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AN ABSTRACT of JOHN RUSKIN, HIS THEOLOGY AND FAITH,  
by M.L.Malleson, B.A., Dip.Th.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was brought up by wealthy Evangelical parents. By the time he went to Oxford he was already interested in art, architecture and geology, which studies he continued afterwards. His first books, Modern Painters, Vols. 1 and 2, were about art and its relationship to God and nature. Great artists depicted God through their painting of nature, which Ruskin called 'God's second book'.

Though Ruskin was outwardly a strong Evangelical, in reality he had serious doubts which he kept concealed from the public. In 1858 he had an 'unconversion' experience while in a Turin chapel, becoming convinced that religion and faith could be better found outside a Church. Both before and after his 'unconversion', he tried unsuccessfully to reconcile his Evangelical upbringing and beliefs with his doubts, depressions and questioning faith.

Ruskin's marriage was annulled, but then he fell in love with a girl, Rose La Touche, which relationship caused great emotional crises, partly because she, as a pious young lady, would not accept Ruskin with his 'heathenism'. At about this time Ruskin was becoming interested in Greek mythology, discovering in it religious and moral truths that he could not find in contemporary religion and Church life.

In 1860 he wrote Unto This Last which was a severe criticism of 'Political Economy' and the harshness of industrial society. From then on he wrote much social criticism, blaming the clergy and Church for allowing these social evils contrary to Christ's teachings.

In later life Ruskin gradually accepted the Christian teachings again, with a renewed respect for the Bible. But he remained extremely critical of society, clergy and Church people who did not practice the moral teachings of Christ.

THE UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

JOHN RUSKIN: HIS THEOLOGY AND FAITH.

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

IN CANDIDACY FOR A DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS.

BY

THE REVEREND MICHAEL LAWSON MALLESON, B.A., Dip.Th.

Department of Theology

SEPTEMBER 1992.

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## DECLARATION

The material for this thesis was previously submitted for a degree in the University of Durham in September 1991.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been renewed interest in the life and works of John Ruskin, an interest which began with Kenneth Clark's admiration of him. Some of Ruskin's many concerns still seem rather arcane and are ignored, such as Greek mythology and his classification of plants. (However, his views on architecture could be studied with advantage in the Post-Modernist age).

Other parts of his teachings are being studied anew, especially those on social matters, education, and the environment. Curiosity, sometimes rather prurient, about his life has also grown. A parallel can be seen in how forty years ago, Ruskin's diatribes about how industry was destroying the environment were ignored, simply because then pollution was a non-subject. Today, of course, the wheel has turned a full circle, and The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century has been rediscovered.

Intellectual fashions tend to go in circles, so what is seen to be highly significant to one generation can be ridiculed by another. So, Ruskin's works can be turned to for illumination of contemporary discussions on social concerns, the environment, the Pre-Raphaelites and the purposes of education. One topic which was of great interest to Ruskin but which is still ignored, except in relation to other subjects, is religion and Christianity.

Why is this? Most people in contemporary Britain are brought up to be non-religious and non-Christian. So there is no enthusiasm for, nor is there much reaction against, the Christian religion and its practice. Because of this, it is difficult for the late twentieth-century mind to understand how important was the religious debate in the nineteenth century, a debate in which Ruskin fully joined. Ruskin's many pronouncements about the spiritual well-being of society, and his Bible studies are ignored.

INTRODUCTION

Ruskin notoriously jumped from one subject to another, and then linked them. Yet, as I have tried to show in the thesis, religion in Ruskin's life and works was not just another of many subjects to be discussed in relation to others. Ruskin's Christian faith and morality were central to much of his writings and permeated all his interests in a way that, for example, Greek mythology or art criticism did not.

Although scholars have paid due attention to the biographical details of Ruskin's spiritual life, with his up-bringing, his 'Unconversion', the role played by faith in his relationship with Rose La Touche and so on, Ruskin's writings on religion have been seen merely as a psychological phenomenon which did him more harm than good and which are not worth studying for their own merit. What has been overlooked is that in spite of the problems of trying to discover what Ruskin meant, how to reconcile different statements and how to trace his changing opinions, there is much of value to be found in his works, his Biblical exegeses, his attitude towards Christian behaviour, his understanding of the duties of clergy and his own problems over faith. These are of more than peripheral interest to students of Ruskin, of the nineteenth century, of the social concerns and of religion itself.

A man's life is much influenced, if not decided, by his childhood. This was especially so for John Ruskin, whose upbringing was an intense one, entirely dominated by parents' determination that he should be famous in life. Margaret and John James's efforts were successful, but their methods of child rearing did not win their son's unqualified approval. In his old age, before putting down his pen for good, John Ruskin wrote his autobiography Praeterita in which, like many autobiographers, he showed that memory could be faulty and revealed an exaggerated bitterness against his parents. He also laid some ghosts. The biographers of Ruskin have sometimes taken Praeterita at its face value when they might not have done so. Thus Ruskin claimed that in childhood he had almost no toys, when in fact he had a rocking horse, dogs, pony and all the books and drawing material he could wish for, besides a large garden of which he had the freedom. A more accurate source for the young boy's life and thoughts is his earlier writings, because they reflect his actual opinions at the time, such as his notes on the sermons he heard at the Chapel the family attended. By the time he went to Oxford University as a nineteen-year old in 1837, he was beginning to write about his faith and other matters in letters to particular individuals. He also kept a Diary which was not for publication in which he wrote about the church services he attended, including his opinion of the liturgy and sermons.

His religious writings while a teenager and in his twenties, along with Praeterita, show that he was an Evangelical in his up-bringing. The main reason for his strong faith was his mother, Margaret Ruskin, who was narrow minded, even inflexible, in her religious views. Later on in life, Margaret told John that she had, like Hannah with Samuel, dedicated him to God. (1) Certainly her influence and domination was what Ruskin remembered of his early life.

I have next with deeper gratitude to chronicle what I owe to my mother for the resolutely consistent lessons which so exercised me in the Scriptures as to make every word

of them familiar to my ear in habitual music, - yet in that familiarity revered, as transcending all thought, and ordaining all conduct.

This she effected, not by her own sayings or personal authority; but simply by compelling me to read the book thoroughly, for myself. As soon as I was able to read with fluency, she began a course of Bible work with me, which never ceased till I went to Oxford. She read alternate verses with me, watching, at first, every intonation of my voice, and correcting the false ones, till she made me understand the verse, if within my reach, rightly, and energetically. It might be beyond me altogether; that she did not care about; but she made sure that as soon as I got hold of it at all, I should get hold of it by the right end.

In this way she began with the first verse of Genesis, and went straight through, to the last verse of the Apocalypse; hard names, numbers, Levitical law, and all; and began again at Genesis the next day. If a name was hard, the better the exercise in pronunciation, - if a chapter was tiresome, the better lesson in patience, - if loathsome, the better lesson in faith that there was some use in its being so outspoken. (2)

When Ruskin published this in 1885 he had mellowed. He would have been more acerbic 30 years before on writing about these Bible lessons which he did not enjoy. In some ways this home-based religious education was in a vacuum, for almost the only religious influence which came into the young John's life was given by his mother. There was the weekly worship at the local Beresford Chapel though that was of little importance compared to the daily Bible reading and religious indoctrination at home. Moreover the ethos of that Chapel merely reinforced Margaret Ruskin's teachings. Margaret believed in the literal truth of the Bible, which was her son's only basis for setting up 'my active analytic power early to work on the questions of conscience, free will, and responsibility, which are easily determined in days of innocence'. (3)

The most public result of this education was the young boy's first sermon, which was 'some eleven words long; . . . and I still think must have been the purest gospel, for I know it began with, "People, be good."' This was a summary of his later teachings. (4)



Of less importance in John's religious up-bringing was his father, John James. Indeed, in Praeterita Ruskin seems to suggest that his father had no influence at all. Mr. Ruskin was obviously an efficient business man, for to go into business, converting his father's debts into a fortune of £140,000 (over £5,000,000 today) was no mean feat. A man who was successful in business, who dealt in and understood sherry, who enjoyed travelling to visit grand houses, cathedrals etc., who liked to meet his sherry-drinking clients every year, could not have been a dour and bleakly religious man. 'His fine palate enabled him always to sustain triumphantly any and every ordeal of blindfold question which the suspicious customer might put him to.' (5) as his son wrote in Praeterita. Although John James had lived in the same Scottish household as his future wife before marriage, with the same evangelical influence, he was less bothered about religion. On this matter, probably John James went along with his wife. But he did introduce his son to the poetry of Byron and to the theatre, both of which his wife disapproved. Only in one thing did John James seem to have been decisive on the running of the Ruskin household, the annual travelling.

The annual holiday formed a contrast in John Ruskin's young life; the contrast between ten months' regularity of Herne Hill, where the family lived, and two months of freedom, travelling around Britain or the continent, visiting Mr. Ruskin's clients and the notable buildings of the area. This visiting was important, because when travelling abroad from the age of 14, John Ruskin visited Roman Catholic churches and saw something of that faith's worship, which meant that he learnt of another religious practice and outlook than his own and his parents'.

Nature was another influence on him. In 1856 he wrote that although as a child he appreciated nature,

there was no definite religious feeling mingled with it.  
. . . I believed that God was in heaven, and could hear  
me and see me; but this gave me neither pleasure nor

pain. . . . I never thought of nature as God's work, but as a separate fact or existence. (6)

Although at the same time

My pleasure in mountains or ruins was never, even in earliest childhood, free from a certain awe and melancholy, and general sense of the meaning of death, though, in its principal influence, entirely exhilarating and gladdening. (7)

By the time he came to write the third volume of Modern Painters, God, nature, heaven and his sensitivity to nature had become inextricably mixed.

The Ruskin family practised its faith in the 1820's and 1830's just after the Evangelical Movement was past its peak, although still very influential. The lives of Newman and Manning symbolized the shift in the Church of England towards Catholicism, a shift which was reflected, although less clearly, in Ruskin's own later life. The Evangelical renewal and movement in the Church of England had links with Nonconformist bodies and in part followed the Methodist Revival.

The Bible was an early and life-long influence on Ruskin even when he was furthest away from the Christian faith. Margaret Ruskin did not only impose daily readings, she made her son learn by heart parts of the Scriptures. He remembered Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 119, 1 Corinthians 15, the Sermon on the Mount and most of the Book of Revelation. (8) These show how Margaret used the Bible to influence Ruskin's faith while ignoring the simple stories and parables taught to most children. Deuteronomy 32 is the so-called Song of Moses. God had protected his his chosen nation, but as his people rejected their God, they would be punished. Psalm 119 was in praise of the law of God, and a desire to follow those laws. The Sermon on the Mount was Jesus' teaching a way of life, based on love and humility. 1 Corinthians 15 proclaimed that Christ's resurrection is a proof of life eternal, and then continued with a

description of what that next life will be like. Finally, the Book of Revelation described the final judgement of the world, with eternal salvation for some and eternal damnation for others. Thus the emphasis of the Biblical teaching in the examples learnt by heart by the young Ruskin was of doing God's will to gain eternal salvation. While God would help and protect as long as a person or nation believed and did what was right, damnation would result if they did not follow God, which teaching was similar to the Deuteronomical covenant between God and his chosen people. (9) In these Bible passages, people-to-people relationships (even with the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount) were subordinate to people-to-God relationships, with salvation or damnation following judgement. In later years Ruskin himself felt that the most important by-product of this training was stylistic rather than theological for 'it was not possible for me, even in the foolishness of youth, to write entirely superficial or formal English.' (10) Yet, besides improving the style of his English, the most important benefit to Ruskin of this concentrated reading and learning was that he remained, perhaps HAD to remain, steeped in the concepts, thoughts and morality of the Bible, sometimes taking from it what he felt was good, sometimes turning for comfort to what he had learnt by heart, often reacting against the biblical foundations of his life, sometimes denying the truth of his childhood religion. But whatever Ruskin's reaction, he could not ignore the early Bible-reading, so deeply was it part of his up-bringing and subconscious mind.

Besides the Bible, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress was compulsory reading on Sundays, as was Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. But on other days Ruskin was encouraged to read secular books. Scott's novels were always favourites with him. Ruskin felt that Scott preferred the Cavaliers to the Puritans, in spite of religious incongruities.

The main element which makes Scott like Cavaliers better than Puritans is, that he thinks the former free and masterful as well as loyal: and the latter formal and slavish. (11)

His wide reading, like travelling abroad, opened the young Ruskin's mind to horizons wider than his mother's limited teaching. However, the evangelical faith was the chief religious factor in Ruskin's younger days.

Although the Ruskin household was regular at public worship, it was strangely part of and yet detached from the religious life of the country and neighbourhood. Although strongly evangelical, the family disassociated itself from promoting their beliefs, for they did not attempt to spread the gospel to others, did not distribute tracts, would not subscribe greatly, nor encourage others, to such charities as the Church Pastoral Aid Society or the British and Foreign Bible Society. They did not go to revivalist meetings. The young Ruskin was Church of England, but his Anglicanism sat lightly upon him and he never tried to evangelize other people. (Perhaps this is one reason why Ruskin felt himself unfitted to be ordained). Rosenberg rightly makes much of Evangelicalism as an influence in Ruskin's life. (12) But a child would not have understood what that label meant and Ruskin seems to have absorbed the doctrine without the factionalism. In the early part of Praeterita Ruskin did not mention Evangelicalism as such, he merely described his religious up-bringing at home, the worship in Beresford Chapel and the emphasis his mother put on the Bible, without attaching any label. Christianity as Ruskin learnt it dwelt upon the depravity of human nature, the wickedness of Roman Catholicism and a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. He kept a sense of the fallenness of human nature all through his life and it came to the surface in a non-religious torrent in and after Unto This Last. Hatred for what he saw going on around him in adult life, the destruction of art and architecture, the rotteness of the Industrial Revolution and Political Economy; this hatred came from the Evangelical attitude to the fallen-ness of human nature.

Ruskin did not see his brand of religion as entirely negative. In 1836, aged 17, he wrote in An Essay on Literature:

We hope, gentle reader, that you are gentle - that you are not one of those philosophers, falsely so named, who assert, in the teeth of reason, and to the injury of the cause of religion, that whatever is amusing must be criminal; that a grave countenance and severe demeanour are the true signs of sanctity of mind and consequent morality of conduct; that austerity is the companion of innocence, and gloom, of religion. We have been taught a different lesson by a higher authority: we know that morality may be radiant with smiles and robed in rejoicing; and we do not deprecate, because we despise, the objections of those who affirm that all pleasure is necessarily evil, and all enjoyment inevitably crime. (13)

After this rather solemn and florid passage Ruskin declared that reading works of fiction are beneficial and worthwhile, besides being pleasurable. The essay reflected another strand of Evangelical thought, a more humane one than normally acknowledged. The children's writer, Mrs. Sherwood, tried to emphasize the positive aspects of childhood faith.

Ruskin always associated Mrs. Sherwood with sweetly domestic landscapes in which children (especially girls, for Ruskin) could safely lead a Christian life, one conceived in terms of obedient childlike innocence rather than in terms of experience and dark introspection. (14)

The family worshipped every Sunday. The Church of England Parish Church was St. Giles, Camberwell, but from Ruskin's infancy they went to the Chapel at Beresford Street. (15) At that time the Evangelical wing of the Church of England could found Chapels which had very loose ties with the main church, and Beresford Chapel was one such, for the Anglican Evangelicals did not necessarily tie themselves to the Prayer Book services or churches. (16)

It began now to be of some importance what church I went to on Sunday morning. My father, who was still much broken in health, could not go to the long Church of England service, and, my mother being evangelical, he went contentedly, or at least submissively, with her and me to Beresford Chapel, Walworth, where the Rev. E. Andrews preached, regularly, a somewhat eloquent, forcible, and ingenious sermon, not tiresome to hear: - the prayers were abridged from the Church Service, and we, being the grandest people in the congregation, were

allowed . . . to come in when even those short prayers were half over. . . . We never went to church in afternoon or evening. I remember yet the amazed and appalling sensation, as of a vision preliminary to the Day of Judgement, of going, a year or two later, first into a church by candlelight. (17)

Margaret Ruskin preferred a shortened Church of England form of worship in a Chapel to the typical service in a proper Anglican Church, even though they were Anglicans. Except for this formal worship, Ruskin's parents took no part in the life of the congregation with which they worshipped; they 'went to Church', rather than belonged to a community of Christians.

The worship which Ruskin attended seems to have been dominated by sermons. In his Diary, during the mid-1840's, Ruskin's comments on Sunday worship in Church are almost entirely about the quality (or more often, the lack of quality) of the sermon. Thus in January 1844 he wrote: 'After church - dull sermon from Stainforth - drove over to Charlton.' (18) Ruskin did not look forward to Sunday, for Saturday, and even Friday were overshadowed by the coming Sunday, or so he claimed in Praeterita, (19) though he might have exaggerated this in his old age.

Ruskin's travels abroad made him critical of the state of Protestant Churches on the continent. But in a letter to Dr. Dale towards the end of his university career he was pleased to say that Protestantism was on the increase. He felt sorry for the poverty of the churches and clergy, as compared to the wealth of the Roman Catholic Churches, admired the Turin Protestants under the protection of Britain and Prussia and felt that the Swiss Protestants were much cleaner and harder working than the Catholics. (20) Britain was a power on the continent, colonies of English-speaking people wanted their own services, and Ruskin thought that the British abroad were the best agents for the spread of non-Catholic religion to the local inhabitants, as well as to the English residents.

I wish you (a recently ordained college friend) would come and preach here on the Continent; there are more clergymen in England than people will listen to. They are more wanted than among South Sea islands, and many poor isolated curates keeping up a heavy struggle, with no money and few hearers, and a stable for a church. (21)

Even as a sixteen-year old, he could see some attraction in Roman Catholic worship. In 1835 he wrote about a Mass he purported to have witnessed at St. Bernard, while staying in the Hospice run by the monks. This was an early intimation of his liking for Roman ritual.

I have heard the sacred music of the mass roll and reverberate among the immeasurable twilight of the vast cathedral aisle, and the cadences of the chaunted Te Deum passing over the heads of thousands bowed at once. I have held my breath when, in the hush of a yet more sacred silence, the secret prayers of the population of a city rose up in their multitude, till every breath of the incensed air became holy, and the dim light around was full of supplication; but more sublime than the sacred tones that shake the dusky aisles with their tread, more holy than the hush of the bended multitude, were those few voices, whose praise rose up so strangely amid the stillness of the terrible solitude, and passed away and away, till the dead air that sleeps for ever and for ever, voicelessly, like a lifeless spirit upon the lonely mountains, was wakened from its cold silence, and that solitary voice of praise was breathed up into the still blue of the heaven rising from the high Alps as from one vast altar to the ear of the Most High, sounding along the vacancy of the illimitable wilderness, where God was, and God only.

When the Mass was over, I remained alone for some time in the chapel, in that state of mind in which you do not think, in which the brain seems incapable of forming any distinct idea; you feel only it is a strange losing of the soul in a multitude of its own most sublime sensations; it is, if I may so express it, a sensual gratification of the mind. (22)

This was a short autobiographical story unpublished until after Ruskin's death; maybe his parents never knew that this short story existed and shows that in spite of his mother's strong influence, he

could already think for himself on matters of religion.



Ruskin went to Oxford University in 1837, leaving in 1842. In some ways Oxford did not change him much, but in other ways, exposure to contemporary thought made him modify his theology. Symbolic of this dichotomy between home and university was his mother's taking up residence in Oxford High Street rooms to keep an eye on her son in case he joined in the debates of the time. The parental influence proved much the greater in later years. Ruskin later described himself on moving into his residence at Oxford. If he was accurate, then the rigours of chapel, Evangelicalism, the Bible and his mother seemed to have left him contented enough.

Without much reasoning on the matter, I had virtually concluded from my general Bible reading that, never having meant or done any harm that I knew of, I could not be in danger of hell: while I saw also that even the *crème de la crème* of religious people seemed to be in no hurry to go to heaven. On the whole, it seemed to me, all that was required of me was to say my prayers, go to church, learn my lessons, obey my parents, and enjoy my dinner. (1)

At Oxford, John did not mix much with the people concerned with the church and ecclesiastical matters. His closest friend, Henry Acland, was training to be a doctor. (2) By distancing himself in this way, he followed the practice of his earlier life, for though the family was religious it did not have much contact with clergy on a pastoral basis. Even so, John Ruskin went to Oxford with the expectation of his parents (and himself) that he would eventually become a clergyman, at least a Bishop, if not an Archbishop. Yet he was unhappy at the prospect of ordination, even though expecting it. He was critical of the clergy and this sniping at individuals might have been one way of showing his unhappiness at the prospect. Perhaps Ruskin could see himself all too clearly in the pulpit, and did not like what he saw. His somewhat caustic attitude appeared in his diary:

Morning at chapel: the regular curate - an intense coxcomb, with formidable whiskers throwing his whole face into a fine *chiaro oscuro* - squinting all over the chapel before beginning; smacking his lips and throwing his head

about; reading 'When the wicked' sublimely - then turning to the 'Dearly beloved' with sudden familiarity. (3)

Later in life, Ruskin's main criticism of the clerical profession was that its members were not Christian enough for they did not follow our Lord's teaching properly. He was willing to praise a good man's sermon, but simply wrote that it was good, without much detail. Ruskin was more given to invective than praise.

One of the controversies at Oxford in Ruskin's time was over the Oxford Movement. Patrick Connor argues that the Movement must have influenced the 18-year old John Ruskin. (4) It did not do so in the short run, for Ruskin was neither sympathetic nor interested. But in the long term, the Oxford Movement controversy encouraged him to widen his theological horizons. He mentioned matters relative to the controversy occasionally, as when in June 1841 he wrote to Dr. Dale that he was pleased that 'Newman submitted to his Bishop in the affair of the Tracts; however wrong he may be, it is well that he is thus far consistent'. (5) Soon after, while recovering from an illness at Leamington, Ruskin noted; 'A Puseyitical but good sermon this morning from the end of 15th Corinth. and as bad a one in the afternoon, from the same person'. (6) A Puseyite sermon was not ipso facto bad. The next year, in a letter to a college friend, Ruskin aired his doubts about the matter of authority, which was of concern to Newman in his decision to become Roman Catholic.

I should almost be glad to be what you call me - a private judgement man - rather than the nothing I am; but I find it so intolerably difficult to come to any conclusion on the matter, that I remain neither one thing nor another. Both extremes, I feel certain, are wrong, but where or how to fix the mean I know not. Whom to believe implicitly - whom to pay respect to - whom to dispute with - whom to judge - I cannot tell; never can attach any real practical meaning to the word "church". Does it mean my prayer-book - or my pastor - or St. Augustine? or am I generally to believe all three, and yet dispute particular assertions of each? Only one thing I know - that I had rather be a Papist than a dissenter - or a member of the Church of Scotland; and I think the error of blind credence is error on the right side, but it is an error for all that; and when to stop,

or why to stop, or how to stop, in belief of interpretation or teaching, I cannot tell. (7)

This is the only writing of Ruskin at this time which expressed any deep concern about the theology of the Oxford Movement and the authority of the Church. In the end, Ruskin rejected both extremes of the ecclesiastical spectrum and went his own way. In January 1843 he put in his Diary a description of a discussion he had with his friend Gordon. (8) Gordon had said that the point of dispute (presumably between Evangelicals and Catholics) 'is not worship of images, nor of Virgin, but doctrine of justification'. In later years Ruskin became sympathetic towards the Roman Catholic Church, being a Catholic, he claimed, but not a Roman Catholic. (9) Many influences guided him to that point, but at the most the Oxford Movement of his student days did not discourage, and might have helped him, to see that there were religious viewpoints other than his mother's fundamental Evangelicalism. At Oxford Ruskin pursued his own interests of geology, art and poetry, while keeping clear of religious movements, organizations or controversies. He was sometimes ill and often abroad. He ploughed his idiosyncratic furrow, which had not much church or theological soil.

There was another great theological debate at Oxford which was of far greater importance to Ruskin; the debate about geology and creation. Geology had become popular and respectable; its discoveries had implications for the the interpretation of the Bible, especially the creation stories in the Book of Genesis. Clergymen took part in this new discipline, without necessarily realizing that it could pose threats to faith or would call into doubt the truth of the creation stories. John James and Margaret Ruskin could not foresee that their 14-year old son's collecting lumps of quartz from the Alps or his writing on why the Rhine should be coloured blue at Geneva might herald a future danger to his faith. At Oxford, Ruskin met the Reverend William Buckland (10) who, while being the leading geologist of the day, never had any difficulty in remaining both a clergyman and a geologist. Buckland

used his geological learning to interpret and explain the Biblical creation stories - not to contradict them. Thus Buckland, at his inaugural lecture in 1820, stated that the words 'In the beginning' (11) described an immense period; 6 days merely meant 6 epochs of unspecified length, not days of 24 hours. Between 1820 and 1840 it became more accepted in academic circles that the world was much older than the 4004 years calculated by Bishop Ussher and that the flood was not the world-wide catastrophe described in the Book of Genesis. The discussions within the academic world had not made the wider public, at least in Camberwell, fully aware of the geological and theological problems involved. To this cross-fertilization between geology and theology at Oxford came John Ruskin.

Before going to University in 1839 Ruskin had studied both disciplines but had not connected them nor realized their contradictions, for his geology had not influenced his understanding of the Bible. But at Oxford he came under the influence of Buckland, helping the professor with his field studies, collecting rock samples and acting as assistant. Such was Ruskin's devotion to geology that he, like the other people of the University Geological Society to which he belonged, allowed his geological studies to modify his religious understanding, rather than try to force geology into the framework of a fundamental interpretation of the Book of Genesis. A series of letters written in 1843, just after he left university because of ill-health, to his College Friend, the Rev. Edward Clayton, (12) showed how Ruskin's mind developed during his stay at Oxford. In these letters he worked out his understanding of creation and the status of life in the Garden of Eden, mostly revolving round the dates of creation, along with the existence of death and evil in Eden before the Fall. The development of Ruskin's argument depended on geological rather than theological bases, for the dating of the creation was generally seen as a geological matter rather than a theological one, and all conclusions should be open to scientific verification. Ruskin pointed out to Clayton that Sir Charles Lyell (13) had discovered near the River Nile bones of mastodons which were at least 15,000 years old, thus showing that

creation must have been before 4004 B.C. Ruskin did not bother to justify Lyell's findings to his friend because he accepted them on the geological evidence. He then used this scientific fact as a starting point for his discussion on whether there was death in Eden before the Fall. Ruskin employed two approaches, biological and biblical. The biological argument was that every living thing is also dying - that is part of its nature. A tree or plant has

in it organs of fructification. You can have no other meaning but this; for flowers have no common form, nor appearance, nor anything essential, but this. . . . Therefore, every bud and blossom of the parent tree implies and necessitates its destruction. Therefore . . . you mean a dying thing. (14)

The same sort of argument could be used for a lion. A lion has claws and teeth which are designed to kill other creatures. (15) Plants without flowers, lions without teeth or claws would not be plants or lions. But if plants and animals are expected to procreate without the parents dying, then

Long before the flood the sea would have been one solid mass of potted fish, the air of wedged birds, and the earth of impenetrable foliage. (16)

Thus death had been a concomitant of creation from the very beginning.

Ruskin moved to a theological and biblical argument for the existence of death at the beginning of creation from a geological one, rather than the other way round.

It is always to be remembered that geologists, and, generally, the asserters of death previous to the Fall, appeal not to any text of Scripture for proof of their assertion - they affirm only that Scripture leaves the matter entirely undecided; and that therefore they are at liberty to follow out the conclusions to which they are led by other evidence. (17)

The Genesis story was, as Ruskin pointed out, neutral on the matter of death existing in animal and plant life in Eden before the Fall.

The main text, on which the detailed argument was based was Romans 8. 22ff.  $\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$  means 'creation'. 'Creation' means either all life: plant, animal and human. Or it can mean just human life: i.e. mankind. There is doubt about what St. Paul meant. In the Authorized Version, which Ruskin used, it is translated 'We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.' Ruskin wrote that 'it can only mean "Every man - all men - every creature groaneth"'. (18) Modern translations e.g. N.E.B., R.S.V., T.E.V. all follow the A.V. by translating  $\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$  as 'all creation', or 'the whole of creation'. Ruskin was unusual in translating this word as meaning, in Romans 8.22, merely 'mankind'. However, he had some justification for making the claim - based on Greek grammar. Usually  $\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$  in the New Testament is written without a definite article. E.g. Mark 10.6. 'From the beginning of the creation ( $\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) God made them male and female.' (.A.V.) But  $\tau\eta\ \kappa\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$  with a definite article usually meant mankind or human beings: e.g. Mark 16.15 'go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature ( $\tau\eta\ \kappa\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ )' (A.V., meaning the same as T.E.V.'s 'to all mankind').  $\tau\eta\ \kappa\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$  in Romans 8.22 has a definite article and thus could be translated as 'mankind' rather than as 'all creation' - if one follows the other precedents of the New Testament grammar. The proper translation of Romans 8. 22 is open to doubt and discussion and Ruskin claiming that 'mankind' is the true meaning of the passage was not on as firm a foundation as he would have liked.

The subject of the discussion, life and death in pre-lapsarian existence was linked by St. Paul, the author of Romans, to a wider theology about sin and redemption. Sin and death were brought into the world through one man, Adam. If Adam and Eve had not been disobedient and eaten of the forbidden fruit, they would not have sinned, and there would have been no death. Ruskin quoted from Romans 5.12;

By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;  
and so death passed upon all men, for that all have  
sinned.

