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Robert Runcie

[British History:](#) Robert Runcie

Runcie, Robert (1921-2000). Archbishop of Canterbury. After war service as a tank commander, winning the MC, Runcie graduated from Brasenose College, Oxford. He was successively principal of Cuddesdon Theological College (1960), bishop of St Albans (1970), and archbishop (1980). A liberal catholic, he developed Canterbury's quasi-patriarchal role by frequent visits overseas. As the first archbishop to propose 'an ecumenical primacy' for Rome, he welcomed Pope John Paul II on the first ever papal visit to Canterbury cathedral (1982).

[Columbia Encyclopedia:](#) Robert Alexander Kennedy Runcie

Runcie, Robert Alexander Kennedy (rŭn'sē) , 1921–2000, archbishop of Canterbury (1980–91).[Top](#)
Bishop of St. Albans from 1970 to 1980, he was enthroned as the 102d archbishop of Canterbury in 1980, succeeding Donald Coggan. Runcie supported the ordination of women and other liberal Anglican positions and was often a critic of Prime Minister Margaret [Thatcher's](#) Conservative government. He also was noted for developing links with the Orthodox Eastern churches and the Roman Catholic Church and for his work on behalf of the Anglican ministry in Africa. Runcie was created a life peer in 1991.

Bibliography

See biographies by A. Hastings (1991) and H. Carpenter (1996).

[Dictionary:](#) Run·cie (rŭn'sē) , Robert Alexander Kennedy

1921–2000.

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British prelate and archbishop of Canterbury (1980–1991).

[Quotes By:](#) Robert Runcie

Quotes:

[Top](#)

"In the middle ages people were tourists because of their religion, whereas now they are tourists because tourism is their religion."

"Those who dare to interpret God's will must never claim Him as an asset for one nation or group rather than another. War springs from the love and loyalty which should be offered to God being applied to some God substitute, one of the most dangerous being nationalism."

[Wikipedia](#): Robert Runcie

[The Right Reverend](#) and [Right Honourable](#)

The Lord Runcie of Cuddesdon

[MC PC](#)

Archbishop of Canterbury

Enthroned 1980

Ended 1991

Predecessor [Donald Coggan](#)

Successor [George Carey](#)

Birth name Robert Alexander Kennedy Runcie

Born [2 October 1921](#)
[Great Crosby, Merseyside](#)

Died [11 July 2000](#)

Buried [St Albans Cathedral](#)

Robert Alexander Kennedy Runcie, Baron Runcie of Cuddesdon [MC PC](#) ([2 October 1921](#) – [11 July 2000](#)) was [Archbishop of Canterbury](#) from 1980 to 1991.

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Early life

He was born and spent his early life in [Great Crosby, Liverpool](#), to [middle class](#) and rather non-religious parents. He initially attended St Luke's Church, Crosby (where he was confirmed in 1936), before switching to the [Anglo-Catholic St Faith's](#) Church about a mile down the road. He was educated at [Merchant Taylors' School, Crosby](#) before going up to [Brasenose College, Oxford](#).

He earned a commission in the [Scots Guards](#) during [World War II](#), serving as a [tank commander](#) and earning the [Military Cross](#) for two feats of bravery in March 1945: he rescued one of his men from a crippled tank under heavy enemy fire, and the next day took his own tank into an exceptionally exposed position in order to knock out three [anti-tank guns](#). As a result, he is unique among modern Archbishops of Canterbury in having personally killed fellow human beings. In May 1945 he was among the first British troops to enter [Bergen-Belsen](#).

After the surrender of [Nazi Germany](#), he served with the occupying forces in [Cologne](#) and then with the boundary commission dealing with the future status of the [Free Territory of Trieste](#).

On his return to Oxford, he surprised many by taking [first class honours](#) in [Greats](#). He was a member of both [Tory](#) and [Socialist](#) societies at Oxford, and through that he had his first dealings with the young [Margaret Roberts](#), a relationship which was to prove pivotal during his archbishopate.

