsterdam to work in the Philosophy Department as a candidate for the Ph.D. degree. His intention is, “to make the history of Greek and Roman philosophy my primary subject.” He subsequently goes on to write a dissertation on Aristotle.

1947, In early February Runner meets Elisabeth Wichers and they are married later in December.

1948, Runner is invited to become a board member of The Christian University Association of America.

1950, The Runners’ first child Evan Jr. is born on May 17.


1953, Begins in the Fall semester teaching Philosophy at Calvin College.

1955, With the public address, *Rudder Hard Over*, on the 3rd of February there were inaugurated a number of very significant beginnings; first, the *Calvinistic Culture Association*, second, a fire-storm of controversy over his remarks, and, in later in the Fall, *The Groen Van Prinsterer Society*.

1953, Delivers the controversial paper, *The Christian and the World: An Historical Introduction to a Christian Theory of Culture*, to the Faculty Board Conference of Calvin College at the beginning of the Fall semester.

1953, Also in the beginning of the Fall semester he delivers another Public lecture entitled, *Cui Bono, To What End Men’s Societies?*

1954, The Runners’ first daughter Cathy is born on October 3.


1956, The Runners’ second daughter Joselyn is born September 6.

1956, As the Centennial celebration of the Christian Reformed Church approaches Runner delivers a public address entitled, *Year of Decision: One Faith or Two?*

1957, Delivers a major essay entitled, *The Development of Calvinism in North America on the Background of Its Development in Europe*, to the Calvinistic Action Association in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

1958, Writes a review of Dooyeweerd’s, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, for the *Westminster Theological Journal*.

1959 - 1960, Delivers the Unionville Lectures, *The Relation of the Bible to Learning*, which are subsequently published through the financial help of his close Wheaton College friend Glenn Andreas.

1961, Delivers the Unionville lectures, *Scriptural Religion and Political Task*, which are also published through the assistance of Glen Andreas.

1962, Writes the article, *The ARSS and its Reorganization*, for the *Calvinist Contact Magazine*.

1965, Writes the significant essay, *Place and Task of an Institute of Reformed Scientific Studies*.

1967, Writes and delivers the stirring address, *Can Canada Tolerate the CLAC?*, April 29, on the occasion of the Fifteenth Anniversary Convention of the Christian Labor Association of Canada.

1967, October 7. Delivers the keynote address, *Point Counter Point*, on the occasion of the opening of the Institute For Christian Studies.


1969, Writes a never to be completed manuscript for the Trinity Invitational Meetings, *Introduction to the Encyclopedia of the Sciences*.


1973, Sensing the less than whole-hearted support from some faculty members at the Institute for Christian Studies, Runner declines an appointment and remains at Calvin College until his retirement. He does, however, for some years travel to Toronto to teach on a bi-weekly basis during the academic year.

1976, Writes the invited article for Calvin College’s *Chimes* Magazine, *Some Observations on the Condition of Calvin College at the Celebration of its Centennial*.

1977-1996, Runner became a very proud and devoted grandfather, beginning with his oldest daughter Cathy who produced two grandchildren, then Joselyn with five, and Evan Jr. with twins.

1977, Runner, along with his wife Ellen, embarks upon a major translation project, the 4 volume work of S.G. De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, in an attempt to provide the sort of material that can radically change the religious heart direction of the body of Christ and hence truly ground the development of a fundamental Christian philosophical insight into the order of Creation.

1977, Writes an article for *The Banner*, April 22, entitled, *Dooyeweerd’s Passing: An Appreciation. Christianity Today* declined to publish the article intimating that it had little interest to its readers.

1979, On the occasion of his 60th birthday Runner is presented with a collection of essays entitled, *Hearing and Doing*, in which he contributes a reflective commentary on his own development.

1979, Delivers a major speech in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, entitled, *On Being Anti-Revolutionary and Christian-Historical at the Cutting Edge of History*, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of *The Anti-Revolutionary Party*, April 3.

1981, In May, Runner officially retires from Calvin College as Professor of Philosophy. He is presented with a book of essays from former students entitled, *Life Is Religion*.


1983, Writes *Christianity In Crisis, for Christian Renewal*.

1984, Writes three articles for *Christian Renewal* on contemporary Church Life.


2000, Ellen, Runner’s wife of 52 years dies on October 13.

2002, After a two year bout with cancer H.Evan Runner goes to be with his Lord on March 14.