Paul claimed that death could not have existed in Eden before the Fall. Adam's sin leading to death was only reversed through another man, Jesus Christ, because through him came righteousness and life eternal. Even so, according to Paul, after the resurrection ἡ κτίσις was still groaning and travailing in pain for the next, second coming of the Lord. If, claimed Ruskin, ἡ κτίσις means all creation is awaiting the coming liberation of Christ, then all creation, vegetable, animal and man must have suffered sin and death at the Fall. But if ἡ κτίσις means mankind only (excluding other living matter) then only mankind suffered sin and became like animals, born to die. Greek grammar along with lions' teeth and claws suggested the latter interpretation, that decay and death were present before the Fall for all creation, including man. Ruskin did not like to commit himself too definitely to what he believed, for in one letter he seemed to think that man in Eden was at first immortal.

My own conviction is, therefore - it don't much matter what it is, but I believe it is most people's who pay any regard whatsoever to modern science - that man in Eden was a growing and perfectible animal; that when perfected he was to have been translated or changed, and to leave the earth to his successors, without pain. In the doom of death he received what before was the lot of lower animals - corruption of the body - and, far worse, death of the soul. (19)

In this Ruskin saved what he could of the creation story, accepting the original immortality of mankind. He was more honest when, in an essay on this subject which he sent with his letter, he dismissed the creation stories as allegorical.

The whole (of the creation stories) appears to me, but for the close geographical account of the Garden, very much like an Eastern allegory; but however that may be, I think it is better always to read it without reference to matters of physical enquiry, to take the broad, simple statements of creation - innocence, disobedience, and guilt - and then to take in equal simplicity of heart such revelations as God may deign to give us of His former creations, and so to pass back through age before age of preparatory economy, without troubling ourselves about the little discrepancies which may appear to start

up in things and statements which we cannot understand.  
(20)

In another section of these Letters to a College Friend Ruskin cast doubts upon his mother's teachings about predestination, hell and damnation. These were important theological topics at this time, although the controversy waned as the century progressed, with the concepts of eternal hell and damnation ceasing to be generally believed in. The Rev'd. Orby Shipley wrote in 1866 that 'no-one interested in theology could have lived through the last few years, without having the awful question of future punishment forced upon his thoughts'. (21) The controversy reached its peak after the middle of the century, when F.D.Maurice was deprived of his post, and when Essays and Reviews was published in 1860. In one of these essays, the Rev'd. H.R.Wilson wrote that, rather than eternal punishment, the next life should be where 'the stunted may become strong, and the perverted restored'. (22) Some of the doubts about the doctrine of eternal damnation followed on doubts about the literalness of the Bible. For similar reasons Ruskin, while at Oxford, also became uncertain about life eternal; whether it existed at all, and if so, whether the division between heaven and hell was fair.

I think a fiat of general annihilation would be a far more comfortable thing for mankind in general than the contest between Satan and St. Michael, with 10 to 1 on the devil. I had rather, myself, be sure of rest than know I was to sing for ever - with great odds it was to be on the wrong side of my mouth. (23)

In a later letter to his College Friend, Ruskin wrote:

As you say you dislike reasoning on these subjects, I will say no more, especially because I think I have no right to run the risk, in asking for light from others, of extending my darkness in any degree to them, which I might possibly do even to the firmest faiths, without deriving equivalent benefit. But I will ask you two more questions: 1. Do you think that there is any chance for part of mankind of dying altogether - of annihilation, as so far supported by that text - "They who shall be accounted worthy to obtain the resurrection from the dead" - and some others? 2. If you do not believe this,



do you really believe in an eternity of extreme bodily and mental torment for nine-tenths or some such proportion of mankind? (24)

Ruskin aired his doubts and desire for 'general annihilation' from a weak scriptural basis. The quotation from Luke 20.34,5 is taken from the debate of Jesus following the Sadducee's question about the woman who had seven husbands, all brothers, and all of whom died before she did. According to Luke, Jesus said that

The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Then Luke went on to a slightly dubious text from Exodus. To take this matter from the Bible first; the Sadducees, one of whom asked the question, did not believe in the resurrection from the dead. Jesus did, and so did Luke who wrote the gospel. Jesus and Luke in this passage (leaving aside the matter of marriage, which was only the starting point for Ruskin's discussion on eternal life) said that those who are judged worthy are NOT subject to death any longer. A corollary from this would be that those who are not judged worthy die, have no eternal life. But this corollary was atypical of Jesus' teaching. In other places the gospel writers have him saying that there is life eternal for everyone. So those who are found worthy will be like angels, children of God, while those unworthy will be condemned to eternal damnation. This is the emphasis of the New Testament teaching on after-life and this is how the Evangelicals interpreted Jesus' teaching, alongside a predestinarian belief. Ruskin could not accept that nine-tenths (not a Biblical apportionment) should be claimed by the devil. He preferred to accept the hint or suggestion that can be read, though probably wrongly, into the text from Luke that those not judged worthy will die eternally, will become extinct. But at this stage Ruskin did not quite take the step of saying that there is no life

after death for anyone, good or bad; the Biblical text could not be stretched that far.

In 1840 Ruskin became quite seriously ill, ceasing to reside at Oxford. Instead he convalesced at Leamington and then went abroad with his parents for nine months, although remaining technically a student at Oxford until 1842, when he was given a degree. During his travels abroad at this time Ruskin saw more of the practice of the Catholic faith which both repelled and attracted the 20-year old young man. Although he knew about the Oxford Movement while he was at the university, the movement's intellectual aspect did not influence his attitude to the Roman Catholic faith. His attitudes were decided by what he saw on the continent. When he was at Chartres he wrote to Dr. Dale;

La Vierge Noire, the presiding deity of Chartres Cathedral, is a little black lady about three feet high. The devotion of the whole city to her is quite inexpressible; they are perpetually changing her petticoats, making her presents of pink pincushions, silk reticules, and tallow "dips" by the hundred-weight, with occasional silver or plated hearts in cases of especial ingratiating. The group of her worshippers never leaves the cathedral solitary for an instant; she has a priest devoted constantly to her service, who never leaves her altar, and the aisles above her are black with the constant ascent of incense. But in the south, they are content with a Mass or two in the course of the day, half said and unheard. The worshippers stagger dreamily into the church, generally lame or weak with some chronic disease, mutter their prayers in the mere fulfilment of peremptory habit, kneel, seemingly without a desire, and rise, seemingly without a hope. (25)

Ruskin was uncertain which was the worse; over-enthusiasm or negligence of worship. He had not been impressed with the Pope a month earlier.

A great fuss about Pope officiating in the Sistine chapel: . . . No music worth hearing; a little mummery with Pope - an ugly brute - and dirty Cardinals. (26)

Ruskin had two very different attitudes to Catholicism and very likely he tailored the content of his letter to Dr. Dale to suit the recipient, a 'High Church Evangelical'. On the same day that he wrote to Dr. Dale, Ruskin wrote thus in his diary about a service at Chiesa del Jesu in Rome:

The service itself came - a little very perfect chorus singing, then a solo by one of the artificial voices, exquisite in spite of all prejudice, than a little of the alternate organ and congregation, which, the church being crowded to the door, was thoroughly beautiful, then a few blazing ceremonies at the altar, elevation of the Host, and concluding burst of organ. I believe they burnt some tow, or some such stuff, but could not see. Altogether most gratifying. (27)

This entry in his diary was as admiring in tone as his description of a service at St. Bernard five years earlier, (28) but his inconsistent descriptions make it unclear just what was Ruskin's attitude to Roman Catholicism. He was very sensitive to atmosphere and feeling, for he understood the awe of the holy and mysterious in architecture, landscape and art. The aesthetic and sensual side of his nature was not satisfied by the formal worship and preaching imposed on him at Beresford Chapel - nor the English chapels on the continent. Well performed Catholic liturgy perhaps filled this gap in Ruskin's religious and sensuous life. A hot day in Chartres, with a dusty, busy cathedral and ill-organized devotion did not attract Ruskin; the Pope in the Sistine Chapel (a building which Ruskin disliked) repelled him. But Mass in a chapel at dawn in his beloved Alps would have been a moving experience. Any positive, rich aspect of Roman Catholicism and its liturgy was a powerful pull away from his Protestantism. The Roman Catholic doctrines of authority, the Church and the primacy of the Pope never would and never did appeal to him. When he abandoned the Evangelical teaching of his youth and early man-hood, he never really accepted any other church doctrine or discipline - but his future sympathy for Catholicism was already apparent at an early age with his liking for Catholic liturgy when it satisfied his aesthetic and emotional needs.

This uncertain attitude to Catholic worship was a reflection of his unhappiness with the Protestant worship he attended regularly, although he would look back almost wistfully to his church-going as a boy. This ambivalence was apparent when he was staying at Bologna. He had missed the regular Sunday service, only calling in at a funeral. Ruskin felt that something was wrong or missing, for he wrote that

I have far less of the old dread of ill keeping the Sunday than I had once, but it was mere fear after all; no real feeling - a childish terror - induced by whipping and sermonizing; yet I wish I had some of it back again. I have spent this day impiously enough. (29)

By his early 20's Ruskin had come to the conclusion that worship without right action or thoughts were of no value. In a story written when he was 22 for his 11-year old cousin Effie, he said this about the offering of holy water. The wicked brothers of Gluck (the hero) had stolen the water from a church to be poured into a stream to make them rich. A good dwarf had appeared to the wicked brothers disguised as a dog and as a child, both of whom were dying of thirst. The brothers had refused to give any water. Then the dog/child/dwarf had been found by Gluck, who also had some holy water. He gave this holy water to the dog, who changed back into the good dwarf. The dwarf said that his brothers had

"poured unholy water into my stream." (So he turned them into stone.) "Why," said Gluck, "I am sure . . . they got the water out of the church font."

"Very probably", replied the dwarf; "but," and his countenance grew stern as he spoke, "the water which has been refused to the cry of the weary and dying, is unholy, though it had been blessed by every saint in heaven; and the water which is found in the vessel of mercy is holy, though it had been defiled with corpses."  
(30)

In 1842, having finished at Oxford, John Ruskin had to decide what to do in the future. He did not have to earn a living - he never did. Although intended for the Church, he himself had never been very attracted to the idea. His stay at Oxford confirmed him in

doubts about his personal suitability and his theological orthodoxy. Being a clergyman would not have necessarily involved him in parish ministry, for Buckland was a clergyman pursuing his own geological interests until he was made Dean of Westminster. Ruskin was not attracted to parish work and disliked some clergy whom he met during their duties, while his intellectual pursuits had been leading him away from the Church and its doctrines. He also preferred other intellectual pursuits such as archaeology, architecture, poetry. He also, even at this early stage in his life, liked to flit from one academic flower to another. He was having religious doubts and ordination would have cramped his style. So he wrote to Dr. Dale when he returned to England and was still recovering from his illness at Leamington that

I myself have little pleasure in the idea of entering the Church, and have been attached to the pursuits of art and science, not by a flying fancy, but as long as I can remember, with settled and steady desire. How far am I justified in following them up? Is it right for any person to enter the Church without any intention of taking active duties upon himself? (31)

Ruskin justified this by writing, earlier in the letter;

Nor can any distinction be made between laymen and churchmen with regard to the claims of this duty (i.e. saving souls) but everyone who believes in the name of Christ is called upon to become a full and perfect priest. (32)

As such, everyone has a duty to bring all other people to salvation, the priesthood of all believers. But Ruskin felt that he could do this work of salvation just as effectively if he were a layman, pointing out that the energies of some great men, such as Galileo, Raphael and Handel were 'employed more effectively to the glory of God in the results and lessons it has left, than if it had been occupied all their lifetime in direct priestly exertion'. (33)

By 1843 Ruskin was grown up. He had left university, he had more or less decided not to become a clergyman. He was growing away from

his parents and their religion. His interests were becoming clear; geology, architecture, art (though not at this time social concern). Before him were his important literary works and he had already written Volume 1 of Modern Painters in 1843.

In June 1840, Ruskin was not a person to be content doing nothing, and he also wanted to justify himself to his parents for not being ordained. Having thoughts and ideas which he wanted to express, he decided to write, and after a lot of casting around for a form and a subject, he wrote the three main volumes of the 1840's; these were the first two volumes of Modern Painters (1843 and 1846) and The Seven Lamps of Architecture in 1849. Although written for non-religious purposes, Ruskin's Christian religion showed, or at least he made it show, clearly. Modern Painters 1 and 2 were ostensibly written as a justification of J.M.W. Turner's (1) style of painting, but in fact were a long treatise on God, nature, art and the relationship *between* them. Ruskin wrote The Seven Lamps of Architecture because he felt that Victorian architecture was using wrong principles (i.e. a non-Gothic style). He felt that his book or "memoranda . . . thrown together" about architecture was a side issue and not part of the main-stream of his writing. (2)

These three volumes were written while Ruskin still kept, with some doubts and modifications, to his parents' Evangelical Christianity. He was a powerful and persuasive writer, with the knowledge and literary skill to put over his case well; one suspects that he enjoyed controversy. As Ruskin matured in later years, especially after 1860, he had different concerns and causes to support in his writings, so mainly in these three major works of the 1840's are there found the clear insights into his Evangelical faith and its effect upon his views of architecture and art.

In the first two volumes of Modern Painters Ruskin wrote about God, nature, art, architecture and how they related to each other. Overshadowing the last four subjects was the first; God, the creator who was seen and known through his creation by those observant and faithful enough to see him. So wrote Ruskin, as he tried to open the eyes of his readers to see as he himself saw. God could be known through other channels such as the Bible, although Ruskin doubted the literal truth of some of its contents. (3) Also, for

the purposes of Modern Painters Ruskin claimed that God revealed himself through the Church, for although very critical of how and by whom this form of revelation was conveyed he was still attending church and trying to benefit therefrom.

However, for the purposes of Modern Painters Ruskin concentrated on God's revelation through nature. Indeed, at this time the natural world was for Ruskin the chief vehicle of revelation. Nature was 'God's second book', in some ways more readable than God's first book, the Bible. In this John Ruskin was a child of his times, or rather the ending of a period. Modern Painters was the last great statement of the English Romantic renovation of sensibility, just as the Lyrical Ballads by William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge were the first, according to John D. Rosenberg. (4) William Wordsworth and John Ruskin had a common attitude; that the observer, he who sensed and felt nature, also observed or felt that which was behind and in that natural world. For Ruskin this was God, the creator. Nature was more definitely revealing of God to Ruskin than it was to Wordsworth. In the preface to the last volume of Modern Painters in 1860 Ruskin wrote:

In the main principle and aim of the book, there is no variation, from its first syllable to last. It declares the perfectness and eternal beauty of the work of God.  
(5)

This was written when the author would not fully have believed what he wrote, though he would have so believed in the 1840's when he wrote the first two volumes.

What was this God as perceived by Ruskin through nature? God was the creator, he was all beautiful. Through the beauty of nature was seen the beauty of God. These were Ruskin's assumptions from the beginning. Thus 'the truth of nature is a part of the truth of God'. (6) As this was a generalization, Ruskin tried to be more specific and describe how different parts of nature showed specific



attributes of the divine character. Earlier Ruskin said that he would

examine the particular characters of every kind of scenery; and to bring to light, as far as may be in my power, that faultless, ceaseless, inconceivable, inexhaustible loveliness which God has stamped upon all things. (7)

Ruskin's strength, when he wrote about examining scenery was that he looked and saw in great detail. This was in some part, no doubt, a natural gift of observation (he would have said a God-given gift) but also it was a faculty which he cultivated from childhood through water-painting, archaeology and descriptive writing. Ruskin claimed that his critics did not observe so closely and so could not see God through nature. He could refute those critics on the unproveable grounds that they lacked the basic skills of observation.

A certain type of light showed to John Ruskin the infinity of God. Nature in the form of

the light of the declining or breaking day, and the flakes of scarlet cloud burning like watch-fires in the green sky of the horizon . . . there is one thing that it has, or suggests, which no other object of sight suggests in equal degree, and that is - Infinity. It is of all visible things the least material, the least finite . . . the most typical of the nature of God, the most suggestive of the glory of His dwelling place. (8)

Scriptures were quoted in support of this. 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all'. (9) This was to justify certain types of light as showing a divine attribute. Not all light qualified, but only a certain type.

And note also that it is not all light, but light possessing the universal qualities of beauty, diffused or infinite rather than in points; tranquil, not startling and variable; pure, not sullied or oppressed; which is indeed pleasant and perfectly typical of the Divine nature. (10)

This description of light led on to Ruskin's seeing purity in some of nature's displays of light. He tried to describe what anyone can feel at a beautiful soft sunset. Whether anything more than a beautiful sunset should be read into such a view is open to debate.

God's beauty was not to be seen just in the broad sweep of a grand view (preferably Alpine) but in more specific objects. There is

that external quality of bodies . . . which, whether it occur in a stone, flower, beast, or in man, is absolutely identical, which . . . may be shown to be in some sort typical of the Divine attributes. (11)

Ruskin did not write Modern Painters in an intellectual vacuum, for he was heir to modes of thought, religious beliefs and attitudes to nature that were current at the time. At this stage of his life, he managed to combine his religious beliefs and a romantic attitude to nature, using the one to illustrate the other. He held to his Evangelical faith, while seeing God through nature. In this he was different from Rousseau (12) and the earlier Wordsworth (13), who were not successful in holding the two, Christianity and nature, in harmony. Ruskin had interesting similarities to and differences from these two earlier writers, who were both articulate observers of nature and could also describe to some extent their psychological communion with the natural world. Ruskin built on their philosophies, as did others in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Rousseau and Ruskin were similar in that they could see the Divine in nature. For them nature was a refuge from city life, where they could both regain spiritual strength. The Ruskin family always looked forward to their travels abroad - especially when visiting the Alps. Rousseau fled 'the frivolity and pomp of Paris for the rapt communion with nature which so often transported him to voiceless adoration of its Maker'. (14) The Alps at sunrise was where the Savoyard Vicar was supposed to have talked to the small boy seeking the truth.

The Vicar utters his faith in a scene carefully chosen to inspire reverence: at sunrise on a little mount looking across a vast expanse of valley to the Alpine summits on which the rays of dawn are pouring to make all things speak the language of the Being in whose mind they dwelt before his spirit moved upon the face of the waters. (15)

Both Ruskin and Rousseau saw God through nature, and thought that any person could and should see the divine. To Ruskin nature was 'God's second book' after the Bible. To Rousseau there was one book 'open to all eyes, the glorious manual of the divine creation. . . . No man is excusable for not reading it.' (16) Rousseau differed from Ruskin in that for him nature was God's first book and there was no other. Both men seem to have been very sensitive to moods inspired by the natural world. For Rousseau, an unbiased look at nature uncontaminated by philosophies or worldly concerns would come to the indubitable and rational conclusion that God was behind the natural world. Ruskin does not start with such a tabula rasa from which to reason, for in this matter reason was not an important piece of intellectual equipment for him. Ruskin felt the divine in nature, for a dawn in the Alps would be a sensual experience for him. Perhaps this was in part because he was a painter.

Ruskin . . . is one of the few critics and theoreticians in the history of Western art who have granted due importance to the roles of both visual thinking and the physical art of drawing or painting as a means of knowledge. (17)

We are more likely to see what we paint than paint what we see. (18)

Painting or drawing a landscape in itself does not necessarily or usually lead to a mystical experience (it did not do so for Turner), but these actions, coupled to detailed observations did so lead for Ruskin, and his skill at water colours gave him an emotional, sensual attitude to nature which was not Rousseau's. But for both of them, the conclusion was the same; that God could be read in the book of nature.

There were other great differences between Ruskin and Rousseau. Both had been brought up in the Calvinist tradition, but Rousseau had, after his Catholic phase, become subjected to tremendous pressures to abandon any Christian faith. His stay in Paris and the influences of the philosophes eventually made him leave the Church. A more nebulous theism, based on reason, experience and looking at nature was the result. Ruskin, while at Oxford, had experienced pressures, although lesser ones, on his faith, especially from new discoveries in geology. But until he was in his forties, when his parents died, he lived within a family which was firmly Christian, and which, when he was writing the first two volumes of Modern Painters, was exerting a powerful influence on him.

Ruskin was not a philosopher, for like most British intellectuals he neither read nor cared about Continental, especially German, philosophical thought. For him reason was secondary to feeling. In this he had more affinity with Wordsworth who also had a greater understanding of feeling and passion than of intellectual philosophy. Ruskin did not so much have an affinity with intellectual philosophy as with feeling and passion. Wordsworth and Ruskin had one element in common with Rousseau; their temperament. All three were prone to fits of depression. After 1795 Wordsworth became disillusioned with the French Revolution and had had to leave Annette and their child in France. This led to depression. Rousseau, in spite of the even tone of his character the Savoyard Vicar, was prone to depressive fits and mental crises. Ruskin was probably a manic depressive, concerned about his health and had a mistaken premonition about his early death while writing the first two volumes of Modern Painters. Basil Willey wrote:

It is perhaps worthy of remark that those who have felt most powerfully the healing influence of 'Nature' have often been those who were most subject, in their ordinary moments, to gloom and nervous depression. One thinks of Cowper, and Rousseau, and Gray, Wordsworth himself. (19)

Willey also went on to state that

remarking that all these men belong to the later eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, we may conjecture that it was owing to the commanding authority of the idea of Nature at that time, . . . that they could find amongst fields and mountains a substitute religion, even, . . . a cure for religion. (20)

Perhaps 'formal Christianity' should replace the second word 'religion' in the above quotation. But whichever way that word is taken, it was not true of Ruskin.

It is uncertain whether Wordsworth's attitude towards nature was a substitute for religion, or whether he felt that there was a God behind and within it. In Stephen Prickett's words:

Is Wordsworth's delight in the beauty and sympathy with the 'real or imagined Life' of objects the expression of an underlying Naturalism, or of its very opposite - an underlying Platonism? (21)

There were four possibilities; first, that Wordsworth worshipped a divine nature, second, that nature pointed to ideals greater than itself - a Platonic view; third, that nature revealed a nebulous deity as Rousseau thought; or fourth, that nature revealed the traditional Christian God, as Ruskin usually stated.

In The Prelude Wordsworth wrote about nature

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!  
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,  
That givest to forms and images a breath  
And everlasting motion, (22)

This seems to indicate the first possibility, with nature total and complete in itself as Wisdom and Spirit. In 1815 Wordsworth wrote a poem which Prickett feels to be more Platonic:

Philosophically we can see here what one critic has called the 'contemplative Platonist' side of Wordsworth. Nature is not seen here as having values of itself, but as capturing the fleeting shadows of an invisible unchanging Platonic reality - even Heaven itself? - and it shares the values of that deeper reality precisely in

so far as it is symbolic to the initiated eye of that hidden world. (23)

The piece to which this referred is

No sound is uttered, - but a deep  
And solemn harmony pervades  
The hollow vale from steep to steep,  
And penetrates the glades.  
Far-distant images draw nigh,  
Called forth by wondrous potency  
Of beamy radiance, that imbues  
Whate'er it strikes with gem-like hues! . . .  
Thine is the tranquil hour, purpleal Eve!  
But long as god-like wish, or hope divine,  
Informs my spirit, ne'er can I believe  
That this magnificence is wholly thine! . . .  
An intermingling of Heaven's pomp is spread  
On ground which British shepherds tread! (24)

Wordsworth developed, changed and was not always consistent in his writings, which is why critics have been uncertain just how he saw nature.

The third way of seeing nature was as pointing towards God, and showing his character. In this, Wordsworth's spiritual journey was in the opposite direction from Rousseau's and Ruskin's, for the former moved towards a more usual type of faith as he became older. Later in life Wordsworth became traditional Church of England, attending worship and writing a series of verses on the glories of the Established Church. He travelled towards an established religion, while Ruskin and Rousseau mostly moved away from one, though for Ruskin it was not a straightforward journey and in his old age <sup>he</sup> made moves back towards a traditional faith.

In his twenties Ruskin used the fourth way - that nature revealed God as understood in Christian, especially Evangelical, thought. The writing of Modern Painters was an opportunity to defend religion. He wrote the books at his father's wish, for he wanted to please his parents, as well as consulting his own religious needs and attitudes. In this he was a non-reasoning, Christian version of

Rousseau. The Christian God was there to be sensed - in the very details of the natural world.

English artists . . . have yet, in an honest and good heart, received the word of God from clouds, and leaves, and waves, and kept it. (25)

A particular and special light at morning or evening showed the receptive watcher a glimpse of the infinite nature of God, with its attendant qualities of goodness, infinity and beauty. This was similar to Platonic forms, though whether it was the same as the Platonic ideal of Good is open to interpretation as there is no agreement as to whether Plato's ultimate Good is understandable in the same way as the Christian God is understandable. Plato used the forms of the world, what he could see, to work back to an ideal Good. 'The Good is a value, God is an existence.' (26) But there was ultimately for Plato a fusion.

Neither Plato nor anyone else could tell another man what the good is, because it can only be apprehended by the most incommunicable and intimate insight. Thus . . . metaphysically the Form of Good is what Christian philosophy has meant by God, and nothing else. (27)

But Plato did not understand 'God' in the same way as Christians often do, as a divine being who acts in history. Nor did Plato see 'the Good' or any other ideal form just as an attribute of God. To see the ideal Good was an end in itself for Platonists, it was not a stepping stone to a relationship with God. Ruskin's mind worked differently. Ruskin had not one but two fixed points: Nature, about which he taught himself, although heir to the Romantic movement, and the Christian (Evangelical) God, taught to him by his parents. Nature gave to Ruskin intimations and indications of the character of God, which he believed in anyway. Nature did not point to any abstract, idealized form of itself or Good. It pointed to the Christian God about whom he knew anyway. Thus, the Alps at dawn did not contain God, its beauty or goodness did not point to any Good beyond itself, independent of God. The Alps bathed in light at dawn

showed the beauty and goodness of God in a way which could only be sensed by a soul as sensitive as Ruskin's.

Ruskin, Wordsworth and others tried to describe as best they could their feelings towards nature, leading them to a sense of the divine. They failed to describe fully what they felt, because ultimately it was too incommunicable, personal and intimate.

Ruskin's Diaries give more examples of how he observed nature and through these observations saw, felt, something beyond nature. In this he followed the Romantic mystical experiences which Rosenberg describes as follows:

Mystical ecstasy before the beauty of the God-in-nature (which) is an unconscious pilfering from modes of Christian experience. (28)

Rosenberg is partly wrong in this, for Ruskin was not 'pilfering', but using from the inheritance in which he was brought up. An example of these mystical feelings appears in his diary of 1846. Ruskin was travelling abroad without his parents, and had had from his father a letter complaining about his (John's) expenses and dilatoriness in travelling. The son decided to ignore the letter and, if questioned later, say that he had not received it.

I had no sooner made this resolution than I felt a degree of happiness and elation totally different from all my ordinary states of mind, and this continued so vivid and steady all the way towards Nyon that I could not but feel there was some strange spiritual government of the conscience; and I began to wonder how God should give me so much reward for so little self-denial, and to make all sorts of resolves relating to future conduct. While in the middle of them we stopped to change horses at Rolle, and I got out and sauntered down, hardly knowing where I went, to the lake shore. I had not seen Mont Blanc all the journey before, and was not thinking of it, but when I got to the quay there it was, a great and glorious pyramid of purple in the evening light, seen between two slopes of dark mountain as in the opposite page (here was a sketch) - the lake lying below as calm as glass. In the state of mind in which I then was it seemed a lesson



given by my own favourite mountain - a revelation of nature intended for me only. (29)

These were the basic observations and feeling which gave Modern Painters Vols. 1 and 2 their theological and moral bases. Ruskin believed that he saw divine attributes through the beauty of nature. He was also a sharp observer of that natural world. Though others might find his reading of 'God's second book' difficult to accept, he could not be proved wrong because his experiences were personal and true to him; they were a self-contained reality, 'a revelation of nature intended for me only'.

It could follow from this, and Ruskin made the step, that the artists who depicted nature most realistically would be the best describers of God and would have the deepest feeling for the divine. When he wrote that

English artists . . . have yet, in an honest and good heart, received the word of God from clouds, and leaves, and waves, and kept it, (30)

he had an ideal artist in his mind, but one that could not exist, because no artist was perfect.

But there was a problem.

If it be the moral part of us to which Beauty addresses itself, how does it happen, it will be asked, that it is ever found in the works of impious men, and how is it possible for such to desire or conceive it? (31)

Ruskin had to address himself to this problem of correlating an artist's character to his work. He claimed that impious men could not be perfect artists and that wickedness shown in art meant a fortiori a moral flaw in the painter. Or conversely, a not particularly moral painter could not produce a painting which depicted Beauty with its source in the Divine Attributes. Thus there was in Perugino (32)

an absence of the full outpouring of the sacred spirit; .  
. . traceable, I doubt not, to some deficiencies and  
avaricious flaws of his heart. (33)

Even Rubens (34) and Titian (35) sometimes adopted

coarse types of features and form; . . . after they have  
rendered some passage of exceeding beauty, they will  
suffer some discordant point to interfere with it, and it  
will not hurt them; as if they had no pleasure in that  
which was best. (36)

For the purposes of discussing his thesis - that only pure painters  
could bring out the Divine Attributes in nature - Ruskin preferred  
to use examples of portraiture rather than landscape. As a reviewer  
commented; 'it may be doubted whether the world waited for a sense  
of the Beautiful until the Christian dispensation'. (37) Even so,  
Ruskin claimed of pagan art that

The Greek could not conceive a spirit; he could do  
nothing without limbs; his God is a finite God, talking,  
pursuing, and going journeys. (I know not anything in  
the range of art more unspiritual than the Apollo  
Belvedere.) (38)

The problem of trying to link the character of an artist to the  
purity of his work was one weakness of Ruskin's theory. Another  
weakness was linked to the previous difficulty; the Catholicism of  
artists and Ruskin's own Protestantism with its dislike of things  
Catholic. How could Romanists be great artists? As Romanists they  
were far from being perfect. All he could say was that as far as  
Catholic artists depicting Christ and the other holy Biblical  
characters were concerned:

Ignorant Romanists (made) many . . . efforts . . . under  
the idea of actual representation, . . . by the nobler  
among them I suppose they were intended . . . as mere  
symbols, the noblest that could be employed, but as much  
symbols still as a triangle, or the Alpha and Omega. (39)

The 'I suppose' suggests that Ruskin himself felt his argument to be  
a weak one, and to describe the paintings of Jesus or God as

'symbolic' begs the whole question of how far any painting is symbolic. It was not sufficient to say that a bad painting by a Catholic artist was a misguided attempt to be realistic, while a good painting by another Catholic artist was being successfully symbolic. In all, Ruskin felt that artists had to have a sense of holiness and to see the holy in nature in order to draw nature truthfully.