Career

Runcie studied for [ordination](#) at [Westcott House, Cambridge](#) where he received a [diploma](#), rather than a second [bachelor's degree](#) in [theology](#). He was ordained in the [Diocese of Newcastle](#) in 1950 to serve as a [curate](#) in the parish of All Saints in the wealthy [Newcastle upon Tyne suburb](#) of [Gosforth](#), then a rapidly growing suburban area. Rather than the conventional minimum three year curacy, after only two years Runcie was invited to return to Westcott House as [Chaplain](#) and, later, Vice-Principal. In 1956 he was elected Fellow and Dean of [Trinity Hall](#) in Cambridge, where he would meet his future wife, Rosalind, the daughter of the college bursar.

In 1960 he returned to the world of the theological college, becoming Principal of Cuddesdon, near Oxford, where he spent ten years and transformed what had been a rather monastic and traditionally [Anglo-Catholic](#) institution into a stronghold of the liberal catholic wing of the Church of England. In this period his name became more and more strongly spoken of as a future [bishop](#), and speculation was confirmed when he was appointed [Bishop of St Albans](#) in 1970.

Like Gosforth in the 1950s, the [Diocese of St Albans](#) was a booming suburban area, popular with families moving out of a depopulating [London](#). As well as diocesan work, he worked with [broadcasters](#) as Chairman of the Central Religious Advisory Committee, and was appointed Chairman of the joint Anglican-[Orthodox](#) Commission.

Archbishop of Canterbury

Runcie was selected as [Archbishop of Canterbury](#) in 1979. Ironically, in view of his future relations with the Conservative government, there is evidence that Runcie was actually the second choice of the [Crown Appointments Commission](#), the first choice, [Hugh Montefiore](#), having proven politically unacceptable to the then newly elected Conservative government. ^{[[citation needed](#)]}

During his time as Archbishop of Canterbury he witnessed a breaking down of traditionally convivial relations between the [Conservative Party](#) and the [Church of England](#), which was habitually if rather inaccurately described as "the Tory party at prayer". This was due mainly to the Church's pronouncements on political matters and [Margaret Thatcher](#)'s support for the ethos of individualism and wealth creation, and her claim that "there is no such thing as society"^[1], which many in the Anglican church thought was uncaring and anti-Christian. However, this seven word phrase, extracted from a 1987 interview with [Woman's Own](#) magazine,^[2] has a subtly different impact when taken within the context of the interview as a whole.

“ I think we've been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it's the government's job to cope with it. 'I have a problem, I'll get a grant.' 'I'm homeless, the government must house me.' They're casting their problem on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour. People have got the entitlements too much in mind, without the obligations. There's no such thing as entitlement, unless someone has first met an obligation. ”

In 1981 Runcie officiated at the marriage of [Charles, Prince of Wales](#) to [Lady Diana Spencer](#), despite suspecting privately that they were ill-suited and that their marriage would not last.

With a dramatic gesture of goodwill, he knelt in prayer with [Pope John Paul II](#) in Canterbury Cathedral during John Paul's visit to Great Britain in 1982.

In 1985 there was friction between the Church of England and members of the Conservative Government, in particular [Norman Tebbit](#), over the Church's report "[Faith in the City](#)", which criticised the government's handling of social problems in British inner-city areas. As a result of this, Tebbit became a strong supporter of the [disestablishment](#) of the [Church of England](#), claiming that institutions affiliated to the British state should not express what he saw as overtly partisan political views.

Much of the middle period of Runcie's archiepiscopate was taken up with the tribulations of two men who had been close to him - the suicide of [Gareth Bennett](#), and the kidnapping of [Terry Waite](#).

When Runcie visited the [Pope](#) in 1989, he set out to reconcile the [Church of England](#) with the [Church of Rome](#). Runcie advocated the Papacy as having a 'primacy of honour' rather than 'primacy of jurisdiction' over the Anglican church, a proposal consistent with the report of the [Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission](#). The Pope did not go along with this, however, claiming that the Papacy already has primacy of jurisdiction over all other churches regardless of whether or not this is officially recognised and also that the doctrines of the [Roman Catholic Church](#) would not change to accommodate Runcie's proposals. ^{[[citation needed](#)]}

In terms of internal Anglican matters, much of Runcie's archiepiscopate was taken up with the debate over whether to proceed with the [ordination of women](#) in the [Church of England](#) as well as the fallout from the ordination of women priests and consecration of women bishops in other parts of the Anglican Communion. Runcie's position on the matter had been described as "*nailing his colours firmly to the fence*" - his liberal catholic theology conflicting with his instinctive conservatism. As a result, he often seemed like a rabbit in the headlights, mistrusted by both sides of the debate. The traditionalist wing of Anglo-Catholicism, in particular, felt that he had betrayed them by not becoming a forthright opponent of women priests and resented him as a result.



