

Letters of Condolence

Dr. 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 electrified audiences with his erudition, wit, and charm. He galvanized individuals with his passion, power, and patience. He shaped institutions with his charisma, ken, 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 sat at his feet for four years as a student at Calvin College from 1977-1981 and served as his research and teaching assistant. Thereafter, he tutored me voluntarily for a year in the history of Western legal philosophy – and we read together all the legal classics from Homer to Hegel, which he insisted we critique with the best tools available from the Reformed tradition. He sent me off to Harvard Law School, and remained in close contact with me for the three years I was there. He was simply delighted that I entered the teaching profession upon graduation from law school, and remained for the next fifteen years an avid correspondent and generous reader of my writings. I have a large box full of warm and encouraging letters from him that I shall savor deeply for the rest of my life.

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

Prof. Dr. John Witte, Jr., Emory University

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 father, Dr. H. Evan Runner.

I got to know your dad during one of my very first trips to West Michigan. He was 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 forming my own theological convictions – and as it happened, it was exactly the book I needed to read. I became a disciple. You probably already know this from my writings and particularly from the book I co-authored with Nancy Percy, *How 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, Dr. Runner would be in the audience and frequently greet me personally afterwards. In fact, I always looked forward to seeing him because of his wonderful, boundless spirit and warm smile. Somehow I knew that he was always there praying and cheering me on. On my last trip to Grand Rapids, I did not see him, missed him in fact; it's now clear to me why he wasn't in the crowd.

Evan 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; he was a very dear friend whose graciousness to me had a great impact on my life. I shall always be indebted to him for introducing me to Kuyper.

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'm sure you can rejoice that he lived such a full and rich life, that he has left such a great legacy through his family and his writings, and that he has now found peace, and is happily rejoined with your dear mother, Ellen.

We will miss him, but we can be grateful that he kept the faith, fought the good fight, and finished the course with honor.

Charles W. Colson, Prison Fellowship Ministries