The same qualities of character were needed to look at either nature or works of art in order to sense the divine attributes shown. Not all could see these divine attributes through natural beauty because not all had the requisite positive qualities of character. (It is to be supposed that Ruskin himself believed that he had these qualities.) According to Ruskin, if an individual were to say that he could not see these divine attributes, then that would be a failing of his own character, and of poor observation. In Modern Painters Vol. 1 Ruskin wrote:

It would appear that we are intended by the Deity to be constantly under their (Ideas of Beauty's) influence, because there is not one single object in nature which is not capable of conveying them. . . . Ideas of beauty . . . are the subjects of moral, but not of intellectual perception. (40)

But not all people perceived these ideas of Beauty.

Ruskin used paintings by Turner to illustrate the similarities needed to appreciate both art and nature.

He alone can appreciate the art, who could comprehend the conversation of the painter, and share in his emotion. . . . The true meaning and end of his art must thus be sealed to thousands, or misunderstood by them. (41)

Ruskin developed this more generally and at greater length in Modern Painters Vol. 2.

The Apostolic words come true, in this minor respect, as in all others, that men are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, having the Understanding darkened because of the hardness of their

hearts, and so, being past feeling, give themselves up to lasciviousness." (42) For we do indeed see constantly that men having naturally acute perceptions of the beautiful, yet not receiving it with a pure heart, nor into their hearts at all, never comprehend it, nor receive good from it; but make it a mere minister to their desires, and accompaniment and seasoning of lower sensual pleasures, until all their emotions take the same earthly stamp, and the sense of beauty sinks into the servant of lust. (43)

In this passage (44) Ruskin is echoing the two classes of people that St. Paul often used in his letters; those living 'in the Spirit' (ἐν πνεύματι) and those living 'in the Flesh' (ἐν σαρκί). Those who have received Christ and accepted him as Lord live by faith and the Holy Spirit. They are 'in the Spirit', living on a higher level. Those who do not follow Christ, but who live by the Law (if they are Jews, for Paul was writing to Jews) live 'in the flesh', the lower, sinful nature of man dominated by ordinary passion, or 'lust' as Ruskin called it. Ruskin transferred this classification to the appreciation of art. He described those people who can see and feel a work of art which is a form of ideal beauty and which reflects the Deity as people who live on a higher, spiritual plane. These were the equivalent of Paul's Christians who lived 'in the Spirit'. However, the majority of people saw art on a sensual or lustful level which was Paul's equivalent of 'in the flesh'.

When Ruskin turned his attention to architecture in The Seven Lamps of Architecture in 1849 he took to that subject the same high-minded moral tone as he had with the art criticism of Modern Painters. His liking for Gothic was a reflection of contemporary tastes. According to Kenneth Clark the Gothic revival had been, until 1820, practically confined to private houses. But after that date churches began to be built in that style. (45) It was at this same period that a sudden outburst of building new churches began, partly in the hope of staving off revolution by making the masses more religious. The moral tone and spiritual purpose which Ruskin brought to his architectural criticism came partly from himself, but

also from Pugin (46) who earlier in the century had seen in the Gothic revival a spiritual purpose. The two men, Pugin and Ruskin, had much in common - but were also divided. They had different faiths, different personalities, and disagreed about the link, or non-link, between Gothic architecture and Roman Catholicism. Their similarities were that they were devout Christians who took seriously the role that architecture could play in religion. Both looked back to the Middle Ages and Gothicism; both believed that architecture influenced and reflected society and both declared that the moral state of architects and workmen would influence what they were building. 'The value of a building depends on the moral worth of its creator'. (47)

Both were Christian, although their two opposed types of Christianity influenced their attitude to architecture, past and present, in different ways. While agreeing that a church building would influence worship, Pugin went further by claiming that the building should be a positive aid to Catholic ritual. As a convert he revelled in the Roman liturgy and gained sensual pleasure from it. Pugin's emphasis was sometimes to the detriment of the soundness of the building for a few of his contemporaries blamed him for 'starving his roof-tree to deck his altar'. (48) Ruskin was an Evangelical brought up to worship in the plain box of Beresford Chapel, Walworth. He was not concerned about the various fripperies of worship, but as an early conservationist (49), he was concerned with the workmanship and soundness of the building itself.

If you cannot afford marble, use Caen stone, but from the best bed; and if not stone, brick, but the best brick; preferring always what is good of a lower order of work or material, to what is bad of a higher; for this is . . . the way to improve every kind of work, and to put every kind of material to better use. (50)

Use what money there is on good, sound building, as opposed to

The treatment of the Papist's temple (which) is eminently exhibitory; it is surface work throughout. (51)

The church building must be an offering of the best, and at a sacrifice. If a building was on the cheap, or if its expense was all on outward show with poor workmanship, then it was not good building, nor worthy of God. In the Levitical sacrifice, costliness was generally a condition of the acceptability of the sacrifice. 'Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.' (52) God cannot be built to on the cheap. Pugin felt that ornaments were an essential aid to worship, while Ruskin put more emphasis on the building itself.

One criticism that Ruskin thought might be levelled against himself was that money should be spent on the poor, rather than on church buildings. But he countered this by writing:

The question is not between God's house and His poor; it is not between God's house and His Gospel. It is between God's house and ours. . . . I do not understand the feeling which would arch our own gates and pave our own thresholds, and leave the church with its narrow door and foot-worn sill. (53)

Both Ruskin and Pugin felt that Gothic architecture of the Middle Ages was the correct style to be used. Pugin's architectural work was to promote Roman Catholicism for it was natural for him to see the Gothic Revival as continuing the Pre-Reformation Catholic Church in England. To him all post-Reformation history and architecture in England was an aberration from the continuity of Roman Catholicism and he hoped that a national Gothic style of church architecture would lead to a restored Roman Catholic nation. The Classical, Palladian and other architectural styles were Protestant and so were bad.

For Ruskin the problem was the opposite, how to separate the Gothic from the Catholic. He wanted to show that the Gothic Revival was Anglican and non-Catholic but was at the same time a continuation of the religious atmosphere of medieval Europe, which of course was Roman Catholic. This was a contradiction that he never bridged satisfactorily. Just because Ruskin was to the fore of British

writers in praise of medieval Catholic Gothic, yet at the same time was a leading apologist for the Evangelical wing of the Church, so his plea for an Evangelical Anglican Gothic revival was open to the charge of inconsistency. His very vehemence in both causes deepened the contradiction, or laid him open to the dreaded charge of Romanism. He tried to overcome this problem in two ways. The first way was a diatribe against the Roman Catholic Church.

No man was ever more inclined than I, both by natural disposition and by many ties of early association, to a sympathy with the principles and forms of the Romanist church. . . . But in confessing this strength of affectionate prejudice, surely I vindicate more respect for my firmly expressed belief, that the entire doctrine and system of that Church is in the fullest sense anti-Christian; that its lying and idolatrous Power is the darkest plague that ever held commission to hurt the Earth; . . . that we never can have the remotest fellowship with the utterers of that fearful falsehood, and live. (54)

The second way Ruskin tried to overcome the problem of distancing the Gothic movement from Roman Catholicism was to underplay the Catholic part of medieval church life and architecture. He praised the architect and worker for their simple sense of the divine when they worshipped through their work while glossing over their Roman Catholicism.

All old work nearly has been hard work. It may be the hard work of children, of barbarians, of rustics; but it is always their utmost. (55)

Ruskin's divided attitude to Gothic architecture, original and revived (which reflected his deeper ambivalence to Roman Catholicism) laid him open to the following strictures.

There is something . . . ludicrous in the notion that the Church of Rome is idolatrous, and yet that the early mediaeval architecture was the result of the purest Christian faith and feeling. . . . The simplicity which can identify the creed and practices of the 13th century with those of 'English Protestantism' is so delicious, that whatever else be Mr. Ruskin's deserts, he may at

least lay claim to the invention of something unquestionably new. (56)

One reason why both Pugin and Ruskin admired Gothic architecture, even though they came to different religious conclusions was that they believed the Middle Ages to have been a good time in which to live. Ruskin believed that the stonemasons, woodcarvers and other tradesmen loved their work, because they were not subjugated to modern industrialism. (In this lay the seeds of Unto This Last and the Guild of St. George.) Pugin in his book Contrasts described the Middle Ages as a time when people were more free, cleaner and in a better environment than they were in the nineteenth century. Both looked for that most elusive and non-existent chapter of history, the Golden Age.

A writer said of the author of Modern Painters Vol. 2 that 'he still assumes art to be nothing but an auxiliary to the Church and to the Religious Tract Society'. (57) In support of this he quoted Ruskin, 'Man's use and function (and let him who will not grant me this follow me no farther, for this I purpose always to assume) are, to be the witness of the glory of God, and to advance that glory by his reasonable obedience and resultant happiness.' (58) In the early and mid 1840's while in his twenties, Ruskin had a Romantic understanding of nature, a deep sense of observation and a firmly instilled faith in God, which was not so firm as he cared to show to the public. All these combined to bear the fruit so aptly described by the reviewer. In the 1850's Ruskin's faith became much less certain and his whole way of seeing God, nature and man changed.



Ruskin next turned from architecture in general to architecture in particular; the particular he chose was of his favourite city, Venice. The most coherent of Ruskin's major works, The Stones of Venice was written within two years and on a specific subject. However, as was his tendency, Ruskin would let his pen wander to wherever his interests took him. The Stones of Venice was ostensibly about the rise and fall of the city, a political rise and decline which the self-proclaimed discerning Ruskin, and those who read his book, could observe from its stones and architecture. He believed that the prosperity and power of Venice, and their reversal, took place because of the religious attitudes of the Venetian leaders and citizens over the centuries. When the city became less pious, its power declined. This was especially so at the time of the Renaissance, since when neither Venice, nor Europe, had remained true to the Christian faith. 'I date the commencement of the Fall of Venice from the death of Carlo Zeno, 8th May, 1418. (1) Carlo Zeno was one of Venice's most noble citizens and his death was followed by war, humiliation at the hands of the Turks, and the establishment of the Inquisition. This decline could be illustrated by the architecture of the city, which was Ruskin's chief concern and love.

Ruskin wrote near the beginning of Stones of Venice:

The evidence which I shall be able to deduce from the arts of Venice will be both frequent and irrefragable, that the decline of her political prosperity was exactly coincident with that of domestic and individual religion.  
(2)

Religious architecture (good or bad) reflected the religious spirit (good or bad) of the age. As Ruskin wrote of the wider European world

Roman Christian (Late Roman Christian, Ruskin probably meant) architecture is the exact expression of the Christianity of the time, very fervid and beautiful - but very imperfect; (it was) in many respects ignorant, and yet radiant with a strong, childish light of imagination,

which flames up under Constantine, illumines all the shores of the Bosphorus and the Aegean and the Adriatic Sea. (3)

But at the end of the Roman Empire, Christianity became weakened, as did the Empire itself. 'The people give themselves up to idolatry, (becoming) corpse-light.'(4)

Ruskin used two types of stones or architecture to describe the original strength and the subsequent weakening of Venice, in its religion and political will; the churches and the tombs. To illustrate the beginning of the process, as an example of rude, simple but strong Christianity, Ruskin took the earliest church in the area, that of Santa Fosca, just outside Venice.

The pillars of the portico . . . and the arches they sustain, together only raise the roof to the height of a cattle-shed; and the first strong impression which the spectator receives from the whole scene is, that whatever sin it may have been which has on this spot been visited with so utter a desolation, it could not at least have been ambition. (5)

Perhaps Ruskin compared the church to a cattle-shed to emphasize the simplicity of that building to the stable of the Nativity. The 'whole building . . . resemble(s) a refuge from Alpine storm (rather) than the cathedral of a populous city.' (6) The whole simple church was

expressive at once of the deep sorrow and the sacred courage of men who had no home left them upon earth, but who looked for one to come, of men "persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed". (7)

The greatest church in Venice was the Cathedral of St. Mark, built at the height of Venice's power when it was still being governed by holy men. For an example of the centrality of Venetian religion, Ruskin pointed out the mosaic of St. Mark's. Besides being beautiful, the mosaic fulfilled a practical religious aim. As most ordinary people did not have bibles, their faith was learnt from what they could see. St. Mark's provided much of this type of

learning, with the mosaics showing the Holy Spirit, Apostles, salvation and judgement. The main entrance, which most people used, proclaimed the Christian 'main groundwork and hope', "'Christ is risen," and "Christ shall come"'. (8) Ruskin believed that Venice was strong at the time of the building of St. Mark's, because its citizens knew these two great religious truths. The city would remain strong, politically and spiritually, as long as its people remembered that

"He shall return to do judgement and justice." The strength of Venice was given her, so long as she remembered this: her destruction found her when she had forgotten this; and it found her irrevocably, because she forgot it without excuse. (9)

An architectural indication of this forgetfulness was in one of the last three churches built - Santa Maria Formosa. Its Classical style facade

consists of a pediment, sustained on four Corinthian pilasters, and is, I believe, the earliest in Venice which appears entirely destitute of every religious symbol, sculpture, or inscription. . . . The entire facade is nothing else than a monument to the Admiral Vincenzo Cappello. . . . He died in 1542; and we have, therefore, the latter part of the sixteenth century fixed as the period when, in Venice, churches were first built to the glory of man, instead of the glory of God. (10)

This message describing the rise and fall of the city was to be seen in the tombs of leading Venetians as well as in the architecture over which they presided when alive. These tombs showed how their incumbents and relatives felt about death and how they adhered to Christianity. It also showed their self-esteem or otherwise. As self-esteem waxed, so did their religious faith wane. One of the earliest tombs which Ruskin described, and of which he approved, was that of two Doges, Jacquo and Lorenzo Tiepolo of the thirteenth century. The bases had the names and dates of death, carved on the sarcophagus were angels bearing censers, and two birds, with crosses on their heads, reflecting the vision seen by the father of the Tiepolo brothers who then founded the church for the Dominicans.

According to Ruskin the tomb was simple with Christian themes, without ostentation, but with a sense of unworthiness. (11)

For the next stage of funeral architecture, featuring the deceased slightly more prominently, Ruskin moved to Verona to describe a fourteenth century tomb that of Can Grande della Scala. Although on it were crudely carved pictures of his life, the main carving was of the Annunciation and on the top a carving of the man himself, laid as if asleep.

Now, observe, in this tomb, as much concession is made to the pride of man as may ever consist with honour, discretion, or dignity. (12)

Later tombs, especially once the Renaissance was under way, showed a different attitude. The earthly life and good name of the person who had died became more important than his eternal salvation or his Christian faith. By the late fourteenth century, florid descriptions of the character or carvings of the (non-Christian) virtues hid the wickedness of of the person who had died. Ruskin felt that all the Renaissance and post-Renaissance leaders of Venice were wicked, almost in inverse proportion to the effusions of honour upon the tombs. The last tomb that Ruskin described, in all the irony at his command, was that of Doge Bertuccio with his son and daughter-in-law.

Towering from the pavement to the vaulting of the church, behold a mass of marble, sixty or seventy feet in height, of mingled yellow and white, the yellow carved into the form of an enormous curtain . . . in front of which, in the now usual stage attitudes, advance the statues of the Doge Bertuccio Valier, his son the Doge Silvester Valier, and his son's wife, Elisabeth. . . . (The statue) of the Dogarassa is a consummation of grossness, vanity, and ugliness, - the figure of a large and wrinkled woman. . . . Beneath and around are scattered Virtues, Victories, Fames, genii, - the entire company of the monumental stage assembled, as before a drop scene, . . . deserving attentive study as exhibiting every condition of false taste and feeble conception. (13)

There was a lot more in this vein, but Ruskin finished his attack by asking rhetorically: 'Nor need we go farther to learn the reason of the fall of Venice.' (14)

At the Renaissance, the Christian symbols and scenes on the tombs became displaced by classical themes. Thus on the Valier tomb were classical virtues, and Victory. Also, attitudes to death changed. (15) The earliest tombs had simple figures carved lying on top of the sarcophagus. Later sculptors pretended that death had not happened.

The Vendremin monument is one of the last which shows, or pretends to show, the recumbent figure laid in death. A few years later, this idea became disagreeable to polite minds; and, lo! the figures, which before had been laid at rest upon the tomb pillow, raised themselves on their elbows, and began to look around them. The soul of the sixteenth century dared not contemplate its body in death. (16)

By the late seventeenth century, the statue of John Pesaro was of the Doge 'in robes of state (who) stands forward with its arms expanded, like an actor courting applause.' (17) All pretence of death had ceased.

Although Ruskin saw the spiritual health or ill-health of Venice in terms of its public architecture and funerary arrangements, he also described the Venetian faith to be a private rather than a public matter. As anti-papal feeling was latent in Venice; making religion a private rather than a public business lessened opportunities for papal interference within the state. Of this the evangelical Ruskin approved. There was a 'magnificent and successful struggle which she (Venice) maintained against the temporal authority of the Church of Rome' (18) and Clement V's (19) excommunicating the Doge and his fellow-citizens was evidence of the normal, healthy, anti-Roman tendencies of Venetian state policy.

'The most curious phenomenon in all Venetian history is the vitality of religion in private life, and its deadness in public policy.'

(20) Yet while commerce and trade were the mainsprings of state policy, the private religion of the city's leaders did influence how they behaved.

The tears of Dandolo were not shed in hypocrisy, though they could not blind him to the importance of the conquest of Zara. The habit of assigning to religion a direct influence over all his own actions, and the affairs of his own daily life, is remarkable in every great Venetian during the times of the prosperity of the state. (21)

But, officially, state policy was about trade and power, not religion.

Decline in Venice began just before the Renaissance and accelerated with its onset. 'The city kept festival for a whole year' on the accession of Foscari in 1423, (22) which unnecessary celebration and expense marked the beginning of the decline of Venice, tying in with Ruskin's remark about the death of Carlo Zeno five years earlier. With the Renaissance, Venice gave herself increasingly to luxury as the years went by, thus ending all true Christian religion. At which point, Ruskin tended to lose enthusiasm and interest in his subject.

Architecture, churches and tombs; these were outside, tangible evidences of a state's inward religion and spiritual attitude, the tale of which Ruskin carefully unravelled. In these objects Ruskin saw the religious rise and fall of the city and its citizens. He was enthusiastic for the medieval architecture and culture, lukewarm to the Renaissance and ran out of sympathy and understanding as he reached modern times. This was because he saw in nineteenth-century Venice the evils of Romanism with few of its benefits. Thus he was contemptuous of the modern Venetian attitude to St. Mark's church.

I never heard from anyone the most languid expression of interest in any feature of the church, or perceived the slightest evidence of their understanding the meaning of its architecture. . . . The beauty which it possesses is unfelt, the language it uses is forgotten; and in the midst of the city to whose service it has so long been

consecrated, and still filled by crowds of the descendants of those to whom it owes its magnificence, it stands, in reality, more desolate than the ruins through which the sheep-walk passes unbroken in our English valleys. (23)

At the time of writing, Ruskin pessimistically thought that all Venice's fine buildings and art treasures would be ruined or destroyed. (24)

From The Stones of Venice Ruskin drew conclusions for his own times - partly that the sad state of contemporary affairs was the result of the Renaissance. For that movement seemed to have caused the decline of Christianity, not only in Venice, but throughout Europe in the nineteenth-century. Before the Renaissance, all knowledge, painting and architecture had been based on Christianity. They were not always well done, but they were done with a spirit of faith. The Renaissance destroyed that way of life by the new knowledge of science and the paganism of neo-classicism. Ruskin used as an example the artists of the early Renaissance to show this calamitous change. Although Ruskin admired Raphael (25) and Michelangelo (26), it was a qualified admiration because they were on the border between Gothic and Renaissance.

Raphael, Leonardo, and Michael Angelo were all trained in the old (i.e. Gothic) school; they all had masters who knew the true ends of art (to increase faith). . . . My own conviction is . . . that he (Raphael) painted best when he knew least. (27)

The Renaissance artists thought that they knew more than their predecessors, as they did in matters of anatomy, perspective and colouring. But, 'in later times, they used the objects of faith that they might show their powers of painting'. (28) Until eventually it mattered little to the artist what they painted, be it classical or religious, as long as they could show off their skills.

Ruskin was doubtful about how far mere skill of artistry could lead the observer to any Christian faith. He went so far as to say that

the truly religious person took no interest in art at all. Simple art could influence a person's faith more than the greatest Italian painting. The likeness to a friend or an interesting incident portrayed would set off an emotional or religious reaction. Carlo Dolci (29), Guercino (30), Benjamin West (31) and John Martin (32), although technically inferior to the great Italians, were more effective artists to the nineteenth century Protestant mind than was Raphael. (33) 'There is perhaps no more popular Protestant picture than Salvator's "Witch of Endor," of which the subject was chosen by the painter simply because, under the names of Saul and the Sorceress, he could paint a captain of banditti, and a Neapolitan hag'. (34)

More serious than the Renaissance influence on art and architecture was its indirect effect upon the religious faith, politics and social fabric of Europe. The growth of science and knowledge on the one hand and enthusiasm for things classical on the other damaged Christianity beyond repair.

Knowledge is, at best, the pilgrim's burden or the soldier's panoply, often a weariness to them both; and the Renaissance knowledge is like the Renaissance armour of plate, binding and cramping the human form; while all good knowledge is like the crusader's chain mail, which throws itself into folds with the body, yet it is rarely so forged as that the clasps and rivets do not gall us. (35)

Knowledge deadened imagination - for the greatest genius

remains in great part a child, seeing with the large eyes of children, in perpetual wonder, not conscious of much knowledge, - conscious, rather, of infinite ignorance, and yet infinite power. (36)

When a man acquires a great deal of scientific knowledge, he thinks that he knows a lot, but he loses Job's realization that compared to the all-knowing God, a human being is almost totally ignorant. (37) But true knowledge comes from the ancient religious root which was in the medieval, Gothic Europe. 'Our scientific teaching, nowadays,



is nothing more nor less than the assiduous watering of trees whose stems are cut through.' (38) In much of his later life, Ruskin tried to turn away from the results of knowledge and science for he thought that the Renaissance resulted in the evils of the Industrial Revolution. To Ruskin, ideas, art, leisure, learning and the dignity of work were more important than science and the production of wealth and goods. (39) He wanted to put back the clock of history, to return to the good old days of the Gothic era (as he understood it), to abolish the Renaissance and all its work. 'We no more live to know, than we live to eat. We live to contemplate, enjoy, act, adore.' (40)

Besides introducing science, the Renaissance also made popular and respectable the classical pantheon, ousting the one true God and his Son. Pagan mythology was studied and admired to the detriment of Christianity, which was, according to Ruskin, badly taught in the years immediately preceding the Renaissance.

Men did not indeed openly sacrifice to Jupiter, or build silver shrines for Diana, but the ideas of Paganism nevertheless became thoroughly vital and present with them at all times; and it did not matter in the least, as far as respected the power of true religion, whether the Pagan image was believed in or not, so long as it entirely occupied the thoughts. (41)

Ruskin felt that it might have been better if the confused, divided man had actually sacrificed to Jupiter rather than going through life 'naming one God, imagining another, and dreading none'. (42) Christianity, in its first Gothic mode, only fell and the Renaissance only happened, because of the weakness of the Roman Catholic Church in proclaiming the true faith. It was, after all, Roman Catholicism and Gothicism which had suffered at the hands of new thoughts and ideas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Ruskin next turned his mind to the modern religious scene. If modern Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism were in the mould of pre-Renaissance religion then there would be good in them, just as the

Roman and Anglican High Church architects were imitating the Gothic of past ecclesiastical architecture. While the Roman Catholic Church included 'all the worst of those who called themselves Christians', (43) it also had the best of the simple and believing, like simple pre-Renaissance Venetians. But, as always, Ruskin was critical of much contemporary Catholic practice. St. Mark's Venice was not appreciated, by and large, by the people of Venice. Most users were like

devotees at the greater number of the renowned shrines of Romanism (who) may be seen murmuring their appointed prayers with wandering eyes and unengaged gestures. (44)

Yet Ruskin was even more scathing of what he felt to be the idolatry for dolls which were thrown around amidst a family, then dressed up in tawdry finery and worshipped. Mary was seen to come before, not after, Jesus in importance and reverence.

Ruskin was also critical of the Protestant movement. He regretted the divisions of Christianity, not only because they eventually led to rationalism in France and Italy, (45) but also because in his time 'the mere fact of the existence of an antagonism' (46) was bad. The Protestant attitudes led to further splits and pointless inventions of new doctrines. The learned infidel outside the Christian faith 'drew his own conclusions, both from the rancour of the antagonists, and from their errors'. (47) Ruskin could see the lesson many breakaway sects have learnt the hard way, that divisions and church-founding can be habit-forming.

Ruskin wrote The Stones of Venice for more than one purpose. One of his reasons was that he wanted to draw a parallel between the decline of the Venetian state over several hundred years and contemporary religious Britain, which was also in decline, as he and Evangelicals generally understood the contemporary national scene.

The civilized world is at this moment, collectively, just as Pagan as it was in the second century; a small body of believers being now, as they were then, representative of the Church of Christ in the midst of the faithless. (48)

But, Ruskin claimed, there was a difference. In the second century people did not claim a faith that they did not have. In nineteenth-century Britain almost all claimed 'nominally and fashionably' to be Christian - but in fact were not. Just as Venice declined when the faith of its citizens declined after 1418, so also would the state of Britain decline as its countrymen continued a downward spiral of unfaithfulness. The whole small body of Christians would be overwhelmed, until judgement came, as judgement had come upon Venice.

At the beginning of the 1850's, Ruskin published a pamphlet, originally an appendix to Stones of Venice. This pamphlet was strongly evangelical in tone, defending the religious position in which he had been brought up. Eight years later, in August 1858, John Ruskin left a service in a gloomy Waldensian chapel, 'unconverted', as he described it, never more to be bound by the religion of his parents. (1) The reasons for this personal journey from a public, strong evangelical Christianity to unconversion and virtual atheism are to be found in his letters, diary and autobiography Praeterita, for there was a long period of doubting and struggling in Ruskin's life which led to this unconversion. However, during this time, his formal printed works, especially in the early 1850's show very few signs of any lessening of his faith because this division between his writings and personal faith was unknown to the reading public. Later on in the decade, he wrote fewer books and articles in which it was convenient to air his religious views. Although he had always been critical of Catholic and Protestant, the Church and clerics, the criticisms were from an avowedly evangelical basis which admitted of no doubts about the eternal verities of the Christian faith.

Notes On The Construction of Sheepfolds was written for people interested in the contemporary controversy about the setting up of a Roman Catholic hierarchy in Britain under Cardinal Wiseman in 1850. Ostensibly it was an essay on the roles of clergy, Church and State, written under the original guise of a tenuous development of the relationship between the Venetian clergy and the civil authorities to be an appendix to The Stones of Venice. His father likewise protested against the Papal Aggression in letters to The Times. Both of Ruskin's parents were, as good Evangelicals, appalled at this papist advance. How much their son was likewise appalled, and how much he simply felt that he ought to appear appalled is difficult to know. He was himself going through a time of spiritual doubt. But, as was his wont, he put pen to paper and published Notes On The Construction Of Sheepfolds in 1851. (2) In it Ruskin

wanted to make less sacred the concept of 'The Church', to down-grade the post of priest and to up-grade the links between state and church - common enough themes for Protestant writers.

Ruskin wrestled with the old problem of 'What is a Church?' A church, as described in the Bible, was usually a gathering of people, including sinners. Those who claimed more than this for a Church made 'not so much a religious error as a philological solecism' (3), a solecism which was not be committed by Protestant English divines who never substituted 'the clergy' for 'the Church'. Ruskin was unfair in this - neither would the Roman Catholics commit this error. As the Church was a gathering of people, it should be more willing than it was to draw limits on what sort of people were in, and what sort should be out. Ruskin did not accept that baptism itself was sufficient for membership, 'for we know that half the baptized people in the world are very visible rogues, believing neither in God nor devil'. (4) These 'very visible rogues' should be openly condemned and excommunicated.

We know that Christ's people are not thieves - not liars - not busybodies - not dishonest - not avaricious - not wasteful - not cruel. Let us then get ourselves well clear (of these people); and having thus got that Church into decent shape and cohesion, it will be time to think of drawing the stake-nets closer. (5)

In these two sentences lie a theme which later became one of Ruskin's chief complaints against the Church; its members were not holy or good enough. On this matter of limiting Church membership to those worthy, Ruskin was insistent both at this time and later on. He said that as a matter of fact most Church people did not follow Christ's teaching for if they did, the Church would be very different, smaller, more worthy and more holy.