Grave of Lord Runcie at [St Albans Cathedral](#)

The church's attitude to [homosexuality](#) was also a divisive issue during this period, although it did not assume the crisis proportions it would in the late 1990s and 2000s. Although in public Runcie stuck to official Church of England policy as set out in the publication *Issues in Human Sexuality*, that homosexual practice was not ideal for lay people and unacceptable for clergy, in private he held a more sympathetic view and consciously ordained a number of openly gay men as priests.

Retirement

When he retired as Archbishop of Canterbury, he was created a [life peer](#), as **Baron Runcie**, of

Cuddesdon in the **County** of **Oxfordshire**, enabling him to remain in the **House of Lords** where he had previously sat as a **Lord Spiritual**. He died of **cancer** in 2000.

Family

Lord Runcie's wife, **Rosalind**, whom he married on **5 September 1957**, was well-known as a pianist. He had two children, **James Runcie**, a novelist, and Rebecca Runcie, as well as four grandchildren: Rosie, Charlotte, Matthew and Edward.

Quotation

In the postscript of **Humphrey Carpenter**'s biography:^[3]

I have done my best to die before this book is published. It now seems possible that I may not succeed.

References

- ↑ Wikiquotes - Margaret Thatcher
- ↑ MargaretThatcher.org, Woman's Own interview
- ↑ Carpenter, Humphrey, Robert Runcie: The Reluctant Archbishop. Hodder & Stoughton, 1996. ISBN 0-340-57107-1.

See also

- Richard Chartres

External links

- A Tribute to Lord Runcie of Cuddesdon
- A Bishop Who Rocked the Boat
- Memorial Page for Robert Runcie
- Portrait in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Religious titles

<p>Preceded by</p> <p>Edward Michael Gresford Jones</p>	<p>Bishop of St Albans</p> <p>1970–1980</p>	<p>Succeeded by</p> <p>John Bernard Taylor</p>
<p>Preceded by</p> <p>Donald Coggan</p>	<p>Primate of All England</p> <p>1980–1991</p> <p>Archbishop of Canterbury</p> <p>1980-1991</p>	<p>Succeeded by</p> <p>George Carey</p>

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List of Archbishops of Canterbury

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pre-Reformation
(**Roman Catholic**)

Augustine · Laurentius · Mellitus · Justus · Honorius · Deusdedit · Wighard · Theodore · Bertwald · Tatwin · Nothelm · Cuthbert · Bregwin · Jaenbert · Æthelhard · Wulfred · Feologild · Ceolnoth · Ethelred · Plegmund · Athelm · Wulfhelm · Oda · Aelfsige · Birtheim · Dunstan · Æthelgar · Sigeric · Ælfric · Alphege · Lyfing · Aethelnoth · Edsige · Robert of Jumièges · Stigand · Lanfranc · Anselm · Ralph d'Escures · William de Corbeil · Theobald · Thomas Becket · Richard · Baldwin · Reginald Fitz Jocelin · Hubert Walter · John de Gray · Stephen Langton · Walter d'Eynsham · Richard le Grant · Ralph Neville · John of Sittingbourne · John Blund · Edmund Rich · Boniface · William Chillenden · Robert Kilwardby · Robert Burnell · John Peckham · Robert Winchelsey · Thomas Cobham · Walter Reynolds · Simon Mepeham ·

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post-Reformation (Anglican)	Matthew Parker · Edmund Grindal · John Whitgift · Richard Bancroft · George Abbot · William Laud · William Juxon · Gilbert Sheldon · William Sancroft · John Tillotson · Thomas Tenison · William Wake · John Potter · Thomas Herring · Matthew Hutton · Thomas Secker · Frederick Cornwallis · John Moore · Charles Manners-Sutton · William Howley · John Bird Sumner · Charles Thomas Longley · Archibald Campbell Tait · Edward White Benson · Frederick Temple · Randall Thomas Davidson · Cosmo Lang · William Temple · Geoffrey Fisher · Michael Ramsey · Donald Coggan · Robert Runcie · George Carey · Rowan Williams

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