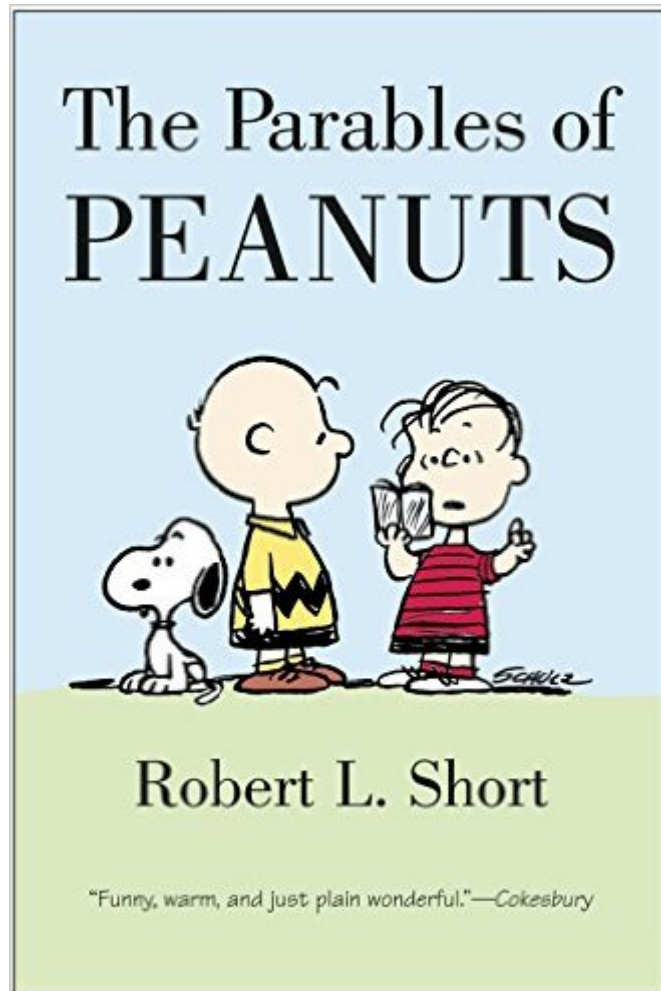


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The Parables Of Peanuts



Synopsis

First published in 1968, this contemporary case for vigorous Christian faith -- profusely illustrated by Charles Schulz's delightful peanuts cartoon strips -- sheds more light on the Christian faith and how it is to be lived than many more "serious" theological works, with hundreds of cartoons featuring your favorite peanuts characters Charlie Brown, Lucy, Linus, and of course, Snoopy (including the earliest red baron strips). This book's wise observations are as timeless as they are timely. "Short . . . succeeds in making theology enjoyable." --Christian Century ". . . a real delight from beginning to end. I could not possibly be more pleased." --Charles Schulz, creator of Peanuts

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Robert L. Short uses Charles Schulz's "Peanuts" cartoons to illustrate his theology, which is broadly speaking, Calvinist. As he is aware, his interpretations are not the only ones possible, but he has the merit of showing the depths of Schulz's work. He cites various thinkers and writers to illustrate his points, such as Kierkegaard, Barth, Bonhoefer, Pascal, Herman Melville, Kafka, Einstein, T. S. Eliot, and Paul Tillich. He takes account of modern biblical scholarship and theology on such things as original sin and hell. It is a very good book, which describes and illustrates many features of human life and the need for saving grace. The fact that I disagree with some of the theology doesn't change that. I will contrast some of his theology with more Catholic views. Short points out that Schulz quite explicitly communicated Christian themes in his cartoons, but knew well he could not impose his own interpretations on them. As Jacques Maritain pointed out long ago, if art is to be Christian, it must be real art. Having read enough devotional and didactic stories and pictures in my

life, I can attest to their general dullness. In great part, I think, Schulz has created real art in his Peanuts cartoons. As Short points out, they say something; they are more than mere entertainment. Short summarizes the freedoms offered by Christian faith: first, the freedom from worship of false gods, idols; second the dreadful freedom of being deprived of being left with nothing to hold on to; third, the freedom of living under the easy yoke of Jesus Christ; and fourth, the freedom to use any legitimate means to spread the message of Christ. This can serve as a summary of the many descriptive themes of the book.

Online reviewers of Robert L. Short's landmark books, drawing parallels between popular culture and the gospels, sometimes are suspicious of his theology -- so let me perhaps re-orient the conversation a little bit. No, not all Christians will agree with Short's theology. It's true that in the middle of this 1968-vintage book, he talks more explicitly about a theme that began to emerge in his classic 1965 book, "The Gospel According to Peanuts." By 1968, Short was moving in the direction that he would land firmly after 2000 -- to a kind of Christian universalism that preaches a strong Christian gospel, but without the threat of hellfire and eternal damnation. Right in the middle of this 1968 book, in a chapter called "Good News of Great Joy," he wrestles with this teaching. And, yes, he even throws a few very pointed darts at hellfire preachers who he calls "vulture-evangelists." Did you half smile as you read that phrase? That's really the strength of Short's books -- making us think about our faith and the culture all around us. I don't agree with Robert L. Short on every theological point -- just as Protestants don't agree with Catholics on every point -- and evangelicals don't agree with mainliners -- and even the man or woman sitting next to me in my pew on Sunday morning probably disagrees with me on various points. But faith calls us to news of great joy and Robert L. Short was the godfather -- the creative catalyst that touched off a whole genre of "Gospel According To ..." books. His most important point is that we all, as people of faith, should engage our popular culture -- critique what's negative, warn against what's deadly, celebrate what's life giving and, together, talk about these issues so close to our hearts in a hopeful way.

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