Ruskin tried to explain what should be meant by the word 'priest', a word much used by the Catholics and the Puseyites as well as being found in the Prayer Book. Ruskin made it clear in his essay that as far as he was concerned, if any high church or Catholic connotation

was attached to the word 'priest', then the word and concept were undesirable in the Church of England. A Church does not need priests. In the New Testament, he pointed out, Church leaders were called by all sorts of names; Bishops, Elders, Evangelists, Deacons, all without any particular function or status attached to them, being appointed simply because a man could do that particular job well. The Bible was the guide for Ruskin's contemporary Evangelicals to understand the appointment, function and status of the clergy and from that that source, Ruskin believed, came the definition of a church leader or clergyman as one being involved in Teaching and Discipline; teaching people to find their own truth for themselves (rather than being told what to believe) and disciplining them. In the New Testament, the Church and its leaders were very willing to discipline by casting out those who did wrong or did not conform to Church doctrine and ethics. It suited Ruskin to take the Acts of the Apostles as being true accounts of events.

This was not a new debate, for there were many schemes in the second quarter of the century to reform the Prayer Book, including the modification of priestly absolution. These were mostly Evangelical proposals, for the Tractarians did not want to 'tamper with it (the Prayer Book) to comprehend Dissenters.' (6) This debate was, in its turn, mixed up with the right of the Church of England to decide its own liturgy.

Ruskin accepted the priesthood of all believers. If the clergy taught and disciplined, that was all (which was a lot) that they had to do. It was not the minister's duty to forgive sins.

As for the unhappy retention of the term Priest in our English Prayer-book, so long as it was understood to mean nothing but an upper order of Church officer, licensed to tell the congregation . . . what (for the rest) they might, one would think, have known without being told, - that "God pardoneth all them that truly repent," - there was little harm in it. (7)

A higher interpretation would be harmful - and was harmful. Ruskin disapproved of the more obvious absolution by the priest in the Holy Communion service. The Mattins prayer of absolution, which he quoted above, was more vague about the minister's or priest's role in enabling sins to be forgiven. Ambiguity of interpretation over the word 'priest' was all right for Ruskin, as long as 'priest' translated the Greek *πρεσβυτερος*, presbyter or elder, as when Paul and Barnabas appointed elders at Antioch and other churches with prayer and fasting. (8) 'Presbyter' or 'elder' in the New Testament was a vague term. The functions and status were not closely defined, and may well have been greater than just teaching and disciplining. The action of Paul's laying hands on the presbyters at Antioch suggests a higher function than Ruskin would have allowed. Ruskin sensed danger when the English clergy thought of themselves as priests in the Old Testament, Levitical, meaning of the word. That priesthood had ended with the coming of the Great High Priest and the priesthood of all believers. (9) But Ruskin did the High Church movement and the Roman Catholic Church an injustice to say that they treated the function of priesthood in the same way as the Jews treated the Levitical priesthood.

The setting up of a Roman Catholic hierarchy cast uncertainties of the relationship between Church and State. According to Ruskin, the two should be clearly united, with the state curbing any over-zealousness amongst the clergy. 'The History of Religious Enthusiasm should be written by some one who had a life to give to its investigation; it is one of the most melancholy pages in human records'. (10) Ruskin had a programme to put right the woes and shortcomings of the Anglican Church and to face the Roman Catholic threat. He called for unity between the High Church and the Evangelical wings of the Church of England, including in this plan the Church of Scotland, for he had Scottish roots. This unity would off-set the danger of Roman Catholicism. The way to unite would be to follow the Scriptures and cut out the word 'priest' from the Prayer Book, make the Church of Scotland accept written prayers and turn out the refractory clergy who did not accept the correct answer

to the baptismal questions. Then all would be well in a united Church. 'Thus the whole body of Protestants, united in one great Fold' would result in 'Anti-Christ' being 'overthrown.' (11)

In his pamphlet Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds Ruskin had three aims. The first was to oppose the Roman Catholic doctrines, for he, like his parents and many others, were deeply opposed to any increase in Catholic power. The second was to promote the evangelical truths about the Church and about the priesthood of all believers. The third aim was to show his dismay at the divisions within the Protestant movement in Britain.

Ruskin's views were open to the criticism that because he articulated much of what other like-minded Evangelicals were thinking, they would force the Puseyites and Roman Catholics closer together. Feelings against the new Roman Catholic hierarchy were fuelled by Wiseman's ill-advised Pastoral of 1850, while Newman's departure to Rome suggested that the High Church Anglicans and the Roman Catholics had more in common with each other than did the two wings of the Anglican Church. So Ruskin and Evangelicals who issued warnings and threats could make the religious differences and suspicions within Anglicanism grow deeper.

Also criticisms could be made on the internal logic and arguments of Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds. Ruskin, to make his point about the leaders of the Church, claimed that 'Church' means a 'congregation or assembly of men'. But Ruskin immediately muddied the waters of the meaning of 'Church' by giving it many subsidiary meanings, such as an elect spiritual host, as St. Paul described it:

A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (12)

But then, Ruskin returned to his much more mundane meaning of the word 'Church' as a collection of believers in one area, based on texts like 'Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain



prophets and teachers'. (13) He asked that men would use the word 'Church' in one sense or the other - but not both: 'that they will accept the sense in which it is used by the Apostles, or that they deny this sense, and propose a new definition of their own'. (14) But some of the trouble with any religious discussion is that the various writers of the Bible did not use words consistently while Ruskin himself and other writers reflected this Biblical inconsistency.

Ruskin believed that the Church had a God-given correct teaching about morality and behaviour, but not a God-given teaching about doctrine. At the same time, the Church was composed of both an Invisible Church (the Communion of Saints and followers of Christ past and present) and also of a 'large percentage of the false wisdom and contrary weight of Undetected Anti-Christians.' (15) This hybrid Church could be right over matters of morality and discipline, for these matters were easy to understand.

Following the Bible, doctrine must be taught gently, as in 'in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves'. (16) But, again following the Bible, 'The minister is to speak, exhort, and rebuke with ALL AUTHORITY'. (17, Ruskin's emphasis) Ruskin gave no adequate reason why there should be less controversy over behaviour than over doctrine, although in Church life opinions about the correctness of human behaviour are, if anything, more divided and divisive than opinions about the theology of God and Jesus Christ. However, Ruskin knew as well as anyone else the problems of taking too literally what the Bible has to say about any particular matter, and that against one text, another could be quoted. He admitted as such when, in a letter to F.D.Maurice (18) he quoted 'judge not that ye be not judged', (19) but dismissed it by saying that it was always quoted because 'It is a pleasant text that for most people' (20). Ruskin wrote that 'counter-texts' about judgement and discipline within a church should be used. Christianity and Christians have always been divided between condemning wrong and

being loving towards sinners; a conflict which the correspondence between John Ruskin and F.D.Maurice brought out clearly.

F.D.Maurice and John Ruskin came from very different backgrounds, which led to their disagreeing with each other. Ruskin, with his Evangelical up-bringing, was taught that as God would elect and reject, so the Church could do likewise. Maurice came from a Unitarian family and believed that individuals brought about their own judgement and punishment by how they led their life and faith in this world. 'What, then, is Death Eternal, but to be without God?' asked Maurice. (21) He was less willing than was Ruskin to judge who should be in or out of a Church, and he was less willing to subscribe to the eternal equivalent of a judgement leading to Heaven or Hell.

Ruskin's evangelical bias was equally clear in an unpublished pamphlet on Baptism, written because of the Gorham controversy. Why Ruskin and his parents decided not to publish is unknown. At some later date Ruskin wrote on a wrapper of the manuscript; 'Kept to see that I wrote worse once than now'. (22) The editors of his works, Cook and Wedderburn (who were keen to show Ruskin as a man with a religious faith, but not bigoted) claimed that Ruskin was referring to his hand-writing. In the essay Ruskin accepted the contemporary Evangelical teaching that conversion did not necessarily come through baptism, but could come through a later turning to Christ, from within a person; it could not be inspired from outside. The Gorham case arose because the Bishop of Exeter refused to institute the Evangelical Reverend Cornelius Gorham (23) to a living. The Bishop refused to do so because he believed that Gorham's understanding of baptism was wrong.

Gorham refused to assert that regeneration was always given in (infant) baptism, though he allowed that it might so be given. . . . He sometimes represented the bishop as teaching that baptism was always and unconditionally efficacious to regenerate; but this was not just to (Bishop) Phillpotts. . . . They were agreed that by hypocrisy or atheism an adult might bar the

working of sacramental grace at the moment of baptism.  
(24)

Ruskin's essay began with a jaundiced survey of the world religious scene, an attitude towards the failure of Christianity which was always to remain with him. A week after a bank-crash in London, Ruskin pointed out, and the news would be known in India. But 1,850 years was insufficient for Jesus' message to be accepted in Britain. Even in Christ's flock the norm was

Angry words of God's ministers one to the other -  
paralysed efforts of Christian teachers one by the other  
- contending congregations, obstinate about forms of  
words and forms of opinion, and God's servants giving  
themselves leisure to dispute about times and methods of  
conversion, while the whole earth is still lying in  
wickedness. (25)

People had been baptized, for it was an almost universal practice in Ruskin's time. But the practice was to no avail.

It is nevertheless as clear as noonday, since it is admitted that the greater number of baptized persons throughout Europe are Godless sinners, that the Church... does Not mean by Regeneration anything of this kind. (26)

'Anything of this kind' Ruskin defined as

the Saving Unity with Christ, the final conversion of the sinner to God, the consummate Grace after the bestowal of which they cannot perish. (27)

Ruskin, by his training and his outlook, was an observer. He looked. He saw, as he did for the rest of his life, that most people, in and out of the Church, did not show signs of regeneration. 'Ye shall know them by their fruits', (28) though Ruskin did not quote this. Another argument against the efficacy of baptism was the example of a heathen. If a person allowed himself to be christened, knowing neither the language nor the significance of the ceremony, while simply hoping to gain money or clothes from a missionary, that heathen would not receive the grace of God. The most that Ruskin was willing to claim for baptism was that there

might be regeneration, but that it was not permanent. The salt once had flavour, but once this is lost, it is thrown out. (29) Ruskin also quoted those who 'for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away'. (30) He cannot be saved. The reader, Ruskin suggested, cannot interpolate the text and read 'for a while pretend to believe', (31) which is how the text could be interpreted by one believing in the indelible efficacy of baptismal grace.

Ruskin ended the essay with two pleas. He asked Churchmen that whatever they think about baptism, 'teach (your) children to love Christ. They will not tell you that is contrary to Scriptures.' (32) He asked the Evangelicals to make as much of baptism as they could; 'Put Christ to the fair trial. See if He will not . . . bless the Child which you baptize in His name, and whether those whom their Lord has blessed, shall not be Blessed for Ever'. (33) This was a conciliatory plea to finish a pugnacious essay.

The author had three points on which to base this essay. The first was that automatic and irrevocable regeneration by baptism was impossible. The second was that the Church was wasting its time and energy in lengthy arguments. The third was that there was a great deal of room for improvement amongst baptized people. This last point, especially, was a constant theme in Ruskin's later social and religious (or anti-religious) writings, when he became more critical of society in general and of the Church in particular.

In the 1850's, to the readers of his books, Ruskin showed a brilliant mind which was based on a seriously held Evangelical faith, and a wide knowledge of the Bible. He was a man who could be sympathetic to the better aspects of Roman Catholicism. The reality was quite different. In the twelve years between 1846 and 1858 his public writings and private opinions were running in very different religious and irreligious channels. Some signs of his changing attitude - on the non-religious side - could be seen in his increased awareness of inequality and injustice in European society. This was already being formulated three years before he wrote Unto

This Last when, in 1857, he gave two lectures titled The Political Economy of Art to a meeting of industrialists in Manchester. (34) In these lectures, Ruskin said that all people should be educated to a trade, that art should be encouraged and that mankind should have a good environment in which to live. Labour should be managed to work in co-operation rather than in competition, for this latter would lead to mutual destruction. Although this was not immediately a religious theme it showed how Ruskin's attitudes were changing. Within his mind, with its penchant for taking in and linking many and varied subjects a non-religious subject could lead to another, religious, one. Ruskin was looking, not at nature, but at people. Previously he had looked and found God in nature. Now he looked for, but did not find, God in how mankind organized society. But man was made in God's image, and society should be organized as God would have wanted and as Jesus had preached; hence one of the links between Ruskin's theology and social reform.

In April 1858 Ruskin became 'unconverted' in a Waldensian chapel in Turin - or so he claimed in Praeterita and Fors Clavigera. 'My Evangelical beliefs were put away - to be debated no more'. As Tim Hilton has pointed out; 'That was not true: he spent the next thirty years debating them.' (1) How did he come to this turning point of his religious life? The journey was a long one, involving his art criticism, his understanding of the scriptures and his relationships within his family.

Ruskin, all his life, loved and respected his parents (more than he did Effie, his wife). Margaret and John James had a tremendous influence over him from childhood. But in his thirties he came, naturally enough, more in contact with other influences. The geological problems of faith had always been with him, but his acquaintance with Carlyle, Manning, Spurgeon and many others outside the traditional Evangelical circles - besides his own studies and thoughts - wrought religious changes in him.

Ruskin occasionally admitted religious doubts to his friends in private. He wrote to Acland in 1845, at the same time as completing the Evangelical tract Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds that

You speak of the Flimsiness of your own faith. Mine, which was never strong, is being beaten into mere gold leaf, and flutters in weak rags from the letter of its old forms; but the only letters it can hold by at all are the old Evangelical formulae. If only the Geologists would let me alone, I could do very well, but those dreadful Hammers! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses - and on the other side, these unhappy blinking Puseyisms; men trying to do right and losing their very Humanity. (2)

In his Diary four years later, June 1849, he again refers to his lack of belief;

They say the French are beaten again at Rome, and another revolution in Paris; (The Ruskins abhorred republicanism, socialism and revolution.) many signs seem to multiply

around us, and yet, my unbelief no more yields than when all the horizon was clear. (3)

He was at this time reading and making extracts from the Book of Revelation, so perhaps reports of a revolution set him off on a religious train of thought. To try and stiffen his weakening faith, in 1848 he wrote in his diary about a meeting he had with a Mr. Oldfield. (4)

(I questioned him) respecting the origin of his faith. It was a deliberate conviction, attained by careful reading and examination of all serious and dignified objections to Christianity, as well as of the evidence for it, begun about the age of twenty six, in shame at not being able to render a reason for the faith taught him from a child. Afterwards, he had rested secure. (5)

Ruskin's Diary entry, describing at length this meeting and Mr. Oldfield's secure faith suggested that he was himself looking for some certainty in his own faith and was pleased to be able to listen to this older man who had come through a difficult spiritual time.

His life was also changing domestically, for he married Effie Gray, his Scottish relative, in 1848. It was a marriage doomed to disaster through Ruskin's selfishness and his parents' meddling. This marriage did not change Ruskin's religion, for Effie had no influence at all on her husband's thinking and writing. She was a Scottish Episcopalian of, as far as can be known, an uncomplicated and conventional faith. She knew the Bible sufficiently well to try and persuade (pathetically and unsuccessfully) her husband to consummate the marriage.

After I began to see things better (a few months into their marriage) I argued with him and took the Bible but he soon silenced me and I was not sufficiently awake to what position I was in. (6)

While courting earlier he had used a different tone to Effie:

I feel that God has given you to me - and he gives no

imperfect gifts - He will give me also the power to keep your heart - to fill it - to make it joyful. (7)

For much of the 1840's and early 1850's, including during his marriage, Ruskin's religious routine, his outward religious conformity, stayed as it always had by keeping Sundays quietly and attending worship. He read the Bible, and even, on his second long stay in Venice with Effie, found time to write a commentary on Job (which has not survived). A commentary is not written without considerable study and thought. Effie suspected that part of her husband's religious difficulty was that he could not take the Bible simply (even though he sometimes exhorted others to do so).

What I dislike about him is his wish to understand the Bible throughout - which nobody in this world will ever do - and unless they receive it as a little child it will not be made profitable to them. He wishes to satisfy his intellect and his vanity in reading the Scriptures and does not pray that his mind and heart may be softened and improved by them. He chuses to study Hebrew and read the Fathers instead of asking God to give him Light. His whole desire for knowledge appears to me to originate in Pride and as long as this remains and his great feeling of Security and doing everything to please himself he is ready for any temptation. (8)

This was an astute observation.

An example of Ruskin's 'wish to understand the Bible' can be seen in some of his Diary entries of 1849 when he tabulated the various meanings and purposes of the word 'Truth' in the Book of Proverbs. (9) God loves truth and hates lying, souls are saved by speaking truth, truth will last, lies will be found out, he read. Ruskin was looking for, in the Book of Proverbs, a description of truth which was simple and easy to understand. In his public writings, his deep concern for finding truth in different spheres of art and knowledge was much more complex. He did not care to realize that any answer from the Bible would be as complex as in his writings, even if there was one definition of 'truth'. The simpler Effie could understand this better than her husband. He had pursued this quest for the



meaning of truth in a letter of 1857 to the Marchioness of Waterford, (10) but he took it from a different angle, although again from the Bible. 'When Christ made "as though he would have gone further" at Emmaus, was He not pretending to have an intention he did not, in order to try his disciples?' (11) Ruskin was trying to make out why there seemed to be deceit in Jesus' actions and what the truth behind it was. Society will be saved by truth, yet Jesus was apparently being deceitful in his actions. This is a strained and literal interpretation of that passage. Less strained was Ruskin's observation in the same letter that

Whenever throughout His life He asked a question - was He not pretending ignorance - in order to try the person enquired of? or, in general, to veil His Omniscience so that the men among whom He ministered might not have the constant sense of Deity being present? (12)

Ruskin used Old Testament examples as well. He ended by telling his correspondent that deception, lies, could be told for good under certain circumstances, depending on the end to be achieved. This came strangely from a person, who, for the most part, said what he felt and did not practise deception in his life, except in his marriage.

Ruskin and his father remained, as always, connoisseurs of sermons. In 1850, while staying with his parents-in-law he described how he

Heard today two very bad sermons: one from pure Scotch, the other high Puseyite - the former the most offensive, the latter the least useful. Both not knowing how to fill up their time, but the Scotchman doing it the most energetically. . . . While the Episcopalian in a quieter and more decorous, but still more trashy and drivelling, fashion spoiled Deuteronomy. . . . Really I believe the only good of such sermons is the self-denial exercised in hearing them. (13)

The Reverend Henry Melville, as always, was much better, for the Ruskins liked the preacher in their own home Chapel. Just before going to Scotland, Ruskin wrote that

I have been today with my Mother to hear Mr. Melville on

Isaiah 55.4. 'Behold, I have given him for a Witness.' .  
. . I felt this sermon laid to my heart; may God help me  
to keep it close there. If I cannot get it, I will write  
it more fully. Laus Deo. (14)

One sermon which Ruskin noted approvingly was by a Roman Catholic at Sallanches, about sacraments the previous year. 'I went to Mass, to hear how they preached', and he seemed to be interested and impressed. (15)

In 1854 Effie left the matrimonial home to return to her parents' house in near Edinburgh. The subsequent annulment was made more difficult because John's parents, especially his mother, had an unfounded fear that their son would turn Roman Catholic. It was an added stress to the family at the time, and was probably more upsetting to his mother than the annulment itself. A conversion would separate parents and son - Effie's departure kept them together. Margaret's unfounded fears were a misinterpretation of John's sympathies with some aspects of the Roman Catholic faith, sympathies which were of long standing. The elder Mrs. Ruskin was also suspicious at her son's starting to collect rare medieval Catholic missals. (16)

During their marriage, John and his wife would sometimes attend Mass on the continent, as when John heard the sermon on the sacraments. But of recent years, Ruskin had become less hostile to the Roman Catholic Church. While in Venice in 1852 the Ruskins met William Russell and his wife. (17) William, who had recently turned Roman Catholic, had been at Christ Church Oxford at the same time as John. Mrs. Russell died while they were at Venice, and Ruskin was impressed at how the widower's faith had helped him during bereavement. The Ruskins also met Lord and Lady Feilding who were also Roman Catholics (18) but who, unlike the Russells, positively tried to convert Ruskin - this while the two couples were journeying home together to England. When the couple returned from Venice in July 1852, John's parents became more alarmed. Effie wrote about the matter to her parents.

Mrs. R goes to such extremes of anti-popery that I am  
really afraid of her tormenting John into being more with

them than he otherwise would, for his vanity is terribly hurt at her speaking to him exactly as a child and she does talk such nonsense that I cannot help laughing. . . . She said to me the other day, 'My dearest Effie, I wish you would use your influence with mine to prevent your Husband keeping company with these Idolaters for they are most insidious.' (19)

It was unusual for the two women to be on the same side. John himself wrote to Effie's mother to allay any fears of his becoming Roman Catholic. He pointed out that thirty-four years of Protestant up-bringing could not be overturned by 'half an hour with a clever Catholic' (20) and that by learning more about the Catholic faith he could the better refute any false doctrine of that denomination.

This I must do before I can write any more against the Catholics - for as I have received all my impressions of them from Protestant writers, I have no right to act upon these impressions until I have at least heard the other side. (21)

Although Ruskin did not make clear to his family his deeper religious doubts and worries, he did, here, give a reasonably honest description of his feelings towards Roman Catholicism, in his letter to his mother-in-law, even though he did not mention the parts of that faith, especially liturgy, which attracted him.

It did not lessen the older Ruskins' concerns when 'Archdeacon Manning', as Effie described the new convert to the Roman Church, became an acquaintance of John's. Manning even came to dinner at the older Ruskin's house, where John usually entertained. It is not known (it can hardly be imagined) what persuaded Margaret to give an invitations to a man so opposed to her religious sensibilities. Effie was not altogether happy about this acquaintance for she wrote in August 1852 to her mother with relief that

Manning is out of town and goes shortly to Rome. I do not believe that John will have further personal intercourse with them. (Manning and the Feildings) (22)

It is not known what influence Manning had at this time though fifteen years later, Effie wrote that

he (John) once years before offered me £800 a year to allow him to retire into a monastery and retain his name - that I declined. He was then under the influence of Manning. (23)

After the annulment, Effie gave vent to her very angry feelings over how she had been treated by John and his parents. This included bitterness over religion.

I think him the most complete Jesuit ever was born and I doubt not that they will get him - perhaps he will not declare himself till his people are dead. . . . If John had not Parents I am convinced that at this moment he is so mad, and besides has always had such an idea of becoming a Monk, that he would really fly to Rome and become one in earnest. We shall see. (24)

Perhaps not too much reliance should be put on Effie's testimony at that time of her life, when she was very bitter towards her ex-husband and perhaps in a state of nervous break-down.

After the annulment, Ruskin had a sense of release and freedom. No longer was he encumbered by a wife - he could do and think as he pleased, as he had actually done, anyway. He made new acquaintances, although lamenting a lack of friends. He became, for the time being anyway, more relaxed in his attitude to religious practice and the Bible. Even so, after a long and not very straightforward path, this all led up to his eventual unconversion. Yet in one instance, his faith seemed stronger. Ruskin and his parents had been planning a tour of Europe in the summer of 1854, leaving Effie with her parents and the ending of the relationship was no reason to change this plan. On this tour, while planning Modern Painters Volumes 3 and 4, Ruskin had a definite religious experience.

July 2nd. 1854. LUCERNE. Third Sunday after Trinity. I hope to keep this day a festival for ever, having received my third call from God, in answer to much distressful prayer. May He give me grace to walk

hereafter with Him in newness of life, to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (25)

Tim Hilton thinks that this was a call to his writing the next volumes of Modern Painters. Although they were printed before Ruskin's unconversion, they will be dealt with in a separate chapter.

With the end of his marriage, Ruskin could, without distraction, carry out his father's wish that he continue the work begun twelve years before. Ruskin's new sense of freedom, the parental support over the divorce, being on a continental tour and his wish to complete Modern Painters all combined to bring on this religious call.

Ruskin was always prone to changes of mood, veering between elation and depression. As he no longer had Effie, but could plan for the future, he became more cheerful, in his faith as well as in his life. He became less worried about Roman Catholicism or the deeper meanings of texts. In his diary he could write in August 1854;

How little I thought God would bring me here again just now - and I am here, stronger in health, higher in hope, deeper in peace, than I have been for years. The green pastures and pine forests of the Varens softly seen through the light of my window. I cannot be thankful enough, nor happy enough. Psalm LXVI. 8-20. (26)

Presumably Ruskin meant such verses as 19 and 20;

But verily God hath heard me; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

In a letter to Anna Blunden (27) Ruskin seemed to be beginning to feel his way towards his later religious and biblical position; that true Christianity consisted in giving justice and consideration to people - rather than devotion to God.

There is a definite change in the tone of my later writings which I have no doubt you feel painfully. It results . . . partly and most from my having been so much accused of hypocrisy as to show me that most people must be hypocrites themselves, and to give me an unhappily scornful conception of other people's religious feelings - so that I have ceased to care to talk about feelings, and look to nothing but what people do. (28)

Ruskin had not previously opposed the two concepts of faith and works so clearly. He had considered faith to be all-important, for, as with many Victorians, the loss of one's faith was a serious matter. Concern for others had been part of and consequent upon his religious beliefs, though there were other more important facets to his faith. In this letter he was beginning to separate the two - realizing that good actions could be independent of an orthodox Christian faith.

In the early 1850's Ruskin made the acquaintance of Charles Spurgeon. (29) The friendship was a most unlikely one, because they disagreed about most things, though they did have in common a deep knowledge of the Bible. Ruskin wrote to the Brownings;

His doctrine is simply Bunyan's, Baxter's, Calvin's, and John Knox's - in many respects not pleasant to me, but I dare not say that the offence is the doctrine's and not mine. It is the doctrine of Romish saints and of the Church of England. . . . The "Turn or Burn" is merely a vulgar modernism of Proverbs i. 23-32, but the vulgarity of it is the precise character which makes it useful to vulgar people; and it is certainly better to save them vulgarly than lose them gracefully - as our polite clergymen do. Evangelicalism . . . is, I confess, rather greasy in the finger; sometimes with train oil; but Spurgeon's is olive, with the slightest possible degradation sometimes - in the way of Castor. (30)

The two men would argue over the Bible late into the night over a bottle of John James' best wine, with Spurgeon smoking a cigar. When Spurgeon fell seriously ill in 1858, Mrs. Spurgeon recalled,

How well I remember the intense love and devotion displayed by Mr. Ruskin, as he threw himself on his knees by the dear patient's side, and embraced him with tender

affection and tears. . . . My husband . . . very often referred to it afterwards in grateful appreciation; especially when, in later years, there came a change of feeling on Mr. Ruskin's part. (31)

Ruskin was more wary with another religious person of his acquaintance - F.D. Maurice. Besides disagreeing about salvation for all or for some in their correspondence over Ruskin's Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds, (Maurice had found Ruskin very narrow and judgemental), they had different opinions about socialism, the role of the state and individual responsibility. They met at the Working Men's College which was founded by Maurice and at which Ruskin gave art classes. At that stage of his life Ruskin was wanting the anonymity of teaching without publicity and without responsibility for organizing or administering the institution. F.D. Maurice was more of a socialist than John Ruskin. John James Ruskin was a High Tory, for he had after all made his own way in the world from nothing by his own hard work. The Ruskin parents neither wanted nor expected radical changes in the running of society. Their son never became a socialist (though others thought that he had) because he held little faith in the efficacy of structural changes. Only a change in people's hearts towards justice would be of any use. Ruskin's Christianity was certainly not of the "'sane, masculine, Cambridge school" favoured by Christian socialism'. (32)

F.D.Maurice, on the rare occasions when he met his drawing master, was taken aback by the restless vehemence with which Ruskin expressed views on religion. There was that about Maurice which goaded Ruskin. He preferred to spend time with Spurgeon, whom Maurice greatly distrusted. (33)

The three years after publishing Modern Painters Volumes 3 and 4 were spent in writing and making new acquaintances amongst poets and other literary figures such as the Brownings (34), Tennyson (35), and Carlyle. (36) He had plenty of friends and managed to live down his marriage breakdown, socially if not mentally. However, in 1858 his life changed again with two events. Firstly, early that year he

met Rose La Touche, although his fondness for her was not to lead to the overthrow of his life until later. (37) The second event was when he went abroad again without his parents. (38)

One day while on this journey in 1858 he first admired a painting by Veronese at Turin, then went into a chapel, walked out again in disgust at the sermon and general atmosphere of the service and finally suffered his 'unconversion'. This event gained in importance on retrospect though Ruskin might have exaggerated the significance of this event, for he was always over-anxious to see 'turning-points'. (39) The unconversion was not as sudden and irreversible as Ruskin wrote in Praeterita and in Fors Clavigera. Rather it was a culmination of changes, conscious and unconscious, which he had had in his mind for many years.

