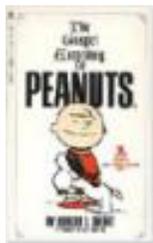


A 'perilous experiment' that comes off

Dennis Coday | Jul. 14, 2009 NCR Today



Just received a press release from Westminster John Knox Press, the Presbyterian publisher, about the death of an author.

Robert L. Short, acclaimed author of *The Gospel according to Peanuts*, dies

Louisville, Kentucky -- Robert Short, who pioneered the study of religion through popular culture, passed away on July 6 after a brief illness. He was 76.

Born in Midland, Texas, in 1932, Short is perhaps best known for his landmark first book, *The Gospel according to Peanuts*. Upon its release in 1965 it became the top nonfiction bestseller in the United States, selling over 10 million copies in 11 languages. It was lauded by *The New York Times Book Review* as "a 'perilous experiment' that comes off" and earned the admiration and respect of Peanuts creator Charles M. Schulz. Through his work, Short became a trailblazer for other authors seeking to reveal the sacred in the simplest of places.

"Bob Short's *The Gospel according to Peanuts* was a groundbreaking book not just for John Knox Press but for all of religious publishing," said David Dobson, editorial director of Westminster John Knox Press. "Bob showed that a thoughtful exploration of popular culture through a theological lens could help us all gain a deeper understanding of both religion and culture. In addition to his many books, Bob was a true friend to the press and a joy to be around. His humor, thoughtfulness, and generosity of spirit will be greatly missed."

Before beginning his work as an author and speaker, Short worked in commercial and religious television as a professional actor. He received a master of divinity degree from Southern Methodist University, a master of arts in English from North Texas University, and a master of arts in theology and literature from the University of Chicago. In 2001 he moved to Little Rock, Ark., where he founded the Fellowship of "Christianity Without Doom or Gloom." An ordained Presbyterian minister, he traveled and preached throughout the country, presenting programs in Christian faith and the arts at churches and colleges.

Short's other books include *The Parables of Peanuts*, (1968), *A Time to Be Born--A Time to Die* (1973), *Something to Believe In* (1978), *The Gospel from Outer Space* (1983), *Short Meditations on the Bible and Peanuts* (1990), *The Gospel according to Dogs* (2003), and *The Parables of Dr. Seuss* (2008).

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The Catholic high school I attended set aside 15 minutes a day for spiritual reading. The school had a couple

copies of *The Gospel according to Peanuts*, and they were well-worn by use. Rest in peace, Rev. Short.

PS: Please don't post comments about how letting high school students read *The Gospel according to Peanuts* is a sign of theological illiteracy. That was just one, small part of a well-rounded program of religious study.

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