

**Recommended works by Ronald Knox
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number for easy reference**

1. A Retreat for Lay People [269.6 KNO]
2. Barchester Pilgrimage [823.912 KNO]
3. Belief of Catholics [239 KNO]
4. Bridegroom and Bride [265.5 KNO]
5. Broadcast Minds [239 KNO]
6. Caliban in Grub Street [239 KNO]
7. The Church on Earth [230.0202 SMI]
8. The Creed in Slow Motion [252 KNO]
9. Difficulties [239 KNO]
10. Enthusiasm [273 KNO]
11. Essays in Satire [827.912 KNO]
12. God and the Atom [261.873 KNO]
13. The Gospel in Slow Motion [252 KNO]
14. The Hidden Stream [239 KNO]
15. Holy Bible [220.5209 KNO]
16. In Soft Garments [239 KNO]
17. Let Dons Delight [828.912 KNO]
18. Literary Distractions [824.912 KNO]
19. Meditation on the Psalms [223.2 KNO]
20. Mystery of the Kingdom [252 KNO]
21. Occasional Sermons [252 KNO]
22. Off the Record [239 KNO]
23. Pastoral Sermons [252 KNO]
24. Retreat in Slow Motion [269.6 KNO]
25. Spiritual Aeneid [262.14092 KNO]
26. Still Dead [823.912 KNO]
27. Stimuli [252 KNO]
28. University and Anglican Sermons
[252 KNO]



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*Mgr. RONALD
ARBUTHNOTT KNOX*

Ronald Knox was born on the 17th February 1888, the youngest son of Edmund Knox and his first wife, Ellen. His grandfathers were Anglican bishops and his own father became Bishop of Coventry when he was seven. Three years earlier his mother died and he was sent to live with his clergyman uncle, who instructed him in the Bible, catechism, Greek, Latin and mathematics. He displayed such precociousness that by six he had read Virgil's Aeneid and was composing puzzles and verse in three tongues.

When his father remarried, Ronald returned to attend prep school and Eton. At seventeen he resolved to enter the ministry and took a vow of celibacy to enable him "to attend upon the Lord without impediment". The following year a visit by an Anglo-Catholic vicar introduced him to the movement he would identify with for the next ten years. At the same time his father as Bishop of Manchester led the opposing Evangelical Party.

From Eton he went to Oxford, having gained several scholarships and bursaries. As an undergraduate he came to prominence as president of the union and editor of the student magazine *Isis*. During his holidays he made several visits to the Benedictine monastery of Caldey, as well as seeing the Oberammergau Passion Play and learning the Rosary in Belgium. In 1910 he accepted a fellowship from Trinity College. Two years later he was ordained and appointed chaplain, the Bishop of Oxford waiving the usual theological training, suggesting he prepare by a retreat at Caldey. As a clergyman he opposed scepticism in the Church of England and satirised it in his essay, *Absolute and Abitofhell*. This was followed by two sermons critical of the position of Anglicanism and an essay, *Reunion All Round*, on Anglicans who held it a duty for Christians to unite in common worship regardless of their theological differences. At Oxford besides lecturing in logic and the Classics, he became a noted preacher and public speaker. His talk *Studies in the*

Literature of Sherlock Holmes was yet another satire, critical of the Higher Criticism.

At the outset of World War I, Ronald offered himself as a prisoner of war to minister to Anglican prisoners but the war office rejected it. Meanwhile many of his friends and students were entering military service. Faced with the prospect of death and restless consciences, many considered becoming Catholic and sought his counsel. To help them he drew up reasons for and against their conversion but found he could not defend being an Anglican. Seeking time to think and pray he went to teach in Shrewsbury. There he met the Jesuit Fr. Cyril Martindale and asked to be received into the Catholic Church. Fr. Martindale advised he give greater consideration to his motives. At the suggestion of Fr. John Talbot, another convert and Oratorian priest, he made a retreat at Farnborough Abbey and was received by the abbot on September 22nd 1917. The following year he wrote his apologia, *A Spiritual Aeneid*. After living with the Oratorians to accustom himself to Catholic life, Ronald taught at St. Edmund's, Ware, and on October 5th 1919 was ordained a Catholic priest, again being permitted to prepare without attending a seminary. Besides preaching and teaching, Ronald indulged in his passion for detective stories, writing several including *The Body in the Silo*, *Three Taps* and *The Viaduct Murders*.

In 1926 he was made chaplain at Oxford, where he delivered two courses in apologetics, later published as *In Soft Garments* and *The Hidden Stream*. These were followed by his *Essays in Satire*, a series of sermons on the parables called *The Mystery of the Kingdom*, a third course in apologetics, *The Belief of Catholics*, and two works on science and society, *Caliban on Grub Street* and *Broadcast Minds*. In 1932 his correspondence with Sir Arnold Lunn on faith and reason was published as *Difficulties*. This was followed by *Barchester Pilgrimage*, where he imagined Trollope's characters living in the

present age, and *Let Dons Delight*, conversations of Oxford dons on the academic, philosophical, political and religious decline in universities from 1588 to 1938.

That year, 1938, he was offered the presidency of St Edmunds but was advised against it by his friend Fr. Martin D'Arcy, accepting instead to make a new translation of the Bible. In 1939 he left Oxford to become private chaplain to Lord Acton at Aldenham but during World War II it became home to fifteen Assumptionist nuns and a group of schoolgirls. Ronald said Mass for them, heard their confessions and each Sunday gave them short instructions, which were published as *The Creed, The Gospel and The Mass in Slow Motion...* After the war he published a series of monthly meditations, *Stimuli*, and *God and the Atom*, on the morality of nuclear warfare. When Lord Acton sold Aldenham, he became chaplain to the Asquiths at Mells, where he completed translating the Bible and wrote *Enthusiasm*, a study of those who claimed to possess God within themselves and a special revelation of His will. Following *Enthusiasm* came sermons on the Eucharist (*The Window in the Wall*) and marriage (*Bridegroom and Bride*), letters to enquirers published as *A Retreat for Lay People*, translations of the *Autobiography* of St. Therese and *Imitation of Christ*, which was completed by Michael Oakley.

In 1951 he was made an apostolic protonotary and five years later a member of the Pontifical Academy. There followed honorary fellowships of Balliol and Trinity, and an invitation to deliver the 1957 Romanes Lectures at Oxford, his last public appearance. Struck by a sudden and serious illness, that was found to be an incurable cancer, Ronald Knox died on August 24th 1957.

*Mary of Holyhood may smile indeed
Knowing what grim historic shade it shocks
To see wit, laughter and the Popish creed
Cluster and sparkle in the name of Knox*