Besides the long-term workings of his mind which led to a disillusion with his Protestant faith, there was a more immediate trigger to Ruskin's change; not in the religious sphere - but in the artistic. At the age of forty, Ruskin began to appreciate and love the work of Veronese. (40) This artistic conversion led to the next step of a spiritual unconversion. Ruskin believed that the two came together, as he said in his autobiographical works. Veronese made Ruskin realize that artists could have stains of wickedness and sensuality in them, and still be great painters thus contradicting Modern Painters, Vol. 1, where he had claimed that only morally pure artists could produce the greatest art. Then he had written that even Michelangelo's and Raphael's moral weaknesses showed in occasional coarseness of art. On visiting Italy in 1858, Ruskin had changed his mind, becoming totally absorbed in Veronese's Solomon and the Queen of Sheba and prolonging his stay at Turin especially to admire, copy and describe it. In a letter to his father he wrote:

I am very glad you like the notion of the negress, for I am pretty sure you will like Solomon too, and therefore both. I find these great Venetians, as I study them more, are as full of mischief as an egg's full of meat; . . . I have called Veronese 'thoughtless' . . . in 3rd



M.P. but he's nearly as full of dodges as Tintoret. The way I took a fancy to this Solomon was especially on account of a beautiful white falcon on a falconer's fist, which comes against his dark purple robe. I thought it was only a pretty trick of colour; but as I worked on, I saw that the white falcon was put exactly and studiously under the head of one of the Lions which sustains the throne, so that the sitting figure is sustained by the Lion & eagle; who were the types of the Divine & Human power in Christ. (41)

This passage was perhaps written to show his father just how Christian a painter Veronese was, so that John James' fears about his son's enthusiasms would be lessened. Ruskin endeavoured to show that Christian symbolism, a joyful and sensuous painting on a large scale and a religious faith could all go together. But the painting was, as Ruskin described in Praeterita, a complete contrast to a dull Waldensian service in Turin out of which Ruskin walked while staying at that town. Veronese's contemporaries had accused him of being a non-Christian, but Ruskin refuted this accusation while enjoying the painter's 'wickedness'. In his younger days, while writing the first volume of Modern Painters, he would have agreed with Veronese's detractors. When Ruskin returned home that autumn, he wrote to Norton about Veronese's wickedness;

I've found out a good deal, . . . the main thing in the way of discovery being that positively to be a first rate painter - you must'nt be pious; - but rather a little wicked - and entirely a man of the world. I had been inclining to this opinion for some years; but I clinched it at Turin. (42)

To Mrs. Browning also he could write about the artist's wickedness; 'I begin to think nobody can be a great painter who isn't rather wicked - in a noble sort of way.' (43) To Ruskin, great art had always been a sensual experience conflicting with his religion. Now he began to love, and feel free to love, art painted by someone with a streak of 'wickedness' (as he saw it) and sensuality. (44) This new outlook on art appreciation and its religious significance could have fitted in with his admiration of Turner, in which there had always been the contradiction that Turner had never claimed to be

particularly Christian - nor had that artist thought of his paintings in terms of 'God's second book'. But Turner was an artist who painted on the grand, sensual scale. Ruskin never openly resolved his dilemma over Turner, but Veronese could be seen in the same way except that his subjects were Christian, or at least Biblical.

Ruskin knew that Veronese had been called an irreligious painter by his contemporaries because he had painted a realistic and earthy enjoyment of everyday life, rather than spiritualizing his subjects. Turner had also been realistic but he had not painted in a pre-Renaissance manner nor had he used Christian themes. Ruskin had always felt free to admire Turner, and he was now free through his admiration of Veronese to admire other sensuous and pleasurable scenes in art. This in turn relieved him from his narrow-minded dislike of everything between Raphael and Turner (except for the Pre-Raphaelites) and with this freedom in art appreciation came freedom in religion.

Coming from a study of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba to a dull Waldensian service, Ruskin was not impressed by the contrast, and walked out. He wrote to his father;

I went to the Protestant church last Sunday . . . Protestantism clumsily triumphant . . . and building (for) itself vulgar churches with nobody to put into them, is a very disagreeable form of piety. Execrable sermon - cold singing. A nice looking old woman or two; . . . three or four decent French families; a dirty Turinois here and there, spitting over large fields of empty pew; and three or four soldiers, who came in to see what was going on and went out again, very wisely. (45)

John did not mention in this letter any unconversion. Even in a Note about art which he sent to his parents for future publication he did not labour the point about his religious apostasy. But he compared Veronese and the worship in the Turin chapel.

Is this mighty Paul Veronese, . . . this man whose finger is as fire, and whose eye is like the morning - is he a servant of the devil; and is the poor little wretch

in a tidy black tie, to whom I have been listening this Sunday morning expounding Nothing with a twang - is he a servant of God? (46)

To which John James tactfully replied; 'I must enquire further for your Strange notes on Sensual Painters, as a source of deep thinking'. (47) John James understood and was more sympathetic to his son's religious waywardness than was Margaret. From John's letters, it seemed that the time in Turin was spent more in discovering Veronese than in un-discovering his faith for at that time he did not write about the service as a turning point in his life, but merely, if anything, as just one more stage in his spiritual journey, and another church service which he had not enjoyed. It was many years later, when writing about his life, that Ruskin put so much significance on the event as to call it an 'unconversion'.

Another indication of how he used this hindsight to put a pattern on his life was shown in another diary entry when he was in Italy. One Sunday he had written; '11,241 Purple orchis gathered on hills on Baden side of Rhine last night'. (48) Below this sentence there was a long description of the orchises and five sketches of them. There was no suggestion of any religious significance for these drawings. But in the margin was written; 'This drawing of Orchises was the first I ever made on Sunday: and marks, henceforward, the beginning of total change in habits of mind. 24th. Feb 1868'. It was only ten years later that Ruskin read into a past event a significance which he did not note at the time. Likewise, his behaviour and writing immediately after the service at Turin did not suggest a dramatic alteration, but a continuation in the same direction away from his Protestantism. He continued to worship in Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. One sign of rebellion was when his parents had sent him £10 to give to a Protestant charity; instead, as an act of defiance he gave the money to a 'danseuse' who was in need. (49)

Ruskin's impatience with conventional Christianity showed in other ways as he began to interest himself in themes which would become more dominant in his later writings. While still on the continent, he wrote to his father about his dislike of an outbreak of Protestant rigidity, when a well was shut up at Pitcaithly in Scotland on a Sunday. He felt that this event was

as neat and precise a repetition of the Pharisees 'in them therefore come and be healed' and 'not on the Sabbath day' . . . as I thought it possible for modern Puritanism to come. (50)

The text from Luke 13.14 was the Pharasaic criticism of Jesus for healing on the sabbath. Ruskin felt that the Church was wrongly trying to restrict people and in later years this was a constant criticism against church authorities. Another theme taken up later in life was aired in a letter to his father in late August 1858. He attacked the church over education.

Now, this (a previous outline of the ideal education) being the type of perfect education, united of course - for denial of Appetite, with which I began, cannot be taught otherwise - with the Love of God and our Neighbour - only those are not so much to be taught as to be the result of all the teaching - the Mistakes which bring about the evil of the world are mainly;

1. Teaching religious doctrines and creeds instead of simple love of God & practical love of our neighbour. This is a terrific mistake - I fancy the fundamental mistake of humanity. (51)

After his stay in Turin, Ruskin made his way across the continent, stopping for services in Paris; 'I never was present at so disgraceful an English service as this morning'. (52) He then returned to England, to his anxious parents and to a new era in his life which began with visits to Winnington School, his love for Rose La Touche, his friendship for Carlyle and his writing of Unto this Last.

In late 1858 Ruskin returned to England thinking that his Unconversion was behind him. As he felt that he had openly shed his religious past at the Turin chapel, he was more free to express his opinions, unshackled by any need to remain, outwardly at least, committed to any Church or traditionally Christian doctrine. In the next few years, John Ruskin became increasingly bitter towards the Church, especially in its attitude to the poor. To his friends he claimed that the Bible was only useful as a moral code which his contemporary so-called Christian world was not heeding. Along with this vituperation against the Church were two other, more positive strands.

The first strand was his continuing friendship with some clergy, such as Spurgeon, clerical fathers of children at Winnington School, and, according to Van Akin Burd, Broad Churchmen.

Ruskin's indebtedness to the Broad Churchmen is yet to be estimated, but his relationship to the movement . . . is apparent. . . . To their disavowal of authority, their protest against a literal interpretation of dogma, their return to experimental religion, their regard for the Bible as an historical record subject to the canons of modern criticism, and above all to their passion for the reform of society - to these Ruskin turned an attentive ear. (1)

By this time, Ruskin's thinking was in some ways approaching closer to that of the Broad Churchmen, of whom Maurice was one, especially in its social thinking. But he never wished to associate himself with any section of the Church. He condemned the two wings, the High Church movement and, even more, the Evangelicals. He did not concern himself with either the merits or faults of the central Broad Church. This might have been because of his determined antagonism to the Church institution, while being friends with some of the clergy.

The second positive strand of Ruskin's thinking was his determination to use his gifts to try and make Britain a more just

society - a sustained attack of the Political Economy of John Stuart Mill (2), an attack which he launched from many points, including the religious. He would attack the modern religion of 'getting on' from a Christian base. Even so, he was divided between preaching a kind of Christian activism and denouncing Christianity itself for not being activist enough.

The crusade, as it was to become, had begun before his trip to Italy. He had delivered some lectures in 1858 before he left, and on his return decided to publish them as The Two Paths. Ostensibly the lectures were about art, for they were

intentionally connected in subject; their aim being to set one or two main principles of art in simple light. . . . The law which it has been my effort chiefly to illustrate is the dependence of all noble design, in any kind, on the sculpture or painting of Organic form. (3)

This was written in the 1859 Preface, and is a reminder of Ruskin's earlier belief that art should portray God's handiwork. In one of the lectures, to the Opening Meeting of the Architectural Museum in South Kensington during January 1858, Ruskin had explained this in religious terms; that modern art and design had abandoned natural form.

You have cut yourselves off voluntarily, presumptuously, insolently, from the whole teaching of your Maker in His universe. . . . Wilfully (you) turn your backs upon all the majesties of Omnipotence; . . . and what can remain for you, but helplessness and blindness? (4)

Ruskin summed this up by reviewing in one sentence all that he had written on other occasions:

I have had but one steady aim in all that I have ever tried to teach, namely - to declare that whatever was great in human art was the expression of man's delight in God's work. (5)

This was the old Ruskin. The new Ruskin with his different preoccupations was heard when he next lectured to the good citizens

of Tunbridge Wells a month later on The Work of Iron, in Nature, Art and Policy. It was an innocuous sounding title, which he used to attack modern economic and social policy using the very loose link that iron represents the plough or the needle, honest male and female labour. Everywhere that honest labour was being over-thrown, cheating God's eternal law. Exploiters of the poor labourers 'feed where they have not furrowed, and (are) warm where they have not woven.' (6) To make his point, Ruskin invoked God's first book, the Bible. As his knowledge of it was great, and as he had the ability to exploit its texts for his own ends, he knew how to be very scathing towards those who read it but who did not (in his opinion) follow its teachings. Quotations from the Bible were an excellent and incontrovertible way of making his point.

In this lecture he used the Old Testament Books of Psalms and Proverbs, because, he said, that the parts of the Bible

which are likely to be oftenest opened when people look for guidance, comfort, or help in the affairs of daily life (are) the Psalms and Proverbs. (7)

The Psalms were of course supposed to be read through in the Prayer Book every month by the clergy as part of the Daily Office. Ruskin pointed out that these books of the Old Testament emphasized the oppression (rather than the neglect) of the poor.

The wicked in his pride he doth persecute the poor, . . .  
and blesseth the covetous, whom God abhorreth. (8)

They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning  
oppression. (9)

Although these Psalms were very well known, they were not taken seriously, for if they were, society would be very different from what it actually was.

We like to dream and dispute over them; but to weigh them, and see what their true contents are - anything but that. (10)

Because the Psalms - and other parts of the Bible - were only taken 'into our mouths in a congregational way, . . . merely to chant a piece of melodious poetry relating to other people' (11) they were ignored for all practical purposes. Evil practices, like speculation and exploitation, using other people's money and labour, was just that oppression of the poor about which the Psalmists complained. This lecture showed how far John Ruskin was becoming preoccupied with the state of the nation. His crusade in lecture hall and print against poverty and for justice often used the Bible as a weapon against those who were supposed to know it and understand it best, but in fact ignored its precepts.

The next year, 1860, Ruskin published what is perhaps his most famous book, Unto This Last. Since its publication it has been treated as its author complained the Bible was treated - read and admired, but not followed. The title referred to the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, (12) when the last labourer was paid the same as the first on a basis of need rather than work done. It might also refer to a man working at an honest trade - as a cobbler at his last. The theme of the essays was justice, and how it could be brought about in the unjust society which Ruskin saw. Whether he came to this desire for a just society because of his Christian upbringing and his understanding of the Bible, or whether he used whatever facets of Christianity he found convenient to reinforce his desire for a better society is impossible to tell. Ruskin cried for justice to the poor and needy. The Church and clergy could play a role in this. Those who practised the professions of commerce and manufacturing were unfortunately expected, as a part of their philosophy of work, not to sacrifice themselves for, nor concern themselves with, the well-being of less fortunate people. In this Ruskin was being unfair, for men like Robert Owen earlier in the century, Ackroyd of Halifax and some of the Quakers did concern themselves with the well-being of their employees. Ruskin thought that the other, older professions were expected to have higher standards; in this he included the profession of the Church.



A clergyman, even though his power of intellect be small, is respected on the presumed ground of his unselfishness and serviceableness. (13)

The word 'presumed', showed Ruskin's unease at giving such a noble character to clergy. The Pastor's task is 'to teach' his society and 'on due occasion, to die for it . . . rather than teach Falsehood'. (14) Above all, a clergyman should not have financial reward as his main motive. A 'stipend is a due and necessary adjunct, but not the object of his life, if he be a true clergyman'. (15) This caveat showed Ruskin's suspicions of a clergyman's motives. This higher motive than stipend was true of all other professions, except those of commerce and manufacture. It would be a more just society if leaders of industry acted with the same altruistic motives as Ruskin saw fit to attribute to clergy, physicians and lawyers. Because Ruskin wanted to enlist the support of socially aware clergy (although he never acknowledged that such existed) he did not abuse the Church in Unto This Last as much as he did in some other writings and lectures.

Towards the end of his essays he gave a Christian justification for his stand against Political Economy. Political Economy was anti-religious.

I know no previous instance in history of a nation's establishing a systematic disobedience to the first principles of its professed religion. The writings which we (verbally) esteem as divine, not only denounce the love of money as the source of all evil, and as an idolatry abhorred of the Deity, but declare mammon service to be the accurate and irreconcilable opposite of God's service: and, whenever they speak of riches absolute, and poverty absolute, declare woe to the rich, and blessing to the poor. (16)

Ruskin took as an example two visions of Zechariah, the one of the Flying Roll or Curved Sword (17), when it was said that any thief would be removed, and the vision about a woman in a basket or container. (18) The container represented the sins of the whole land, and the woman represented wickedness. The basket and the

woman inside were taken away by two angels. Abandoning these abstruse Bible references, Ruskin argued for his desire of the removal of injustice and its replacement with justice by claiming that all ill-used, ill-educated and rough working people were more holy, perfect and pure than those who had forced them to be into poverty. Such unfortunate people should be treated, 'Unto this last as unto thee' (19) when 'justice and peace have kissed each other'. (20) The correct quotation was 'righteousness and peace . . .'.

In his personal letters of this time, Ruskin was concerned about his own lack of faith, more so than he was willing to admit in public. Putting his old Evangelical faith behind him had not led to the happiness he had anticipated and later erroneously proclaimed in Praeterita. He was depressed at the time and was not altogether secure in his own mind at not having anything to cling on to. As he wrote to his American friend, Charles Norton in 1859: (21)

I don't believe in Evangelicalism - and my Evangelical (once) friends now look upon me with as much horror as one of the possessed Gennesaret pigs (22) - Nor do I believe in the Pope - and some Roman Catholic friends, who had great hopes for me, think I ought to be burned. (23)

This isolation was not only religious, for in this letter Ruskin also complained that he had been abandoned by other sections of society - the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Tories, and 'domestically - I am supposed to be worse than Blue Beard', which was a reference to the end of his marriage six years before. Ruskin regretted some inevitable consequences of unconversion:

The changes . . . in me - are, to me, very painful pieces of new light, and the sunshine burns my head so that I long for the old shades with their dew again. (24)

So much was he disturbed, that he want to look at the stuffed penguins of the British Museum.

I find Penguins at present the only comfort in life. One feels everything in the world so sympathetically

ridiculous; one can't be angry when one looks at a Penguin. (25)

Ruskin had little sympathy for the ecclesiastical world. To Norton he wondered 'whether Clergymen ought to be multiplied - or exterminated by arsenic like rats'. (26) Of the minister at Camden Chapel he wondered to the Brownings how he could think of

going primly up to that tidy pulpit of yours . . . to tell, every Sunday - your prim congregation how God managed the Atonement - . . . I believe the whole modern doctrine of Salvation to be an accursed lie. (27)

Clergy, he wrote, had less chance of reaching Heaven than had ordinary people. Ruskin questioned a Venetian gondolier about his religion. The gondolier could recite the Lord's Prayer, 'in Latin like Dean Gaisford without a flaw.' But he did not know what it meant, except '"to ask for - for - for - everything - for God's blessing - for all that is good". . . . I would of course rather take Panno's (the gondolier's) chance in the next world than that of most English clergymen, but nevertheless, . . . he might as well know the Lord's Prayer in Italian as not. And how is he to better (his mind and body)?' (28)

German art was merely 'eternal vanity and vulgarity mistaking itself for Piety and poetry - . . . the absorption of all love of God or man into their one itch of applause and Fine-doing'. (29) Perhaps fortunately, considering its parlous state, all organized religion would die out. As he wrote to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe (30) who had seen the Pope at Easter:

So you have been seeing the Pope and all his Easter performances! I congratulate you, for I suppose it is something like "Positively the last appearance on any stage." What was the use of thinking about him? You should have had your own thoughts about what was to come after him. . . . It (Roman Catholicism) will last pretty nearly as long as Protestantism, which keeps it up; but I wonder what is to come next. (31)

With all these pressures by 1860, there was another one from his father, now in his seventies. John James wanted to have the Modern Painters series finished by his son before his own death. John obliged, even though the series could never be truly completed, so many and disparate were the themes.

Many of the notes and sketches for the last volume of Modern Painters, which was printed in June 1860, had been done before 1858, and so the book reflected a return to his earlier, pre-Unconversion ways of thinking rather than his attitudes of the 1860's. Ruskin carried this earlier material through two important times of his life - the 'unconversion' (whether or not it happened as described in Praeterita and Fors Clavigera), and the publishing of Unto this Last (which amplified and made more public some of his ideas). The printing of the fifth volume of Modern Painters was the end of a phase in Ruskin's public writing for it was the last of his monumental, fairly well thought out works with their set passages and descriptions. It was an end which also dealt with the beginnings of his later period for he touched on some of the themes in Unto this Last. Modern Painters, Vol. 5 had a sense, a feeling, never put clearly into words, that its author had tired of writing about or defining Christianity in its relationship to art. He seemed to be going through the motions, perhaps to please his father. Reflecting this mood, he described the Reformation as the last time that people would have an unquestioning faith. 'Thenceforward human life became a school of debate, troubled and fearful.' (1) The Reformation was a dark, doubting time, not a time of a new Evangelical faith released from Romanism. Ruskin, on a personal level, was going through similar religious upheavals. Ever since his college days, he had struggled with his religion, but within the context of the Evangelical faith given him by his parents. This broke up at his 'unconversion', his own reformation, after which all was open to doubt and questioning. This was not necessarily a pleasant process, neither for Europe after the Reformation, nor for Ruskin after 1858.

Volume 5 was a continuation and mixture of themes continued from the earlier books and his more recent concerns. Ruskin described the purpose of Modern Painters.

In the main aim and principle of the book, there is no variation, from its first syllable to its last. It declares the perfectness and eternal beauty of the work of God; and tests all work of man by concurrence with, or subjection to that. (2)

Yet when he wrote this Ruskin had become very dubious about the existence of God and the beauty of the Creator's work. For when the fifth volume of Modern Painters was written, Ruskin had been unconverted for two years and had become more and more disillusioned with the Christian faith as he had been taught and had practised it. The tone of Modern Painters Vol. 5 is sometimes different from the earlier books. Not only was he less inclined to deal in purple passages, but also some of the concepts had changed, as was natural over a period nearly twenty years, which was the time between the first and the last volumes. In one respect, Ruskin underplayed how his attitude had changed, how he had become disillusioned, for he did not want to distress his aging parents more than he already had. But there was another person whom he did not care to upset, Rose La Touche's mother, Maria. (3) She was an odd woman of strong religious views, albeit different from her husband's. Rather gushing, and liking to have influence over people, she had persuaded Ruskin to promise her not to attack religion nor to air his heretical views in public for the next ten years.

Much of Modern Painters is fairly technical, dealing with the painting of clouds and leaves. On the non-art side, he continued with his mental journey from the preoccupation with God in nature to his newer, more pressing concerns with how God is to be seen in men's souls, the status and importance of man himself and how decay was in the world. Once again he described the decline of Christianity through the centuries, and the influence of this decline on art. Ruskin also had a new theme; he tried to wrestle with the problem of evil. His new interest in Classical (Greek

classical, not Renaissance neo-classical) religion had a lengthy airing in his book and was from then on pursued up to the end of his writing career, and in his lectures at Oxford in the 1870's.

God in nature was treated rather perfunctorily in this volume, Ruskin merely mentioning that it was preferable to see God in nature, rather than seek him second hand in a painting of nature. He then moved on to classifying the different types of painting before returning to the relationship among God, people and nature.

A child would, I suppose, receive a religious lesson from a flower more willingly than from a print of one; and might be taught to understand the nineteenth Psalm, on a starry night, better than by diagrams of the constellations. (4)

Psalm 19 has hints in it of un-Hebraic sun worship:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. . . . In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. (5)

This was not a good choice of psalm, for it makes no mention of the constellations or the night-sky, only of the sun and day light. However, after that, Ruskin turned to matters of more immediate interest to him; God reflected in man.

As a starting point he took the text from Genesis that God made man 'In His own image. After His likeness'. (6)

The truth they (these words) contain seems to lie at the foundation of our knowledge both of God and man; yet do we not usually pass the sentence by, in dull reverence, attaching no definite sense to it at all? (7)

Ruskin decided to attach a definite sense to this quotation and find in it a 'plain significance'. (8) Because God made man in his own image, God could be seen in man, although only in the best part of mankind's character. 'God is love', 'God is just' are phrases in

the Bible, but there is a difficulty in knowing what this divine love and justice are like. They cannot be directly observed; they can only be seen inside our own, and others', characters and souls. (9) Look into the mirror of the human soul, made in God's image, and there will be found love, justice and other divine attributes. Of course Ruskin knew that the human soul was a very flawed image of the divine nature; 'through the glass, darkly. But, except through the glass, in nowise'. (10) Here Ruskin had come to see mankind in a way which he never later abandoned; the central importance of man in society, with his personal worth. 'Man is the sun of the world; more than the real sun'. (11) This was, thought Ruskin, because man was made in God's image - a religious truth from Genesis which should be taken seriously for the spiritual and social well-being of society. From his student days, Ruskin had doubted the accuracy of the creation stories, a doubt which increased over the years. However, it suited his purpose here to take as literally true the passage that 'man is made in God's image' although it is, at best, a spiritual or psychological understanding of man, an understanding which the author of Genesis had seen fit to make part of a mythical story.

Ruskin was also beginning to wrestle with the problem of evil, with its relevance to art and man. In his earlier writings, as in The Poetry of Architecture (1837-8) (12), which he published while at Oxford, most of what he observed was put in the category of 'beautiful' or 'not beautiful', as it improved or marred the landscape. A building might be dilapidated or well cared for, but the young Ruskin was mostly concerned with its visual impact. The architecture or landscape had no evil content. By Modern Painters, Vol. 5 Ruskin was looking behind what he saw, to the effect architecture or landscape had on the people who lived there. The people whom he observed were no longer objects to fit in with the view, but people with problems and evils pressing upon them. Ruskin gave a description of evil and decay in nature by comparing two scenes. One was a 'rhapsody' written by a Scottish clergyman in which was 'described a scene in the Highlands to show the goodness

of God', picturesque and romantic. (13) The other scene was his own; outwardly just as beautiful (the description was deliberately one of Ruskin's 'purple passages'), but then,

Beside the rock . . . the carcase of a ewe, drowned in the last flood, lies nearly bare to the bone, its white ribs protruding through the skin, raven-torn. (14)

Next came a description of a picturesque group of Highlanders;

A man fishing, with a boy and a dog - a picturesque and pretty group enough certainly, if they had not been there all day starving. . . . The child's wasted shoulders (are) cutting his old tartan jacket through, so sharp are they. (15)

Ruskin had come to see that nature, God's creation, contained evil and good, not only ugliness and beauty. It was wrong to gloss over unpleasant facts of evil. He linked this moral concept to art by saying that bad art ignored evil.

All great and beautiful work has come of first gazing without shrinking into the darkness. If, having done so, the human spirit can, by its courage and faith, conquer the evil, it rises into conceptions of victorious and consummated beauty. (16)

Ruskin had come a long way from suspecting evil in Michelangelo's character because he had painted evil-looking men.

Ruskin delivered a short history on attitudes to evil. He felt that the classical Greeks, especially Homer, understood that evil was often sent by the gods for no rational purpose, and that evil could be overcome by heroism, (17) to be bothered about no more, or with some ultimate good to come.

At the close of a Shakespeare tragedy, nothing remains but dead march and clothes of burial. At the close of a Greek tragedy there are far-off sounds of a divine triumph, and a glory as of resurrection. (18)



Here, Ruskin was beginning to draw a continuous historical line between Greek and Christian thought or mythology; a theme which he elaborated in his last lectures at Oxford in the early 1880's.

He went on to describe early Christian schools of art, complaining that they did not take evil and decay seriously. They described it in their art, but it was only a temporary problem, even to be honoured. Death and corruption were inevitable, but

Christian painters . . . had been taught a faith (in which) . . . all was at last to be well - and their best genius might be peacefully given to imagining the glories of heaven and the happiness of its redeemed. But . . . though suffering was to cease in heaven, it was to be not only endured, but honoured upon earth. And from the Crucifixion, down to a beggar's lameness, all the tortures and maladies of men were to be made, at least in part, the subjects of art. (19)

Ruskin, by the 1860's, used this as a criticism of a school of art which he had previously held to be above almost any criticism - such was his concern to see the evils and pains in nature and the human lot. Yet in Modern Painters Vol. 5 Ruskin did not explore one important aspect of the problem of evil; why a good God should allow suffering. He treated the subject historically, comparing the Greek and the medieval mind. The two eras thought of evil and suffering differently;

The teaching of the Church in the Middle Ages had made the contemplation of evil one of the duties of men. (Unlike the Greek attitude.) As sin, it was to be duly thought upon, that it might be confessed. As suffering, endured joyfully, in hope of future reward. (20)

This, Ruskin felt, 'introduced the most complicated states of mental suffering and decrepitude'. (21) He could understand the psychological pit-falls and dangers of church or social pressures enforcing guilt feelings unnecessarily, for he had been brought up under the same sort of system. The Greek attitude, he felt, was mentally healthier.

As in earlier volumes of Modern Painters and in The Stones of Venice Ruskin lamented the decline of Christianity and the parallel decline in art. This time he illustrated the decline by taking various painters as examples. Veronese with Titian, both Venetians, were the first examples. In its hey-day Venice was a religious city. Thus Venetian men, unlike the contemporary Englishman, allowed their being painted while at prayer; this was not hypocritical, but conventional. (22) To show the spiritual feeling of the Venetian painters, Ruskin compared a painting by Veronese to one by Rubens. (Ruskin could find little good in Dutch or Flemish paintings). Veronese portrayed himself and his family as visiting and worshipping the Madonna. Normally, worshipping the Blessed Virgin Mary would not have pleased Ruskin, but he allowed this to pass in his admiration of Veronese and his faith. The Rubens painting was of the artist and his family performing the Holy Family; acting or pretending, instead of worshipping. This showed Rubens' lack of spiritual understanding and his insensitivity.

Ruskin finished this volume and series of Modern Painters by looking to the future; "'Thy kingdom come," we are bid to ask then! But how shall it come?' (23) The rest of his life was spent trying to find the answer to this question, as he left behind him his large scale, most formal written works.

Ruskin was often depressed with all the problems of writing Modern Painters Vol. 5, his father and his faith. He had two sources of pleasure. One was the girls at Winton School, the other was Rose la Touche. Winton Hall, near Northwich, had been converted to a school for young ladies by a Miss Bell in 1851. (1) It was run on liberal lines, and Miss Bell tried to encourage well-known people to come and teach or talk to the girls. As the school was permanently in debt, she hoped for more practical benefits, and John Ruskin was quite liberal with his father's money. When Miss Bell first invited Ruskin, she set out to flatter him by putting a portrait of him in the hallway between the portraits of F.D. Maurice, Samuel Wilberforce (2) and Archdeacon Julius Hare (3). (The picture of Samuel Wilberforce might have been injudicious but Miss Bell meant well.) The headmistress and her guest struck up a genuine friendship for they had much in common. Miss Bell's father, Alexander, had been a Methodist Minister who had become embroiled in the disputes of that denomination in the mid-century. His daughter preferred to avoid Methodism and sectarianism. She became attracted to the Anglican Broad Church and was a very open searcher for truth, while having religious doubts. So she and Ruskin shared much in common over religion at this time. Later on, in the 1870's, the school went bankrupt, in spite of Ruskin's large gifts, and Miss Bell and Ruskin lost contact with each other. John James was more cynical towards the school, resenting the money which his son gave it. It was, after all, his money. When Miss Bell brought some pupils to visit him, his diary read: 'Miss Bell, 5 virgins to strawberries'. Van Akin Burd writes that John James had 'misgivings about her friends - a queer bevy of heretics roosting in Winton Park so far as he was concerned'. (4)

After the first visit, Ruskin often stayed at the school. On a practical level, it was a useful base if he was lecturing at Manchester or in the Midlands. On an emotional level, it was a much more relaxed place than Denmark Hill with his parents. Ruskin was beginning, in his forties, to have a liking for the company of young

girls and friendship for its own sake was valuable, for a few of the pupils remained his friends into adulthood. The school was also a place where he could teach interested young people about some of his favourite subjects of geology, art, architecture and religion in a congenial atmosphere, rather like the Working Men's College. The teaching continued when Ruskin was not there, through correspondence, especially the 'Sunday Letters' which were a substitute for the religious talks he gave on a Sunday. These letters were about words or texts in the Bible, for the girls to read, and he would also give them texts to look up and copy. (5) Some of the concepts and ideas must have been too difficult for the girls, mostly in their early 'teens, to understand, but if they were bored, Miss Bell did not offend her patron by telling him so. Ruskin's aim was to work out the meaning in depth of biblical words and concepts, which was congenial work for him, if not for the girls, as he could be painstaking and detailed in analysing anything that came his way. The letters to the girls allowed him to write what he wanted, without the risk of being publicly condemned, nor of having to convince people who would disagree with him.

The first of these letters, in March 1859, was written soon after he finished a Winnington visit. (6) It concerned various verses from the Book of Isaiah, with Ruskin's thoughts on that text. He chose some verses from the Authorized Version which were badly translated from the Hebrew and make better sense in modern versions. The theme of Isaiah in this passage was change and victory, especially victory over death. The first verses mentioned by Ruskin were from Isaiah 2, itself a chapter about everlasting peace coming to Jerusalem and arrogance destroyed. 'For the day of the Lord of Hosts (in destruction) shall be . . . upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures'. (7) 'No room for Titian to paint', lamented Ruskin. (8) A better and more understandable translation is 'He will sink even the largest and most beautiful ships'. (9) In a good translation there is no reference to the beautiful pictures, which made irrelevant Ruskin's remark about Titian. In Isaiah 25. 7,8 is written: 'He will destroy in this mountain the face of the

covering that is cast over all people. . . . He will swallow up death in victory'. Ruskin noted that 'destroy' translated the same word as did 'swallow up', according to the margin reading. To Ruskin, these two clauses meant the same, with 'covering' another word for 'death'. Jewish poetry used synonyms as a literary device to reinforce each other. In spite of this, Ruskin was wrong in his analysis, for 'covering that is cast over all peoples' meant 'the cloud of sorrow that has been hanging over all the nations', not death. (10) Ruskin moved on from this complex of ill-translated, and half-understood words because 'Death swallowed up in victory' reminded him of 1 Corinthians 15.54, where Paul used the same phrase after writing; '"this corruptible shall have put on Immortality" - Surely a nobler experience than merely to "cease dying".' This was observed by a Ruskin who did not believe in, or at least was very doubtful about, any life after death. He could not understand two other verses Isaiah, chapter 29, verses 7,8:

And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall be even as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

It meant that all armies attacking Jerusalem (Ariel) would finish like a dream, or like a hungry man dreaming about food only to wake up and find that there is nothing. Then Ruskin had another thought from Isaiah 2, in which verses refer to turning swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning-knives. Ruskin related this concept to his concern for those of society who had nothing.

Is it not curious that people quote that verse . . . without ever going on to think that plough-shares imply something to plough, - and hooks something to prune. (11)

As Isaiah wrote about changing from a state of war to a state of peace, it was not curious that the passage had not been interpreted

as a plea for equity and ownership of land. Lastly in this letter Ruskin referred to a comment made to him by a Mrs. Rogers at Winnington, who had asked 'was she not to go to her clergyman for comfort?' (12)

I think if Spurgeon had been in the room, he would probably have said - "My dear Mrs Rogers - some one is, in the best accounts of Him, always called the Comforter: that is His Business - do you suppose he won't give you the right article? - or that you can get it quicker & handier at the retail shop?"

Ruskin agreed with this, saying that clergymen had better direct the person needing comfort to go direct to the Lord.

This letter showed Ruskin's weakness in his criticisms of the Old Testament. He did not know Hebrew and had to rely on the Authorized Version with its marginal notes. He could and did refer to the Septuagint, giving it much authority, and to the Vulgate (13), but these could only have been of limited use. As he could read New Testament Greek, his textual criticisms of that part of the Bible were of more relevance and more likely to be correct.

In the Sunday Letter of 27 March 1859 (14) Ruskin wrote about faith and its links with concern for improving society. He wanted to encourage the girls to

see that what St. Paul means by faith is a very different thing from what most people fancy: - (You will) begin to see how throughout the Bible Deeds are the test, and not words nor Creeds. (15)

To work for God is pleasant, like the girls working for their father in the garden would be pleasant. Although he began by referring to Paul, Ruskin used two non-Pauline texts: the Sermon on the Mount and the Book of Revelation. Heaven will be for the 'poor in spirit' (16) and for those who 'hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled'. (17) Righteousness, doing right, is necessary. Ruskin asked the girls to look up, amongst other references, Matthew 5.20: 'except your righteousness shall exceed



the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven'. It is not common exegetical practice to link this verse with the Beatitudes, even though both occur in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew, who was probably a Jew, and maybe even a Scribe or Pharisee, had a great respect for the Judaic Law, and in the latter reference seemed to be upholding Jewish practices. It is more likely that the Beatitudes are original to Jesus than are the references to the Scribes and Pharisees, the latter being a Matthean addition. According to most New Testament scholars, Jesus did not have much patience with the details of the Law. But the Beatitudes of Matthew 5.2-10 made no reference to the Pharisaic Law; indeed they emphasized attitudes, emotions and suffering in this world rather than dutiful obedience to that law, making inappropriate the links suggested by Ruskin.

The Book of Revelation, Ruskin thought, gave the same message of righteousness, doing right. 'If you in due time examine the whole of the Sermon on the Mount - and . . . the Apocalypse, - by this light - you will find and feel the full stress laid in both on obedience and by action. (18) The girls were to write out alongside the Matthean verses ones like this from Revelation:

And I saw the dead . . . stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those . . . books, according to their works. (19)

Action leads to overcoming successfully difficulties and temptations. Each of the seven Churches in the Book of Revelation (20) had to overcome difficulties to gain final victory. For example, the Church at Smyrna bore and overcame suffering and poverty to have the reward of no more pain. 'It shall not be hurt of (by) the Second Death.' (21) Ruskin brought in this theme of 'overcoming' as a rather irrelevant addition to his main theme that the Sermon on the Mount and the Book of Revelation emphasized deeds as the way to blessedness.

In a short letter to Mary Anne Leadbeater, one of three sisters associated with the school as pupils and teachers, Ruskin wrote about baptism of the Spirit, or being 'born again' as in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. (22) True baptism is of fire and the spirit, which is 'commonly, & too thoughtlessly, though correctly spoken of as change of heart'. (23) By free association Ruskin quoted Ezekiel: 'I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh', (24) and then thought about eating the

flesh of Christ - as "drinking Christ's blood" means sharing the life of Christ - . . . they have "washed" their robes, and made them white in the life of the lamb'. (25)

Ruskin (or the Winnington girl who copied the original letter) made a mistake, for it should have been 'blood of the lamb'. What Ruskin or the redactor wrote - 'life' - would not make sense even in the context for which he was using it. Then Ruskin referred to Naaman's washing himself clean from leprosy in the River Jordan. (26) He used this in a very roundabout way to revert to his theme of how people do not truly follow Christ:

those who hate Christ's life, & will not bathe in it, but go about to establish their own righteousness, by all manner of human inventions and subterfuges - creeds, forms, prayers, payments, penances - anything in this word rather than the life & heart & blood of Christ. (27)

So much did such people hate Christ's life that they ignored Christ's parting message to Nicodemus, that

men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. . . . But he that doeth truth cometh to the light. (28)

These were words which 'Christ speaks last to Nicodemus that at least he may not forget them'. Ruskin felt that he could write more critically of people's wrong attitudes in a letter to one person than in his Sunday letter to all the girls.



27 April, 1859 was the next of Ruskin's Sunday Letters to his Warrington 'birds'. He began, with some justification, 'I am giving you too much to do just now. Don't do it'. (29) But all this hard work which the girls were expected to do had a purpose, for he wrote in a postscript to this letter that

You know all this work about work is merely a part of your investigations of the meaning of the Kingdom. You'll see what it is - clearly - only when you see how to advance it clearly. (30)

In fact Ruskin attacked, more gently, those whom he had previously attacked in his letter to Mary Leadbeater. He described how people, although professing to be Christians, were practising iniquity - literally 'in-equity'. He took for his text 'I (Christ) will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity'. (31) A modern translation is 'you wicked people'. (32) The Greek is literally translated 'you doers of unlawful deeds', rather than 'causers of inequity'.

Ruskin was often meticulous in working out meanings from the original Greek, but in this instance it suited his purpose to ignore the original and to use the translation 'iniquity' in its exact English meaning, although it could not be justified by the Greek word it translated. But he could have used  $\tau\alpha \acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\pi\iota\alpha\upsilon$  to support an opposite, favourite word of his, 'justification', via 'lawfulness'. Whatever the niceties of translation, the Biblical passage was about Jesus refusing to accept those who have prophesied, cast out devils and done many wonderful works in his (Christ's) name. Ruskin felt that this type of person who was disowned by Christ was typical of many Christians of his time. They have done 'Works - mind you - No idle people, these. They've been crossing seas - encountering storm and enduring toil - for Christ'. (33) But, according to Christ and Ruskin, they have worked in-equity. They had forgotten, he wrote, 'What doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to do justice, & to love mercy - and to walk humbly with thy God'. (34) Ruskin gave examples of in-equity by so-

called loving and caring people: 'They like excitement & reputation - enjoy sending missionaries to people abroad - neglect millions at home'. (35)

Ruskin realized that there was a discrepancy between this passage, Christ rejecting people doing good works in his name from wrong motives, and another Biblical passage. Elsewhere Jesus had accepted what had been done in his name by a man who was not one of his immediate disciples. 'Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.' Ruskin simply called it a

counter or guardian text - the one which touches the error that might spring from a too narrow acceptance of the first. (36)

While any faith has to live with contradictions, a satisfactory explanation of conflicting statements in its scriptures is not given simply by positing 'counter or guardian texts'. This presupposes an over-all plan for the Bible which Evangelicals might accept, but the Ruskin of 1859 most certainly did not. From the inclusiveness or otherwise of the disciples, Ruskin went on to discuss the word 'Church', referring back to what he wrote about the Sermon on the Mount in the previous Sunday's letter. 'Church', he wrote, came from the German word meaning 'the Lord's (assembly)' (37), though 'the Lord's house' is an equally acceptable meaning of the original German. 'Synagogue', as in Pharisees who 'love to pray - standing in the Synagogues' (38), meant the same as the Latin 'Ecclesia', no more than a coming together. He wrote that it would be salutary to substitute the word 'Church' in some biblical references, such as Pharisees loving to pray 'standing in churches', or at Ephesus where 'Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the Assembly (read Church) was confused'. (39) This example was a bad application of Ruskin's suggestion, for the assembly at Ephesus was not a coming together of Christians but a meeting called by a silver-smith to denounce and stop the local Christians. Behind this rather abstruse etymology and confused thinking, Ruskin was trying

to demystify the Church by making a Church seem to be nothing more than a coming together of Christians. But the New Testament or 'Church' has many shades of meanings; from the mystical body of Christ to a simple group of Christians meeting in a house. The general aim of Ruskin's letter was to make the girls face the real enough paradox that although Christians in the Church of the day were meeting together, preaching Christ, doing great works and confessing Christ as Lord, they would be denied by Christ because they were aiding and abetting in-equity and injustice.

The next week Ruskin tried to be more positive by quoting examples from the Bible about righteousness coming in abundance. Almost all the examples were taken from the Old Testament, prophesying future justice rather than decrying present injustice. (40) 'Till He come and Rain Righteousness upon you.' (41) 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in their ways.' (42) The girls had complained to Miss Bell that it was impossible to 'do justice'. This is true, answered Ruskin, contradicting much of what he had previously written, but he assured his young readers that it was sufficient to mean to do justice, 'which is in reality Being Just. God only can Do justice. . . . But we can all be just in heart and purpose' (43), which was a rather nice distinction.

The Epistle for that day (Lent 5) had included Hebrews 9.14, 'Purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the Living God'. Ruskin linked this with his letter to Mary Leadbeater about being washed in the blood of Christ. (44)

What a wonderful thing it is that people use that metaphor . . . about ten times day on the average - if they are talkers about such things - and yet never notice or care about its meaning. (45)

People believed, thought Ruskin, that this text meant washing away the consequences of sin, but in reality it meant washing away the sins themselves: 'Cleanse me from my sin (46) - not - put away its

punishment.' After an optimistic start to this letter, Ruskin had reverted to his pessimistic self and his belief that no-one but he understood Scripture and the ethical meaning therein of justice.

For his next letter, Ruskin changed from explaining 'righteousness' to a somewhat arid discourse on the derivation and meaning of 'faith'. 'I am going to write to you the dullest & stupidest letter that ever birds bent bright eyes on'. (47) According to Van Akin Burd's note; 'this letter may be considered as Ruskin's notes for his etymological discussion of faith in Modern Painters V'. Faith, according to Johnson's Dictionary and to Cicero meant 'trustworthiness', the 'character of Doing what we say or promise'. (48) The Greek word πιστις wavers towards 'obedience'. Ruskin left it at that for the letter, but promised that the next Sunday he would discuss another word, meaning more directly "'to believe" (which) is derived from the Greek word "faith" and the use of it is very curious.' (49)

In that next letter Ruskin actually used the word 'believe' rather than 'faith'. He showed that

in the Bible; "to believe," always has a mingled sense of obedience, which we have lost - and "to obey," a mingled sense of belief - which we have also lost. (50)

To believe in God means also to obey him. This comment was a gloss on Ruskin's unease at the Authorized Version's translation of John 3.36: 'he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life'. 'He that believeth', translated ο πιστευων, but 'he that believeth not' translated ο απισθων, which means literally 'he who does not obey', rather than 'he who does not believe'. John used these two word-stems in opposition to each other, because to him obedience and belief went together. The Authorized Version's use of the one word 'belief' upset Ruskin not only because it was a bad translation, but also because he saw no point in any Christian belief unless it resulted in doing God's will in obedience.

As this letter was written on Easter Day, Ruskin used the resurrection story to point out that belief in the resurrection itself should lead to certain actions in obedience to God's will. He also thought that this aspect of the resurrection was ignored.

The last words, I fancy, which any body will think of preaching about - will be St. Paul's practical & straightforward pressings of the Resurrection on all men - "Awake to Righteousness, - and sin not." "If ye then be Risen with Christ - seek those things which are above."  
(51)

Ruskin then made the assumption that clothing yourselves with "mercy - kindness - humbleness - meekness - endurance - patience - forgiveness - charity - peace - wisdom - and gratitude" (52) are 'things above'.

This link between the resurrection and good behaviour is theologically possible, but is not to be understood automatically; and it would not have been so made by a preacher on Easter Day. The gifts to which Paul referred were the gifts of the Spirit given to Christians in the world, and would be a better text for Whitsunday. But, as Ruskin wrote; these things are 'to be forthwith taught and got - Down here, as well as up there'. (53)

Ruskin realized that this was rather hard for the girls, for he wrote: 'tell me if you understand all this: and whether you would like me to go on with the subject'. (54) He did not make it any easier for the girls by putting in many Biblical references, although he did so in order to encourage them to look up the texts and write them out for themselves, a way of learning how to study the Bible in, hopefully, an interesting way. It seemed that the pupils were satisfied with this method of teaching, for on the next Sunday Ruskin used the same style to delve into the meaning of 'Holy'. (55) Having in an earlier letter asked for a definition of that word, he wrote a list of texts with 'Holy' in them. e.g. Psalm 22.3; 'But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel'. (56) He criticised the definitions of 'Holy' that the

girls had given. 'Holiness' could not mean 'purity', for Ruskin rather harshly dismissed that synonym as being a metaphorical term, although not defining what he meant by 'metaphorical'. He rather pointlessly added:

You may have pure arsenic, as well as pure gold. You don't mean Pure in this sense. . . . You could not say Holy Arsenic? (57)

Nor did 'Holy' or 'Sanctus' mean 'set apart', for then 'you might think it meant you were all to go into convents'. (58) The next week Ruskin tried to be more constructive about defining 'Holy', while straining the meaning beyond what it could rightfully bear. He simply substituted 'Helpfulness' for 'Holiness'.

You can say Holy Balm - without difficulty. Does not that mark at once the attached sense of Helpfulness - a healing Power. (59)

At this point Ruskin abandoned all his usual method of studying roots and origins of words, and arbitrarily forced the meaning of 'Helpfulness' onto the word 'Holiness' to make his point that a Christian faith involves doing good, helpful acts. 'Helpful, Helpful, Helpful - Lord God of Hosts.' (60) 'The commandment is Helpful, Just, and True'. (61) By 'helpful' Ruskin meant that the Spirit of God was behind this helpfulness, a sort of holy helpfulness. He was pleased with this substitution for

To me it is the most precious of all that I have tried to express to you, since our letters began. (62)

He also used the same substitution in a letter to Mrs. John Simon.

Our word 'holy' is indiscriminately used for various Greek ones. One of its senses is undoubtedly the Latin sanctus, or set apart - but this sense is, I believe, an inferior one. The main sense is 'Life-giving,' and the word is applied to God as Lord of Life, and giving help every instant to all Creatures. If you merely read Helpful instead of Holy, keeping this deep and awful sense of the kind of Help . . . you will light up half the texts wonderfully. 'Helpful - Helpful - Helpful - Lord God of Sabbaoth'. . . . Holy Church ceases to be

Holy in ceasing to be helpful - the Set-apartness being secondary, and by itself wrong. (63)

Here Ruskin was not quite as unsympathetic to the meaning 'set apart' as he had been when writing to the pupils of Winton.

Ruskin finished the letters for that school term from Cologne, telling them not to have anything to do with 'German ideas . . . respecting myths' (64), for previously Miss Bell had written about the girls picking up these ideas. The girls were told that reading the Bible must mean taking it literally and simply - finding out the meanings of the words. 'And above all, get into the habit of solving speculative difficulties by conduct', for

Most religious people bear to me the aspect of persons sitting with their eyes turned up to heaven - on the edge of a precipice, remarking how beautiful the sky was; or wondering how the clouds were made, while whole companies of children & blind people were walking over the precipice & getting dashed to pieces - Jump up - and pull as many people out of misery & death as you can - and let the sky - for the present - take care of itself - and its clouds. (65)

In an earlier letter Ruskin had similarly told the children how to avoid speculative problems by being precise in their understanding of the Bible;

I believe that Vagueness is in matters of religion, our worst enemy, and that nothing is liable to do so much mischief and get us into false states of feeling as using words without a clear meaning. (66)

Because Ruskin was wont to study the minutiae and the literal meaning of parts of the Bible, especially when this agreed with his opinions, his learning and mental curiosity did not allow him to rest with that simplicity of interpretation he enjoined on his young correspondents.

The children returned to school in the Autumn of 1859, when Ruskin again visited them. After he left in November, the Sunday Letters

were resumed, although not so regularly as before and with less length and enthusiasm. The letter started with discussions of words and texts in the Bible with attention on the word 'glory'. (67) As a preliminary, Ruskin explained the bad translation of *καυχασθαι* and its derivatives as 'glory', when in other places the same word is translated more correctly as 'boast'. After that explanation and correction, Ruskin came to the true meaning of 'glory' in the Bible. It meant, according to him, 'the declaration or manifestation of the character of a person, so that it may be generally seen'. (68) The blind man cured by Jesus glorified God, 'i.e. making manifest, or declaring what God had done', in contrast to the people who 'when they saw it only gave praise - or assent'. (69) 'Praise' was not a synonym for 'glory'. It was only 'the acknowledgement of rightness, especially of kindness'. (70)

After this letter, Ruskin seemed to become tired of explaining separate words and instead decided to do something which he thought and hoped would be simpler. So he told the girls about the Psalms,

For we read them as often and so confusedly that we are apt to confuse and hack their unity into too many broken bits. (71)

Ruskin, as in The Two Paths, felt that much reading of the Psalms unfortunately did not lead to an equal understanding or carrying out of their better precepts. Another reason for a simpler Sunday Letter might have been that towards the end of 1859 Ruskin was busy with Modern Painters, Vol. V, and just did not have time to give full attention to his Warrington letters. But in them he started with the first Psalm, (72) which he thought 'is one concerning conduct, opposing Fruitfulness and good issue, to Barrenness - and annihilation'. (73) Ruskin simply went through the psalm verse by verse in a desultory fashion. The Psalm stated that 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful'. There were three characters which are not blessed - the Ungodly, who deny or forget God, the sinners, who know God but in works deny him, and



the scornful who know God and try to serve him, but look down on others who know less. (74)

David - whom Ruskin assumed for the purposes of these letters to have written the Psalms - was very fond of the law and in doing God's work, much as a servant enjoys working for a good master. By 'law' Ruskin would not have meant the detailed ritual Law of the Pentateuch, to which the Psalmists often referred, but the more general law of doing God's will, which is always right. Those who follow the Law and do God's will can bring 'forth his fruit in his season'. (75) But, as Ruskin, with the Psalmist, pointed out, the ungodly will be blown away like chaff.

Just before Christmas, Ruskin wrote about the second Psalm, which he thought apposite for the season because of the phrase 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. (76) It is actually a psalm about God's chosen king (probably a king of Israel) being saved from foreign enemies. Ruskin linked the psalm to the various atonement theories, for it was used in the Letter to the Hebrews, where this text from Psalm 2 is quoted. (77) He was not the first nor the last commentator unable to make clear to his readers his understanding of the Atonement. But at least he was more constructive than when he wrote to the Brownings; 'I believe the whole modern doctrine of Salvation (in this context Ruskin meant Atonement) to be an accursed lie' (78). Ruskin informed the young ladies at Warrington that mediation came from above downwards - from God to man, rather than upwards from man to God. Christmas gave us God's son, as a declaration of God's love, who is a judge tempted as we are and so someone whom we can trust. The tone of this letter, which was based on the theology of the Letter to the Hebrews, was very jumbled and uncertain, being written like the sort of second rate sermon which he would usually despise. No definite conclusions were reached, (perhaps just as well with doctrines of the Atonement) and there was no logical argument. Ruskin took for granted traditional religious thinking which normally he would have questioned, such as whether there is any doctrine of the atonement at all, or whether Jesus was

in any way God's son, let alone whether 'He that hath seen me (Christ) hath seen the Father', as Ruskin claimed in following St. John. (79) At this time Ruskin was not very well. The day after writing to the Wimmington pupils he wrote to the Brownings;

My work does no one much good, but on it must go - as so much of life has already been given to it, though often I feel as if it were the weakest of vain things and the cheapest of valueless ones - at this time, I mean. (80)

The rather perfunctory tone of the letters to the girls at Wimmington continued into the New Year of 1860, when he temporarily abandoned the Psalms. The first letter, not written until the middle of February, (81) was on Jeremiah 17. 5-14, which consisted in various sayings about God blessing those who put their trust in him, condemning those who put their trust in man and seeing into all human hearts. Ruskin seemed to have chosen this piece almost at random but justified it by writing;

I should like to make you see the real meaning of a Bible verse quoted fifty times a week by many religious people without the slightest knowledge of its force or purpose. (82)

Ruskin wrote another very short Sunday Letter, simply using Johnson's Dictionary and the Englishman's Concordance of the New Testament to define 'gospel' as 'God's Spell', or 'God's charm'. (83) This Saxon word, which would lead to 'strange - unheard of - enchanted happiness' was 'sweeter' than the Greek word which meant a more prosaic 'message'. 'God's spell' was better 'in order to connect the idea of the message more distinctly with the messenger or mediator'. (84)

After the diversion to Jeremiah and 'Gospel', Ruskin returned to the Psalms, along with forgiveness. These topics made him more interested and enthusiastic than in the previous few letters, because now he would write about what was concerning him at this time; individual attitudes and society. He decided to write about 'Psalms hostile', more commonly known as the Cursing Psalms (85),

although a list he made of these Psalms did not include all of them, as he would have realized when he referred to one outside that list. He described in some detail Psalm 3 which, according to the Authorized Version, was written by David at the time of Absalom's rebellion. As Ruskin pointed out, this Psalm did not refer to Absalom at all. (86) Ruskin explained this by saying that David could not refer to such a painful subject:

There is little in it (Psalm 3). David's heart is not in it. His heart was in the verses which are unwritten.  
(87)

David was troubled by the words of men. The second verse of the Psalm was 'Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God', while the penultimate verse reads;

'Save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

Ruskin pointed out that those who spoke evil can no longer do so because of the injuries inflicted; though the writer of Psalm 3 would not have meant the verse to be taken quite so literally.

Ruskin analysed this Psalm because it was the next one on the list. (Was he intending or expected to do a commentary on all 150?) But this Psalm lead him to two much more congenial themes, about which he wrote with more enthusiasm until April 1860; the first theme being the use of Psalms in worship, which engrossed him in the next letter, (88) and after that the second theme of forgiveness.

Ruskin had a great deal of respect for the Psalms. Very likely he knew them almost by heart (89), for he often read them, sometimes daily, putting the reference into his diary. Ruskin pointed out to the girls that the Psalms covered a large range of situations and emotion. Not all were suitable for all occasions, even though they were set in strict order for Anglican worship. As he wrote to the girls:

It would be very absurd for happy little birds (the girls at Wimington) who never had known any misery greater than a hard French lesson to sing the 55th Psalm by way of pleasing God on a May morning. (90)

If a particular Psalm did not have relevance to the individual singer or speaker, then, 'mind there is no harm in singing them for others' sake'. (91) People should

Know & feel what is there in the Psalms & what is not -  
To get out of the merely superstitious & monkish habit of singing them because they are pretty words which God must need like to hear. (92)

Ruskin did not solve the problem which he and Church people generally realized, that saying a part of liturgy regularly can become automatic and without feeling towards what is said.

The second theme of the letter, about forgiveness and repentance, was introduced by quoting a Psalm Hostile, No. 59, which Ruskin took as an example of young girls using a Psalm which can have no immediate relevance to them. The themes of repentance and forgiveness were discussed until the whole series of Sunday Letters came to an end. Psalm 59 contains these words:

Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. . . . Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. . . . Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be. (93)

Ruskin observed (not altogether correctly) that Jesus and the early Church followed the Psalmist's tradition of not forgiving enemies.

He (Jesus) prayed for Peter. Did He for Judas? Caiaphas? . . . "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them bring hither & slay them before me." In this parable, is Christ illustrating forgiveness? (94)

It was so in the early Church, as when Paul said; 'God shall smite thee, thou whited wall' to the High Priest who had hit him. (95) In all these incidents, there was no hint of forgiveness by man or by God. Ruskin was not completely happy with his own interpretation of

forgiveness in the New Testament, for he had to explain away two other texts which seemed to contradict his own argument. One event was Jesus forgiving those who crucified him. Ruskin tried to explain this by saying that that episode

strictly speaking was not for his enemies but His executioners who probably had no enmity to Him at all but were merely Roman soldiers doing their duty, for whom Christ prayed. . . . Does it follow that He would have prayed for them if they had known? And don't you find that the prayer was instantly answered (Luke; XXIII.47). The centurion being the officer who had special charge of the execution was practically the doer of it all. (96)

The other event was Stephen forgiving those stoning him. (97) Even Ruskin could not explain this away; he simply passed it over by giving examples in the early Church of enemies who were not forgiven. Altogether, this was an unusual exposition of the role of forgiveness in the New Testament.

What lay behind this for Ruskin was the generally accepted Christian understanding that there can be no forgiveness without repentance. An enemy could not repent. If he did, he would cease to be an enemy. At this point, Ruskin realized that he was entering a complicated area, because he wrote in a postscript: 'Mind you must not think I'm going to tell you that you are only to forgive people after they've begged your pardon. It lies much deeper than that, this matter of forgiveness.' (98)

In the next Sunday Letters (99) Ruskin tried to elaborate on these themes by dealing with unforgivable sins and unforgivable people. He himself took a very hard, unforgiving line, with sharp divisions between forgivable and unforgivable sins, friends and enemies, right and wrong. His earlier Evangelical upbringing and practices, with its emphasis on salvation or damnation, sin and repentance, come out clearly in these letters, an attitude also obvious in Unto this Last, which was being published at about this time. Forgiveness could not, and should not, come easily.

Put it as personally as you can. That wickedest of all wicked dragons - St George's dragon - who used to breakfast on schoolgirls - Would you have forgiven him or sent St George at him? (100)

Some sins could be forgiven by God and by other people. These sins were those of error or trespass (which Ruskin defined as 'involuntary mistake') as in 'Lord - how often shall my brother Err against me and I forgive him?' (101) But some sins were unforgivable; those which set one Being from another. (Here Ruskin came close to the Catholic concept two different categories of sins, more and less serious ones, Venial and Mortal.) 'There are Sins committed against the "Helpful Spirit", (against) . . . all the instinctive kindly impulses'. (102) The type of sins of which Ruskin was thinking became clearer when he wrote: 'men are to be judged . . . not by the Name they work in, but by the work they do'. (103) The sins that could not be forgiven, though Ruskin did not pursue this topic in these particular letters, would be the sins which caused social injustice and inequity. Those who perpetrated those sins were not God's friends, they were the enemies of the Helpful Spirit - and God did not forgive his enemies. God's friends had to be against all forms of evil. 'God has always blessed a stern resistance to evil,' Ruskin wrote. (104)

Those who have committed the sins of social injustice were unlikely to repent and change their ways. They could not be forgiven because their repentance was a necessary prerequisite for God's forgiving them. So, as Ruskin in his penultimate Sunday Letter of the series wrote, there must be repentance. (105)

You may look over all the merciful texts you can think of. There is no Forgiveness without repentance - only judgement. . . . For those who hate God (and all who hate their fellow men do so) . . . there are but the prayers of the Psalms Hostile. (106)

Ruskin put before the girls those very basic Christian choices: Good or evil, God or the devil, salvation or damnation; themes he must have heard many times from Evangelical pulpits, with, as in these

letters, a greater dwelling on the consequences of choosing wrong than in the consequences of choosing God's way.

In April Ruskin wrote another, short Sunday Letter, (107) on the theme that children should have the gifts of Trustfulness, an unwillingness to bear grudges and a forgetfulness of evil - all traits of character which help the process of forgiveness.

Look through history and see how in all war and distress - children are - if anything is - the reconciling - saving - strengthening creatures.' (108)

Six months later Ruskin wrote

I can't write Sunday letters for a long time to come; for I am very lazy, first, and in a very bad humour second; and afraid of saying naughty things about somebody or other. (109)

Whether the girls were relieved or disappointed is not known. The last excuse of saying 'naughty things' was written because Ruskin had just published 'naughty things' in the first two essays of Unto This Last. But the real reason was that he had run out of enthusiasm for these letters to Wilmington.

These letters to his 'birds' at Wilmington were the only writings of Ruskin at this period which dealt specifically with religious matters at length. They showed his lack of interest in purely religious speculation, although he concealed from the girls his contempt for much of ecclesiastical affairs. More positively, the letters showed his willingness and ability to use the Scriptures to illustrate how he thought God would want people to act and think, in justice and equity to each other. Because the girls came from middle-class, reasonably well-off and sometimes clerical homes, they were insulated from the worst of British society. Ruskin felt they would grow up to be members of a class which would - perhaps unwittingly - continue the inequity of Political Economy. By these letters Ruskin hoped to harness their religious understanding to an awareness of the evils of the social system from which they would

materially benefit. Finally, he hoped that they might become more 'helpful' or 'holy' and so reform their society.



The girls of Winnington School were not Ruskin's only interest at this time. In the late 1850's he began his acquaintance with Rose La Touche. While his letters to the Winnington girls were read sympathetically by the teachers and the girls (for Miss Bell had similar religious opinions to her famous correspondent's), his relationships with the La Touche family were very different and much more stormy. Religion was a source of very great friction, amidst all the other problems.

Ruskin first met Mrs. Maria La Touche and her two daughters Emily and Rose in 1858. Mrs. La Touche had asked Ruskin to give her two daughters, then aged ten and fourteen, drawing lessons, just before his going to the Continent and his unconversion. On his return his friendship with the family gradually ripened; as a result, in 1861 he spent a fortnight at the La Touche's home, Harristown, near Dublin. Rose's parents were in religious conflict, and Ruskin added fuel to that conflict.

Rose's father, John La Touche, was of an old Irish family, a landowner and bank shareholder, although by the 1860's his bank was falling upon hard times, leading to serious financial troubles. He had spent his early manhood leading the existence of a typical landed gentleman, hunting, shooting and looking after his estates. His membership of the Anglican Church was only conventional, for religion at that time was not important to him. But he was influenced by Spurgeon, who was disliked by the majority of clergy within the traditional churches. Spurgeon's sermons were fundamentalist and he believed in salvation through faith alone, after adult conversion and baptism. He had a total acceptance of the Bible as the literal word of God, and his was a Calvinist doctrine, wanting all who heard him to become a 'true prize', which was his term for a soul converted and saved. He did not have a high doctrine of the Eucharist and he could be very severe on Roman Catholic teachings and practices. It is not known why John La Touche was originally attracted to Spurgeon's sermons, an unlikely

form of edification for an Irish land-owner of minimal religious commitment. He first heard Spurgeon preach in 1857, just before the La Touche family met Ruskin. The effect of Spurgeon on John La Touche was immediate, for very soon after that he began to form a society to save prostitutes in London. He was not baptized until 1863, a considerable lapse of time after being first associated with Spurgeon, but by then he had abandoned the life of the typical Irish gentleman to become absorbed in his newest brand of Christianity. As Spurgeon said in 1861,

Working with great discretion, he sowed the seed so rapidly in each place, that before the fowl bird, the Popish priest, could hasten to stop him, the work was done. . . . We shall, we are sure, hear of this sowing in years to come. (1)

John's wife, Maria, had a very different outlook on life. She was a devout woman in the Church of Ireland who wrote some poetry and two novels with religious themes. 'On Sunday they (John and Maria) went their separate ways, she to Carnalway Church near which stood the La Touche mausoleum and he to his Gothic chapel for the Baptists about a mile distant.' (2) Maria La Touche, who was rather gushing and effusive, had aspirations to an intellectual and literary life which she found completely stifled in rural Ireland and enjoyed the contrast of the intellectual company provided by her acquaintance with John Ruskin and George MacDonald. (3) If it had not been for the emotional tangles of John Ruskin and her daughter Rose, she might have become as close a friend to him as were the Ladies Trevelyan (4) and Mount-Temple (5) and Mrs. Browning. It is possible that Maria La Touche fancied herself in love with Ruskin. If so, her consequent jealousy against her daughter would have made the complicated family relationships and their attitudes towards their friend even more difficult for Rose to cope with emotionally. Mrs. La Touche disapproved of her husband's building a Baptist Chapel on his estate, disliked his enthusiasm for conversion and converting others, and did not understand his Calvinism. But she did admit that his new Christian role was preferable to his former fox-hunting one.

Their daughter Rose was caught between them, for their biggest conflict was over her up-bringing. John did not try to change his wife's opinions, and his elder daughter Emily was not particularly inclined to follow his enthusiasm for Spurgeon-type conversion. That left Rose, who seemed to have been an intelligent and sensitive child, though rather over-religious. John put pressure on his younger daughter, hoping to make her his 'true prize'. When Rose was nineteen, she wrote her spiritual autobiography; and in it she described her father's influence.

(My father) taught me that there was but the one thing needful, one subject worthy of thought, one aim worth living for, one rule for conduct, namely, God's Holy Word. . . . He used to say that the things that concerned God were the only real and important things. . . . So I got ill . . . and it was a weary period, all that of childhood. (6)

Maria La Touche did not, quite reasonably, approve of such earnest indoctrination, and she disliked her husband's hold over their daughter. In 1863, after a lot of argument in the family, John La Touche persuaded Rose to take her first Communion without being confirmed. There is no obvious explanation why John La Touche was so insistent on this. Neither his spiritual mentor, Spurgeon, nor his Church, the Baptist, laid any emphasis on the sacraments. La Touche's action seemed more an attack on the necessity of Confirmation than on an endorsement of Holy Communion. Maybe this episode was John's way of attacking his wife's religion and Church through his daughter. Whatever his motives, he did not seem to care about Rose's wishes or happiness and the conflict in her mind must have been great, for soon after this she had her first attack of 'hysteria'.

Although these religious conflicts were primarily within the La Touche family, Ruskin became involved. He had sympathies with all sides. He was from the very first very fond of Rose, but did not like her over-zealous religion. Sometimes he was on the side of Mrs. La Touche and against her husband. Ruskin himself had only

recently freed himself, as he thought, from the Calvinistic doctrines which John La Touche was so enthusiastically embracing, and which Maria so much disliked. Ruskin found himself dragged into the family struggle and was used by Maria to try and check her husband. Maria and John Ruskin were very perturbed at Mr. La Touche's influence over the young Rose and the damage they thought was being done to her. But on the other hand, John Ruskin was a friend of Spurgeon and also approved of John La Touche's genuine attempts at improving the lot of the poorest section of society. On his only visit to Harristown, Ruskin wrote to his father about his host. He found John La Touche 'nicer' than he had expected;

Less worldly and with more heart than evangelicals have usually. But a park with no apparent limit, and half the country round paying rent, are curious Paraphernalia of Christianity. (7)

Though the two men disagreed about the religion, they agreed about Spurgeon's exhortations to his listeners to good works; one from a religious and the other from a non-religious point of view. Typical of Spurgeon was that although salvation only came through knowledge of forgiveness,

I remark, next, that change of nature is the best proof of the pardon of the sinner. . . . These (good works) will not save you; but unless we see them, how are we to know that Christ has wrought a miracle upon you? (8)

But though the social action which John La Touche practised won his guest's approval, the religious journey to that end was the journey abandoned by and abhorrent to him.

Mrs. La Touche's attitude to John Ruskin was more ambivalent. She liked him, perhaps was in love with him, and felt that she had influence over him. In Ruskin she found a supporter against her husband's Calvinism. But on the other hand, she strongly disapproved of Ruskin's heretical beliefs. She was as much concerned about Ruskin's doubts and questionings influencing Rose as she was about her daughter's being influenced in the opposite

direction, by her husband's Calvinism and desire for her to receive Communion before Confirmation. So concerned was Maria about Ruskin's beliefs, or lack of them, that during his stay in Harristown she persuaded him not to publish anything about his religious doubts and views for the next ten years. Ruskin kept this promise, so his reading public, although not his friends, were kept in an ignorance about his state of mind which his friends did not share. His father John James was pleased with this promise of silence as his son acknowledged:

I got yours (John James' letter with) . . . expression of rejoicing in my promise to Mrs. La Touche. I am very glad you are glad of it - it was not one I would have given for money . . . but it was the only thing I could do for Mrs. La Touche, and she would do all she could for me. (9)

As Ruskin came to know Rose better, he wrote to her in the same way as he did to the girls at Wilmington, teaching about the Bible and what sort of faith the young reader should have. Before his visit to Ireland Ruskin had been depressed, so in June 1881 he had gone to stay with a fisherman's family at Boulogne from where he wrote a letter to Rose. (10) Van Akin Burd has described this letter as a 'subtle justification of the changes in Ruskin's religious faith'. (11) This is not altogether accurate, for Ruskin's description of faith evolving and maturing was more optimistic than was warranted by his own spiritual journey. He quoted to Rose parts from the parable of Jesus about the wheat growing to maturity.

The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. (12)

This parable, and the others told in the same section of Mark's gospel, laid more emphasis on the good results of growing and reaping than on the bad results. Ruskin realized this as he drew Rose's attention to the passage. Yet he could not apply them to himself. He had rejected as dust his religious harvest up to the Unconversion of 1858, and since then, as he sometimes acknowledged,

his 'harvest' had not been as good as, and he did not see it as being as good as, the salvation Jesus was preaching through this and the other parables. What Ruskin wrote he could not apply to himself.

Ruskin developed this into a long analogy. The letter's style is interesting, for it illustrates Ruskin's ability to observe closely, in this case the growth of an ear of corn. More importantly, it shows his knowledge of the Bible and his ability, when at his best, to make a coherent whole out of different texts. He refers to Matthew 3.12 (winnowing on the threshing floor), Matthew 13.8 (the parable of seed increasing), 1 Corinthians 13.8 (charity or love never failing), Psalm 129.7 (the reaper not binding his sheaves) and Isaiah 41.16 (the wind carrying away that which was winnowed).

Now whether you suppose the "kingdom of God" to be spoken of the world, or of change in a single human heart, does it not seem that each condition is, as it were, the defence of and preparation for another? - the Last only being the precious or perfect one. . . . If you take it of a single soul, does it not seem as if each successive condition of mind, though for a time good and necessary, were only the covering and guiding preparation for better things; better, that is to say, more useful and fruitful. First the leaf, like fresh religious feeling which may pass away - (whereof he that binds the sheaves fills not his bosom) - but if it hold, beneath it springs the ear, which we may take for well-formed purpose - that also may be blasted before it be grown up; - lastly the good fruit forms, some sixty, some an hundred-fold, which is like charity that doth not fail - the blade and the chaff failing and ceasing like prophecies and like knowledge. We thought the green was good - but it passes: we thought the gold was good - but the winds carry it away and it is gone: we thought at least the grain was good - but even that must be crushed under the millstone, - and only at last the white is good. (13)

Ruskin had been much more pessimistic about the evolving of God's work in other writings, such as in the Essay on Baptism in 1847. In it, he had pointed out that Christianity had not been universally accepted - it did not seem to flourish as an ear of corn did. When writing to Rose in 1861 he did not find that his new religious outlook was at all fruitful, even after winnowing. Instead, he felt

that he was being crushed under the millstone of life, for no good purpose. Depressed, unwilling to stay at home with his parents, not knowing in which direction his life should go, he had taken refuge at Boulogne to escape the pressures of London and England.

His other correspondence and writing did not suggest that he expected any good, white grain from his present crushing of the spirit. The harvest analogy in the letter to Rose suggested that in faith - 'whether "of the world" or of "a single human heart"', there would always be improvement. Even though Ruskin wanted to convey an optimistic impression to a thirteen-year old girl, in himself, he was very dubious as to whether his increasing 'paganism' was an improvement over the 'old Certainties'. He certainly did not believe that the current religious climate was any improvement over previous phases of Christianity. If anything, life was becoming worse. Ruskin had been more honest about his feelings in a letter to C.E. Norton three weeks before he had written to Rose;

Little Rosie is terribly frightened about me, and writes letters to get me to come out of Byepath Meadow - and I won't; . . . and Bye path Meadow is bad walking in this Will of the Wispish Time: but as for that straight old road between the red brick walls - half Babel - quarter fiery furnace & quarter chopped straw - I can't do it any more - Meadow of some sort I must have though I go no further. (14)

In this letter Ruskin seemed to think that Christianity was composed of unpleasant things; a cacophony of different languages, meaning variations of ideas, as in the story of the Tower of Babel; (15) the judgemental theme of a fiery furnace, as in the Book of Daniel (16) and Christian teaching of Hell; and chopped straw, an ephemeral nothing, perhaps also with a reference to the straw collected by the Israelites with great hard labour in Egypt to make bricks. (17) Altogether, this was an unappealing view of orthodox Christianity.

In 1862, Rose overheard conversations between adults about liberalism in religion. Such talk disturbed the young girl. Essays and Reviews had been published in 1860, and Bishop Colenso (18) had

written his book Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans in 1861.

In her autobiography Rose asked herself,

If there was really a doubt that these Gospels had ever been written by the people they professed to be, how could one trust them? . . . it all seemed utter despair.  
(19)

But Rose did not continue to doubt, for she went on:

But there was God, I could call upon Him . . . and He heard me out of the horrible pit. (20)

How much of this Rose thought at the time she was describing, 1861, and how much she was projecting on to the past from when she wrote her Autobiography in 1867, cannot be known. But Ruskin, according to Van Akin Burd, 'was guarded in his comments to Rose. He was not among those from whom she heard evil or light talk about faith in Christ'. (21)

From mid-1861 to the end of 1863, Ruskin spent most of his time on the Continent, usually at Mornex in Switzerland. By doing so, he could escape emotional and work pressures in England and distance himself from his over-powering and now elderly parents. While in Switzerland, he looked to nature as well as the Bible for spiritual refreshment. He had been reading some of the Book of Jeremiah, just after a lonely Christmas. He felt that his lonely stay there was doing him good for he could even pray;

Though I am so much of a heathen, I still pray a little sometimes in pretty places, though I eschew Campden Chapel: so I knelt on the turf at the head of the Grande Gorge and thanked God for bringing me back safe and well to it. (22)

He seemed to be as ill at ease being a heathen as he was being a Christian.

He kept in contact with the La Touches, although he had deliberately ended a fleeting return to London just because the family were



coming to that city for Christmas. Mrs. La Touche showed Rose some letters that Ruskin had written to her about religion - perhaps out of jealousy and to divide Rose and Ruskin. These letters distressed Rose, who was 'mightily vexed about my heathenism', as Ruskin wrote to John James. (23) Rose wrote to him that 'for the sake of all Truth, and Love, you must not give the one true Good - containing all others - God - up'. (24) In March the next year, Ruskin wrote to Charles Norton from Mornex that

I shall send her your letter that she may see people can yet love me who won't give me any votive candles - . . . for she has been scolding me frightfully - and says - "how could one love you - if you were a Pagan". (25)

John Ruskin and Rose La Touche did not meet again until 1865, three years after their last meeting, and two years after these letters, by which time Rose was no longer a girl, but an eighteen year old young woman, which led to further emotional problems.

A more public religious controversy was exercising Ruskin at this time, in which he was involved through his connection with Winnington Hall. One of the pupils there was Frances Colenso, the daughter of the Bishop of Natal. Mrs. Colenso was an old friend of Miss Bell, the Headmistress, for they had known each other since at least 1854, when the Rev'd. John Colenso had been appointed Bishop of Natal. The bishop had caused controversy in 1861 when he had published his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, which was printed soon after Essays and Reviews. When he wrote The Pentateuch and The Book of Joshua Critically Examined there was bound to more criticisms of him, both because he had gained publicity from his earlier work and because the commentary was about the controversial subject of how and when the early Old Testament books were written. Like some other controversial theological works of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Colenso's Pentateuch did not state anything new; it arranged and made more publicly available what was common currency in theological and ecclesiastical circles. In May 1862 the Bishop and his family returned to England to supervise the publication of this second book on the Pentateuch staying at Winnington where his daughter *Frances*, usually known as Fanny, was a pupil, using it as a base.

Ruskin was well aware of the religious controversies of the time. He had read Essays and Reviews, Baron C.J. Bunsen's work on the Bible, (1) and took the Westminster Review, which referred to modern Dutch and German critical scholarship. In The Pentateuch and The Book of Joshua Critically Examined, Colenso tried to work out how these early Old Testament Books were written. He believed that the Pentateuch contained material written after the Israelites returned from the Babylonian exile - six hundred years after Moses. Colenso was very uncertain about the miracles described in the early Old Testament; which doubt was liable to misinterpretation, because, as his wife Francis wrote to Miss Bell:

Miss Gourlay's (a teacher at Winnington) letter is a most exasperating production. She surely cannot have read

John's book, and say that he says 'miracles are impossible. Where does he say or imply such a thing? But it is disheartening to find an intelligent person reading one's book and decrying it as nonsense for things which are not in it. (2)

Colenso had first become interested in Biblical criticism, he claimed, when a Zulu had asked him about the Scriptures 'Is it true?'. Colenso had come to the conclusion that it was not true.

I wish . . . to repeat here most distinctly that my reason, for no longer receiving the Pentateuch as historically true, is not that I find insuperable difficulties with regard to the miracles, or supernatural revelations of Almighty God, recorded in it, but solely that I cannot, as a true man, consent any longer to shut my eyes to the absolute, palpable, self-contradictions of the narrative. (3)

When the controversy over the Bishop's book began, Ruskin had already isolated himself at Mornex in Switzerland. But before the book was published, Colenso circulated draft copies to people such as Maurice and Jowett. Very likely Margaret Bell saw a copy, and sent some extracts on to Ruskin, who commented:

They are quite delightful, and they relieve me a little from the weight of dread I felt, lest I should hurt the children by silence of such things. (4)

Ruskin had tried to be positive in his talks and letters to the girls at Winnington, concealing many of his religious doubts. But Colenso's controversial book made it easier for Ruskin to write openly to the girls, for Colenso had a daughter at the school and some of the girls themselves were transcribing excerpts of his manuscript to post to him at Mornex. On one point concerning miracles he disagreed with the Bishop, as he continued in the letter:

I long for them (miracles), need them - feel that all is mystery and loneliness without them. - But I can't get hold of any good evidence of them. (5)

But, as he added; 'What a splendid crash the Bps. book will make!'

When the book was published and Ruskin had read it in full, it helped neither his faith nor his depression. The Bishop wrote from a Christian faith which Ruskin did not have, for although they had the same critical understanding of the Scriptures they came to different conclusions. Ruskin wrote to Miss Bell, trying to help her in her similar uncertainties of faith exacerbated by their friend's writings:

I have known ever since that winter of 58 . . . (that) we were all wrong. - It is only within the last two years that I have quite known how wrong. . . . For us who have been long deceived, and who have all to forget & forsake, and desecrate - and darken it is dreadful - The world is an awful mystery to me now - but I see that is because I have been misled, not because it need be so. (6)

Ruskin was also depressed because his plan to buy a cottage in the Harristown grounds had been opposed by Rose's parents, and he was also feeling guilty at cutting himself off from John James and Margaret. The only happy thing in the letter was 'Love to the children - Make them write me again - more about the bishop (Colenso).

While Ruskin agreed with most of the contents of Bishop Colenso's book, his mother believed that Wunnington Hall and its adult associates had corrupted her son's religious faith. She could not understand the more deep-seated reasons. Ruskin denied this corruption from Wunnington claiming, rightly, that Colenso was not responsible for changing him. As he wrote to his father:

I wish you could put out of your mind - that either Carlyle, Colenso, or Froude (7), much less anyone else less than they - have had the smallest share in this change. Three years ago, long before Colenso was h(e)ard of, I had definitely refused to have anything more to do with the religious teaching in this school (Wunnington). . . . I was then far beyond the point at which he (Colenso) is standing now. (8)

Colenso's book and the furore that followed encouraged Ruskin to follow the religious path which he had been treading for several years. He had a highly individual way of studying and coming to conclusions for he was very much his own man, and in some ways enjoyed being the centre of controversy. His religious pilgrimage was made from his own deep studying and psychological make-up while reflecting the thoughts and beliefs of his time. Carlyle and Colenso did not directly influence him, nor did Essays and Reviews. But he came to the same general conclusions as they did, via his own path, although being pleased to reinforce and be reinforced by like-minded people.

In public Ruskin was willing to take the Bishop's side, but was uncertain how much he could actually help him. Ruskin himself was not a popular figure at this time, following the publication of Unto This Last and the annulment of his marriage. He wrote to Miss Bell:

Well, I will stand by your Bishop - as much as he himself likes - but my own belief is, with all this calumny and hatred about me - he would get only harm from allowing my name to be in any wise joined with his. But I'll stand by him to any extent: you may tell him so: I'll say anything that I can - anywhere - to anybody - publicly - in print - in private - as he chooses. (9)

Ruskin was concerned about the well-being of the Bishop, hoping that he would not want to leave the Church. Colenso could do more to change the Church from within than from without.

Please tell the Bishop not to work too hard. No human strength can at once overthrow - or even make serious impression on the vast fabric of ecclesiastical fallacy and custom. It is part of many peoples constitution - They are actually mineralized - fossilized with falsehood - They look like men - but they are flint. (10)

As Ruskin was in Mornex when Colenso's commentary was published, he wrote his letters about the book from there. He did not meet the Bishop during the controversy, but continued to be sympathetic to the Colenso family.

I think it is as well that Fannie (Colenso's daughter) is with her Father just now. He will have a good deal of thorny road to travel, and sometimes, people will keep a bough or two back out of his way, because his girls are with him, on the whole, they should all be together just now. (11)

The children and affairs of Winnington were very important to Ruskin in the 1860's, as were the La Touche family. But he would sometimes complain that he had no friends which was not true, for he had a very wide circle of them in many spheres of life. At this period, two men had influence with him, George MacDonald and Thomas Carlyle. Ruskin had first met George MacDonald through the La Touches.

It was Mrs. La Touche . . . who first introduced George MacDonald and John Ruskin, the occasion being the latter's attendance at one of the lectures at Tudor Lodge in 1863, and the acquaintance rapidly developed into a close intimacy. (12)

This shows that Ruskin was still interested in things religious to the extent that Mrs. La Touche could persuade him to go to a lecture given by an ex-Congregational minister. MacDonald became enmeshed into the Ruskin-La Touche friendship and had to bear the brunt of the confidences and pleas for help from both sides. MacDonald was a Scottish divine who had lost his living because of unorthodox views on salvation. (13) He was continually in ill-health, poor and with a large family to support. The two men, Ruskin and MacDonald, had started with similar religious views. While both came to doubt, MacDonald kept his faith and wrote from a certainty that Ruskin lacked. When MacDonald sent to Ruskin a book of his sermons, Ruskin wrote:

If they (the sermons) were but true, - . . . But I feel so strongly that it is only the image of your own mind that you see in the sky! And you will say, "And who made the mind?" Well, the same hand that made the adder's ear - and the tiger's heart - and they shall be satisfied when they awake - with their likeness? It is a precious book though - God give you grace of it. (14)

According to MacDonald's son, 'Ruskin's mind was the more scientific and aggressive, George MacDonald's imaginative and receptive'. (15) MacDonald, though poor, had a stable home life and a steadier mind. He was also a considerate and kind friend, in whom Ruskin could confide at a difficult time of his life. On the other hand, Ruskin, who always needed to be needed, felt that he could be of help to MacDonald financially.

The other person who had much influence over Ruskin at this time, and for many years to come, was Thomas Carlyle. This was a very different kind of friendship from Ruskin's with MacDonald. Even though Ruskin was of a brilliant mind and of decided opinions, and liked friends who were dependent on him, he also had a psychological need for a strong father-figure. For many years John James had himself fulfilled this need, but now he was insufficient. John felt too restricted by his now old parents and perhaps too dependent on John James financially. In Carlyle, Ruskin found a man who was older, shared many similar ideas, could help him in difficult times and could dominate him on occasions. The two men had undergone parallel experiences for both had been brought up by religious parents, both had rejected their Calvinist upbringing, both had felt they had known an important spiritual enlightenment leading to the rejection of orthodox faith, both used their religious capital to channel their thoughts and pens into trying to reform the society in which they lived, but which they condemned. Carlyle was

Highly unorthodox in his religious views, he (Carlyle) was yet indifferent to earthly pleasures, had a strong moral sense, and preached his famous doctrine of Work. . . (He was) primarily concerned with the state of mankind's soul. (16)

Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, published back in 1835 showed the author's position. The hero of the book was Professor Teufelsdröckh, a German. He (in reality Carlyle himself) changed his attitude to the world.

Thus have we . . . followed Teufelsdröckh through the various successive states and stages of Growth,

Entanglement, Unbelief, and almost Reprobation, into a certain clearer state of what he himself seems to consider to be as Conversion. (17)

The hero had had a conversion, or unconversion as Ruskin would have put it, one 'sultry Dog-day, after much perambulation' in Paris (18)

Thus had the EVERLASTING NO (das ewige Nein) pealed authoritively through all the recesses of my Being, of my ME; and then was it that my whole ME stood up. . . and with emphasis recorded its Protest. . . . It is from this hour that I incline to date my Spiritual New-birth. . . . Perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a Man. (19)

The similarities with Ruskin's 'unconversion' were obvious. Ruskin and Carlyle likewise came to the same disparaging conclusions about the Church. Teufelsdröckh said, on his release from traditional religion, that

Nay, perhaps, every conceivable Society, past and present, may well be figured as properly and wholly a Church, in one or other of these three predicaments: an audibly preaching and prophesying Church, which is the best; second, a Church that struggles to preach and prophesy, but cannot as yet, till its Pentecost come; and third and worst, a Church gone dumb with old age, or which only mumbles delirium prior to dissolution. (20)

Like Carlyle, Ruskin wanted the first type of Church, but believed that the Church in contemporary Britain was of the third type. But for Teufelsdröckh or Carlyle there was a ray of hope, the same hope which Ruskin wished for in the Church:

Some generation-and-half after Religion has quite withdrawn from it (the world), and in unnoticed nooks (it) is weaving for herself new Vestures, wherewith to reappear, and bless us, or our sons or grandsons. (21)

In this conclusion, Carlyle appeared as a man of some hope and faith, who kept this hope alive even while condemning the Churches and religious practices of his time. Ruskin was attracted to such a man. Carlyle, for his part, found the younger Ruskin



In all things to mean well, and aim high with the very highest; but he strikes me always as infinitely too hopeful of men and things. . . . The man himself I find exceedingly amiable. . . . But he flies out like a soda-water bottle. (22)

Carlyle was the most use to Ruskin just after Unto This Last was published in 1860, for although Ruskin's parents and many of his friends were appalled at what he had written, Carlyle stood by him:

I have read your Paper with exhilaration, exultation, often with laughter, with "Bravissimo!" . . . My joy is great to find myself henceforth in a minority of two at any rate! (23)

Ruskin's parents blamed their son's friends for his straying from the faith. This John refuted in a letter to his father:

Mamma has a horror of these people - Carlyle, etc. - because she thinks they "pervert" me. . . . My "perverters" are Mr. Moore and Mr. Bayne and the Bishop of Oxford, and Lord Shaftesbury. (24)

Mr. Moore was the worst perverter, according to Ruskin, because in a sermon about Psalm 138, 'Thou has magnified thy word above all thy name':

Applying the phrase "thy word" to the Bible, he sent, or endeavoured to send, his congregation away with the impression that David had a neatly bound volume in the Bible Society's best print always on his dressing-table, with a blue string at his favourite chapters of St. John. (25)

It is surprising that Ruskin did not have more sympathy with Lord Shaftesbury, for he was rightly renowned for his philanthropic work.

Ruskin wrote this letter while in Lucerne, Switzerland. On his return home, he was even more soured by traditional religion because at that time having to read the sort of religious literature which he disliked. He was busy at home looking after his mother who had fallen and broken her hip. He showed great patience with her.

The worst of the thing has been the confinement, which my mother has however borne admirably, (with the help - be it confessed - of some of the worst evangelical theology which she makes me read to her - and I'm obliged of course to make no disparaging remarks of an irritating character - You may conceive my state of mind after it!) (26)

His parents were right in seeing that Carlyle and their son reinforced and helped each other in the public debate on social questions and in the private debate about traditional Christianity and worship. They also helped each other emotionally in ways the older Ruskins could not understand, for their son could write to Carlyle about his depressions and doubts and expect more sympathy than they could give. So Ruskin felt free to write to Carlyle that

The heaviest depression is upon me I have ever gone through; the great questions about Nature and God and man have come on me in forms so strange and frightful - and it is so new to me to do every thing expecting only, Death. (i.e. No life after dying) (27)

This Ruskin had written while journeying to Ireland to stay with La Touches, a period when he was seemingly happy, and appeared so in a letter to his parents.

After Unto This Last, Ruskin published very little until 1864. He was depressed, did not know what to do next, realized that his feelings for Rose ran very deep, did not know what, if anything, to believe. Other letters which he wrote were liable to take religion as their subject; this was true all through the 1860's, when his diary would also have occasional references to his unhappy spiritual state. At the end of 1861, while he was in the midst of his depression, he wrote to his father from the continent:

You know in the matter of universal salvation, there are but three ways of putting it.

1. Either; "people do go to the devil for not believing."

2. Or "they - don't."

3. Or - "We know nothing about it."

Which last is the real Fact, and the sooner it is generally acknowledged to be the Fact, the better, and no

more said about Gospel, or Salvation, or Damnation - not one of which three words is even understood by one in ten millions of the persons who use them, in the sense in which they are used in the Bible. (28)

He was fairly open about his heathenism to his friends, but did not realize how much he was burdening them. John James asked him to be more reticent, to which John answered that 'the fear is lest I should be too reserved'. (29) Ruskin felt that 'every man who is worth anything' must admit at sometime or other to sorrowfulness of soul, even if open to the accusation of 'Christian whining'. (30) This attitude would not have been approved by his parents - especially not by his mother. Yet a week after the first letter in August, their uncertain son wrote in his diary that he had picked up a Bible; so he must have had some curiosity about what he had ostensibly left behind, or a feeling that perhaps the Bible had something to offer. In his Bible reading and studying phases, which came and went, he tended to concentrate on the Old Testament. So it was this time, though with mixed results.

Read Jeremiah 1. in morning, long since I looked at Bible; the fresh eye and ear very useful. Look for Anathoth, can't find it. Work very badly on head. Day certainly does not seem to go better for a Bible beginning. (31)

Ruskin tended to put the blame or credit for his heathenism on other people and circumstances, sometimes blaming the Church. He complained, when writing to his father about the price of Turner paintings, that unselfishness and generosity, the Christian virtues, were only rewarded by 'punishment and vexation'. (32) To a Captain Brackenbury he wrote that Christianity had failed because of Simonry. (33) Simon Magus had seen the Spirit given by the Apostles to converts and had offered the apostles money to be given the same power as the apostles, at which Simon Peter had pointed out that spiritual gifts were not for sale. Ruskin believed, and this came out in many of his references to the Church, that religion had become too bound up with money. He also said in this letter that

the whole basis of his early lectures (and writings) were now as nothing.

I would say more about art if I had anything to say. But have I not been always lecturing "it is only to be great if founded on Faith"? - and now what is our faith? I am in too great trouble of thought and heart to have any fire left in me. (34)

In a letter the next year to W.H.Harrison (35) Ruskin similarly blamed the priesthood for all that had gone wrong. In this letter he would not have been thinking of Catholic priests, but of all clergymen and Church leaders.

Up to, and down from, the days of Caiaphas, priests have had the same general character; if you want to have a great work stopped, a great truth slain, or a great Healer crucified, your chief priest is the man to do it, and he only. All the worst evil on this earth is priests' work - all the completest loss of good has been by priests' hindrance. (36)

There were two almost separate streams running parallel which led to Ruskin's heathenism. The first was a loss of faith within himself for his spiritual life diminished as he matured and he felt that much of his early Evangelical indoctrination was false. The other stream which led to his heathenism was his increasing awareness of social injustice and he put the Church and clergy into the same category as industrialists, merchants and the rich - the causers of poverty and injustice. As he became more abusive and extreme in his criticisms of those who had power and wealth, he became ever more unsympathetic to what some parts of the Church were trying to do to improve the physical and spiritual well-being of those for whom Ruskin had the most sympathy,- the oppressed and desperately poor.

Towards the end of 1863, Ruskin returned to England, and in February of the next year, was with his father when he died, aged 78. Soon after this, Ruskin's mental attitude improved, for although he continued to grumble about how depressed he was, and how he could not work properly, he did spend much more time lecturing and writing. He wrote to the Warrington girls, this time not the long Sunday letters, but shorter and probably more enjoyable ones, although sometimes a little perfunctory. In his lectures on art and architecture he brought before his listeners those themes about society which were close to his heart and which he had outlined in Unto This Last. Religion ceased to figure largely in his work at this time, unless it were to continue to put the Church in the same category of exploiters as merchants and other bodies of people who had done well from Political Economy, while making the poor and helpless even more poor and helpless.

This happier frame of mind, allied to a critical attitude to the Church, can be seen in a lecture of 1864, called Of Kings' Treasuries on reading books. (1) During this lecture he quoted an excerpt from Milton's Lycidas, avowedly to show how a piece of literature should be read closely. But as the lecture continued, he became carried away and used that passage to describe how, in his opinion, a Bishop, and by extension all clergy, should behave. The excerpt was about St. Peter, who was seen by Milton as a true Bishop, one who cared for the flock of sheep in his charge. Though Milton was 'not a lover of false bishops, he was a lover of true ones.' (2) Milton described the false shepherds, the bad clergy, as men who "for their bellies' sake Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!". (3) Ruskin transferred this description to the contemporary equivalent of the clergy who only chose their profession because it gave them influence over other people, and who enjoyed the dignity and authority of office. Milton and Ruskin both felt that many clergy did not supervise or feed their sheep, but fed off them themselves; exploiting those over whom they had pastoral care.

The first thing, therefore, that a bishop has to do is at least to put himself in a position in which, at any moment, he can obtain the history, from childhood, of every living soul in his diocese, and of its present state. . . . If he cannot, he is no bishop, though he had a mitre as high as Salisbury steeple. (4)

Ruskin believed that because the clergy were too concerned with doctrine and Church politics, they were ignoring the more basic needs of people's physical well-being. He quoted Milton:

The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
But, swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,  
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread. (5)

Ruskin took 'wind' back to its etymological roots; the Hebrew 'ruach'; meaning wind, Spirit, breath or word. He said that Milton meant by this passage that the people were fed with the spirit, breath, word of man, not of God, which was bad food for the sheep. The false shepherds to which Ruskin was referring were

Your sectarians of every species, small and great,  
Catholic or Protestant, of high church or low, in so far  
as they think themselves exclusively in the right and  
others wrong; and, pre-eminently, in every sect, those  
who hold that men can be saved by thinking rightly  
instead of doing rightly, by word instead of act, and  
wish instead of work; - these are the true fog children.  
(6)

Ruskin rather lamely ended this exercise on the duties of Bishops and pastors by saying that the purpose of reading was to discover what the writer thought: "'Thus Milton thought," not "Thus I thought, in mis-reading Milton."' (7) In fact, Ruskin used this passage from Lycidas mostly because he wanted to illustrate what was concerning him at that time. He interpreted Milton freely, although maybe correctly, to castigate nineteenth century ecclesiastical attitudes. Indeed, the criticisms which Milton and Ruskin made against the clergy of their several periods were timeless ones. They had been made in the Old Testament by Jeremiah, and they are criticisms which have been made since, into the twentieth century.

The ostensible theme of Ruskin's lecture was that reading properly needed great care and attention. The more one read of the great minds of the past, the less one would say oneself, because of a realization of personal inadequacy.

In the end, the God of heaven and earth loves active, modest, and kind people, and hates idle, proud, greedy, and cruel ones. . . . For the rest, respecting religions, governments, sciences, arts, you will find that . . . the best you can do . . . is to be silent. (8)

This was advice that Ruskin was not prone to follow.

The second lecture in the book, Sesame and Lilies, was called Of Queens' Gardens and was about the education of young ladies. There were three female influences on this lecture. The first was Miss Bell's educating the girls at Wimington. The second was his idealization of Rose. The third was his regard for his mother whom he greatly respected, in spite of her Evangelical beliefs and dominating behaviour. Ruskin said that girls should be brought up to be kind, helpful, modest and caring for others. Their education 'should be nearly, in its course and material of study, the same as a boy's' (9), though with one important exception. 'There is one dangerous science for women - . . . that of theology'. (10) Women should avoid 'that science in which the greatest men have trembled, and the wisest erred'. (11) Young ladies, at least in the idealized form of Ruskin's mind, should not be contaminated or sullied by theological speculation, for instead they should simply do what God wanted, without thinking too much about him. Rose La Touche was probably in Ruskin's mind as he wrote this, for although at one stage Ruskin had tried to teach her New Testament Greek by letter, for the most part he blamed the religion taught to her for causing her mental distress and illness.

At this time Ruskin gave one of his bitterest lectures attacking society, Traffic, delivered at Bradford in 1864. It was published in 1866, in The Crown of Wild Olive with some other lectures to a Working Men's Institute at Camberwell, and to young soldiers,

probably officers, at Woolwich. In the lectures, Ruskin was concerned about the quality of life within a nation. Leaders of industry should make sure that the workers were treated with respect and justice, and they should be given a fair reward for work, which should be personally fulfilling. Leaders of industry should not exploit. Soldiers should make sure that the country for which they were fighting was worthy of being fought for. Ruskin did not lecture on religion as such, for his attitude was that the basic ethical teaching of Christianity, as found in the Bible, was of great value, but that the Church did not always keep these values and that God was not confined to the Church. With the decline of true Christianity there was a new and worse religion in England.

For, observe, while to one family this deity (worshipped in England today) is indeed the Goddess of Getting-on, to a thousand families she is the Goddess of not Getting-on. (12)

In the lecture Traffic Ruskin said that there had been three stages of religion. First, Greeks worshipped the God of Wisdom:

Every habit of life, and every form of his (Greek) art developed themselves from the seeking this bright, serene, resistless wisdom; and setting himself, as a man, to do things evermore rightly and strongly. (13)

Ruskin linked Greek art, thought and religion. Next came the mediaeval Christian faith of comfort by the remission of sins. Thus

Sin and sickness themselves are partly glorified, as if, the more you had to be healed of, the more divine was the healing. . . . The Mediaeval religion of Consolation perished in false comfort; in remission of sins given lyingly. (14)

It was the selling of absolution that ended the Mediaeval faith. Ruskin over-simplified the Reformation in renouncing his own Evangelical up-bringing. He said that

it was the selling of absolution that ended the Mediaeval faith. . . . Pure Christianity gives her remission of sins only by ending them'. (15)



Ruskin thought that the Church, still, in the nineteenth century, falsely remitted sin rather than ending them.

We English have beautiful little quiet ways of buying absolution, whether in low Church or high, far more cunning than any of Tetzels trading. (16)

The third and last religion was the contemporary one of pleasure and Getting-on.

There followed the religion of Pleasure, in which all Europe gave itself to luxury, ending in death. First bals masques in every saloon, and then guillotines in every square. . . . Now, lastly, will you tell me what we worship, and what we build? (17)

The only answer which the industrialists of Bradford could give, thought Ruskin, would be the goddess of Getting-on.

Ruskin, whatever his personal faith, was willing to use the best part of Christian teaching to prod his listeners. He said to the manual workers in the audience of the Working Men's Institute at Camberwell that true wise work is 'work with God - foolish work is work against God'. They should take seriously the part of the Lord's Prayer; 'Thy Kingdom come'.

If you do not wish for His kingdom, don't pray for it.  
But if you do, you must do more than pray for it; you must work for it. (18)

But, and in this Ruskin was near the centre of his social-cum-religious thought, the Kingdom of God comes from within a person. Social transformation could only come from a change of personal attitudes, not of social structures. In speaking to the Working Men's Institute, Ruskin taught an ethic of Christianity, and suggested that 'thy Kingdom come' could be taken seriously. Ruskin told the middle-class, mill-owning audience at Bradford how they should behave if they considered themselves to be Christians. He pointed out that Jesus never said; 'To do the best for ourselves is finally to do the best for others'. Instead, said Ruskin while

interpreting Christ's message, 'To do the best for others, is finally to do the best for ourselves'. (19) To make the point, Ruskin quoted Plato at length, citing the old legend to be found in Critias; that originally mankind had perfect forbears, but that this perfection had become more and more watered down, becoming 'filled with all iniquity of inordinate possession and power'. (20)

The lectures were about the concerns of this life. In the Introduction to the printed versions Ruskin wondered about, and almost rejected, the concepts of the next life and the eternal soul. Whatever the truth itself, Ruskin wished people would make up their minds.

As, with the so-called Christian, I desired to plead for an honest declaration and fulfilment of his belief in life, - with the so-called Infidel, I desired to plead for an honest declaration and fulfilment of his belief in death. The dilemma is inevitable. Men must either hereafter live, or hereafter die; fate may be bravely met, and conduct wisely ordered, on either expectation; but never in hesitation between ungrasped hope, and unfronted fear. We usually believe in immortality, so far as to avoid preparation for death; and in mortality, so far as to avoid preparation for anything after death. Whereas, a wise man will at least hold himself ready for one or other of two events, of which one or other is inevitable; and will have all things ended in order, for his sleep, or left in order, for his awakening. (21)

Ruskin was as much airing his own doubts as he was enjoining others not to have such uncertainties. He was critical of Christians because they did not seem to have the courage of their own convictions:

The Church's most ardent "desire to depart, and be with Christ" (n)ever cured it of the singular habit of putting on mourning for every person summoned to such departure. (22)

Ruskin's later reaction to Rose La Touche's death was one of tremendous grief.

More important than the Church's teaching on the next world was the Church's practice in this one. Ruskin hoped that a clergyman's aim would be pastoral, not financial.

They like pew rents, and baptismal fees, of course; but yet, if they are brave and well-educated, . . . the clergyman's object is essentially to baptize and preach, not to be paid for teaching. (23)

Unfortunately, some clergy, like some doctors and other professional people, put their priorities the wrong way round. 'Work first - you are God's servants; Fee first - you are the Fiend's'. (24)

In Traffic, to the mill-owners of Bradford, Ruskin claimed that religion had become separated from the people's daily concerns, symbolized by the fact that religious and secular buildings were of different styles.

I notice that among all the new building which cover your once wild hills . . . the churches and schools are almost always Gothic, and the mansions and mills are never Gothic. (25)

This was not so of London, for the Houses of Parliament and St. Pancras Station were of the Gothic style.

By 1850 the triumph of Gothic in church building was practically complete, but such Gothic civil architecture . . . was violently repudiated by advanced Gothicists. . . Two men were chiefly responsible for converting England to secular Gothic: one of them (was) Ruskin. (26)

In the Middle Ages most houses were of wood or even less durable material, so there could be little long-lasting Gothic domestic building. Ruskin continued his argument about the split between the religious and the secular by saying that now, in the 1860's, Bradford Exchange would not be built in the same style as the local churches. This architectural split symbolised that God had been put firmly into church buildings and was not elsewhere. 'This is the house of God and this is the gate of Heaven' was carved over many church doors, even though God's house was everywhere. (27) A church

building, said the ex-Evangelical Ruskin, should only be a synagogue, a 'gathering together', not a temple. 'I am trying to prove to you . . . not that the Church is not sacred - but that the whole Earth is' (28), a combination of his early chapel up-bringing and panentheism.

Finally and most importantly, Ruskin talked about Christian behaviour. He wanted to see the Church's practice returning to its Master's teaching; the result would be social justice. Justice, both in the religious and secular spheres was a great concern of Ruskin's, much more so than was charity. Justice, not charity, demanded that a young crossing-sweeper should have as good a life as a rich man's child. (29) But the Church as part of society generally rejected the concept of social justice, and the Christian religion took up but a small part of people's lives.

You know we are speaking always of the real, active, continual, national worship; that by which men act, while they live; not that which they talk of, when they die. Now, we have, indeed, a nominal religion, to which we pay tithes of property and sevenths of time; but we have also a practical and earnest religion, to which we devote nine-tenths of our property, and six-sevenths of our time. (30)

This was the goddess of Getting-on.

All in all, it hardly seemed worth while to become a Christian, for it made one so miserable.

You hear much of conversion now-a-days: but people always seem to think they have got to be made wretched by conversion, - to be converted to long faces. No, friends, you have got to be converted to short ones; you have to repent into childhood, to repent into delight, and delightsomeness. (31)

Ruskin was not being altogether fair about the mental and facial attributes of those converted to Christianity. He, as many people before and since, looked at what the Church was doing and at what the Bible said, only to discover that the two did not match. Ruskin

knew the Bible extremely well, and was articulate enough to put it forward as an ideal, and so in these lectures could chose the bad parts of ecclesiastical life along with the good parts of the Bible to illustrate the gap between practice and theory. He was equally critical of other institutions. Although he liked many individual Christians such as Lady Trevelyan, Spurgeon and Colenso, these people could not prevent him from attacking the Church and religion at some of their weakest points. As he saw the Church as an integral part of a society which seemed to be socially unjust, perhaps that was natural enough for him.

Ruskin was at his most anti-Church and anti-Christian during this part of his life. The faults he saw in the Church reinforced his religious doubts. But towards the end of the 1860's, this gradually changed, as he regained some sort of faith in himself and God. The stirrings of this could be seen in two non-Christian forms of religion which came to interest him, ancient faiths and spiritualism. He used the ancient faiths of the Egyptians and the Greeks in later works like Queen of the Air, but an earlier and lighter work using these subjects was The Ethics of the Dust, which was written in 1866 as a dialogue between Ruskin himself as the Old Lecturer and some of the children at Wilmington School. This form was not popular with his public (32), but it did enable him to discuss in a fairly disjointed way three of his chief interests; the girls themselves, geology and human behaviour.

In the book, Ruskin again attacked the religion of his time. Thus he complained that those who claimed to believe in Christ, and presumably actually did so, denied and sold him. Ruskin described a mythical Valley of Diamonds, but then pointed out that gold, silver and precious stones bring out the greed of human nature.

Was ever man the better for having coffers full of gold?  
. . . The sin of the whole world is essentially the sin  
of Judas. Men do not disbelieve their Christ; but they  
sell Him. (33)

The monastic system also came under attack, for Ruskin felt that by retiring from the world monks did little actual good.

There is always a considerable quantity of pride . . . in what is called "giving one's self" to God. As if one had ever belonged to anybody else! (34)

Ruskin admitted that he was attracted to the monastic life, having

'pensively shivered with Augustines at St. Bernard; and . . . sat silent with Carthusians in their little gardens, south of Florence'. (35)

But he felt that their withdrawal from the world was essentially selfish and useless to humanity generally. In this passage Ruskin under-played how attractive on occasions he had found the monastic life to be, an attraction which was to continue: for ten years later, when again depressed, he was tempted to join the Franciscans at Assisi.

Though critical of the Roman Catholic tradition of monasticism, Ruskin was even more critical of the Evangelical tradition, which he had of course rejected. The doctrine which he attacked was of divine reward and punishment:

We are told nothing distinctly of the heavenly world; except that it will be free from sorrow, and pure from sin. What is said of pearl gates, golden floors, and the like, is accepted as merely figurative by religious enthusiasts themselves: and whatever they pass their time in conceiving, whether of the happiness of risen souls, . . . is entirely the product of their own imagination; and as completely and distinctly a work of fiction . . . as any novel of Sir Walter Scott's. (36)

Because of anybody's lack of knowledge about the here-after, doing right simply to avoid punishment or hell was a wrong attitude.

When a father sends his son out into the world - . . . fancy the boy's coming home at night, and saying, "Father, I could have robbed the till today; but I didn't, because I thought you wouldn't like it." Do you think the father would be particularly pleased? . . . Nothing is ever done so as really to please our Great

Father, unless we would also have done it, though we had had no Father to know of it. (37)

Right should be done simply because it is good in itself, not because of any fear of Hell. A good person should have 'Virtue', by which Ruskin meant 'human strength, which instinctively, constantly, and without motive, does what is right'. (38) Ruskin was vague from where this virtue would come, except that it should be instilled into young people. But he, as well as the girls at Wimington Hall, knew that not all had had the chance of the liberal education provided by Miss Bell. Nor, perhaps, could he see that his own attitudes were intermingled with his religious and moral upbringing. It did not much matter where these right opinions were acquired, as long as Christians did Justice, loved Mercy and walked humbly with God, for that is what God required of them, as Ruskin proclaimed at the end of his book (39).

In The Ethics of the Dust, while Ruskin was critical of Evangelical doctrine, clergy, monasticism and the selfish avariciousness of those who claimed to believe in Christ, he was becoming sympathetic to and willing to learn from long-defunct non-Christian religions in which he was beginning to interest himself. In Modern Painters Volume 3 he had ascribed the decline of Christianity and all that was good in mediaeval religious culture to the Renaissance study of classical learning and art. (40) But by the 1860's he was reading about Greek and Egyptian gods with some appreciation and enjoyment. In these myths he tried to discover philological bases and return to first principles, almost a Jungian approach. In The Ethics of the Dust Ruskin went back to ancient religion, to illuminate contemporary ethics because he was beginning to see in ancient religions reflections of what he wanted to say about modern society. He could use those religions more easily than Christianity because they were more distant. He could ignore and was ignorant of cultic practices and he was not psychologically involved. Ancient gods and goddesses were idealized for his purposes, so that he could immerse

himself in what he found was a new and interesting corner of human knowledge.

Symbolic both of his going back to roots and of using an ancient deity for his own purposes was the Egyptian goddess Neith. 'Neith is the Egyptian spirit of divine wisdom; and the Athena of the Greeks.' (41) She was portrayed by the Egyptians as having vulture wings, because 'she is, physically, the goddess of the air, this bird, this most powerful creature of the air known to the Egyptians.' (42) Athena kept these wings and these continued even when she became the goddess of victory. Ruskin enjoyed tracing back these sorts of details and in Neith he could see or invent the superior, unattainable woman he liked.

Ruskin next used this pagan goddess Neith to denigrate traditionally understood sainthood, as symbolized by St. Barbara. (43) This reflected a struggle going on in Ruskin's mind; he preferred this new deity - newer to him, though older in time - to the Christian saints. He could see in ancient mythology those universal truths which were present in his own Christianity (as in all great world-religions), but without all the bad things associated with his faith and culture. St. Barbara was a third century Christian martyr from Germany. In the story Ruskin told, she was finely dressed and she boasted to the Egyptian goddess Neith about North European architecture. (Ruskin was not over-fond of the more ornate German Gothic style of which he made St. Barbara boast.) Neith was at a loom, symbolizing simplicity and work. She did not seem to listen until she told Barbara that 'It may be very pretty, my love; but it is all nonsense'. (44) It was nonsense because the churches were built in a mood of vanity. Neith turned down an invitation from Barbara that both should build something in order to see which would be best, for 'Remember, child, that nothing is ever done beautifully, which is done in rivalry; nor nobly, which is done in pride.' (45) Ruskin's pretended dream then changed into a competition between quarrelsome German, Gothic demons trying to build a better cathedral, and the phlegmatic Egyptian demons



building a pyramid. The German edifice collapsed. Ruskin was mocking German Gothic architecture in this second part of his dream. He was also mocking Christianity as a contentious, selfish religion practised for the people's own pride and self-gratification and was comparing it to a better, ancient religion. St. Barbara herself (46) was treated more respectfully because she admitted her error and was submissive to Neith's reproof. Neith, being the goddess of divine wisdom, knew better than Barbara. This story treated Christianity, symbolized by Barbara, as younger than and subordinate to the Egyptian religion. Ruskin's linking of two characters of different religions could be seen as syncretistic, but this was not really so, because divine wisdom was above all gods and religions. It was the theological reality inherent in any worshipped divine being.

In this dream, Ruskin was trying (even while attacking German Gothic and strife amongst Christians) to find out for himself the deeper truths behind religion. He had rejected Christianity, but he was trying once again to be constructive, to find that which was worthwhile in religion, of whatever faith. Just as the Christian St. Barbara could learn from an ancient religion, so perhaps Ruskin saw himself symbolized by Barbara, a Christian learning from an older religion. Neith was polite, good and simple, as a truly religious person (especially a woman) should be. To come to a religious understanding of his own, Ruskin had to use a path which was untainted by that what he had previously rejected, but a path which could illuminate the good that he could still see in the Christian ethic.

There was another, very different, type of religion which undercut his 'heathenism'. This was Spiritualism, to which he was introduced by the Cowpers in 1863 (47), who tended to be attracted to odd but worthy causes. Georgina Cowper was an earnest seeker after truth, with, earlier in her life, doubts about any existence beyond death. After the death of her mother in 1861, she wrote and was introduced to some mediums, such as William Howitt (48) and Daniel Home. (49)

There was a link between Christianity and Howitt, for this medium saw no contradiction between spiritualism and the Christian Gospel.

Although Georgina Cowper and John Ruskin were both uncertain of their Christianity, and 'his experiences bear remarkable parallels to hers' (50), Mrs. Cowper at first did not seem to know that Ruskin doubted, like her, the immortality of the soul. In 1863 she lent Ruskin a book on Spiritualism, after which he accepted an invitation to a seance with a feeling of uncertainty.

I will follow up the enquiry in any way in which you can aid me to do so, but I suspect you will find me interrupt all Immaterial proceedings - not from incredulity: but from stupid Solidity. You will find me a fatal Non conductor, - I can neither see nor feel my way anywhere just now. (51)

Ruskin was depressed at this time, because of Rose's illness. Ruskin's attendance in February 1864 was prepared for by the spirit world, according to notes made by William Cowper. The medium was a well-known practitioner, Mary Marshall, (52) one of the first English mediums. The Spirit which answered the summons at the seance stated that St. John would become a faithful spiritualist. St. John, it was decided by those present, meant John Ruskin. He was called St. Cyr by Mrs. Cowper and Rose La Touche; 'an illusion (sc. allusion) to St John Chrysostom, the early patriarch of Constantinople famed for his eloquence'. (53) The sender of the message was 'mother, Margaret Ru -', which was understood by Ruskin to be his maternal grandmother using her maiden name. (His mother, Margaret, was still alive at this time.) Ruskin was sufficiently impressed to attend the next seance, when Mrs. Marshall was again a medium. This time she was reinforced by Annie Andrews (54), who, eleven years later, met Ruskin again soon after the death of Rose. At the start of this session there was 'a message of a common place character, the name cd. not be well spelled out, & the word paper was given', according to William Cowper. (55) But immediately afterwards on a piece of paper was written the identity of the spirit, 'John R—', which was changed to 'Bull', also known as

'Honesty' or 'St. John'. Some spiritualists believed, following Swedenborg (56), that each person alive on earth had a spiritual counterpart, so this could have been John Ruskin's alter ego in the other world. Ruskin had reservations, but 'liked what he saw', as he wrote the next day to Mrs. Cowper.

I am very grateful to you for having set me in the sight and hearing of this new world. I don't see why one should be unhappy, about anything, if all this is indeed so. I can't quite get over this spiritual spelling . . . I always expected . . . at least, when I got old . . . that at least I should be able to rightly spell. (57)

However, a little later, Ruskin became more suspicious of the values of the seances:

I am not now more surprised at perceiving spiritual presence, than I have been, since I was a youth, at not perceiving it. The wonder lay always to me, not in miracle, but in the want of it; and now it is more the manner and triviality of manifestation than the fact that amazes me. . . . I meant to ask, next time, for the spirit of Paul Veronese, and see whether it, if it comes, can hold a pencil more than an inch long. (58)

The internationally famous medium Home made Ruskin less sceptical about the value of spiritualism. 'I've found out such a grand cloudy nest of spiritual people - I shall be able to tell you something very soon - I hope - about them', (59) Ruskin wrote to Mrs. Cowper. A Mrs. Hall, herself a medium, wrote about Home's influence over Ruskin; 'only fancy Ruskin being convinced (by Home)! But he does not wish it talked about'. (60) Over the next few years, Ruskin's interest waned - he seemed to find spiritualism superficial, especially when compared to the social needs of his time. On one occasion, in 1868, he went to a seance which impressed neither him nor Mrs. Cowper, who was also there. In a long letter to her afterwards he wrote that

(The seance) bore to me the aspect of the basest imposture . . . but I am glad to have seen it - and that you saw it with me - for now I think the facts may be put into some form. (61)

He then compared spiritualism to the Old Testament 'familiar spirits', confusing the Old Testament ones with the false prophets heralding the second coming of Christ. (62) If the Biblical account of the resurrection is true, then Georgina Cowper and John Ruskin should

Abstain from all these things . . . to receive what you have seen of them as an awful sign of the now active presence of the Fiend among us. (63)

If the Bible is not true as regards Christ's resurrection, suggested Ruskin, hedging his bets, then

it is unquestionably true that in all ages, men have been fatally misled in their conceptions of a spiritual world.

Ruskin tried to turn Mrs. Cowper's mind to what she could know was right - doing good;

Lead such a life as the daily expectation of the coming of Christ would compell in all earnest souls - that is to say, of the simplest and sternest practical doing of good. I want you and Mr Cowper to take a quiet walk with me, through some of the streets of London, chosen by me, and to talk of these things there. (65)

This would have been unnecessary advice to give to the Cowpers, for they were already doing a lot of good among the poor.

Ruskin never denied that spiritualism might be based on the truth. Although he criticized the mediums and the spirits (as over their spelling or trivial interests) he did not call the former charlatans or fakes, nor deny the existence of the latter. The experiences of spiritualism from 1864 to 1867, especially in 1864, made him think anew his heathenism and virtual atheism. Even if spiritualism was of the Fiend, then there must also be a God and the life of souls after death, a possibility which he had previously denied, or at least stated that we could not know. Ruskin liked and respected the Cowpers, calling Georgina one of his 'tutelary powers'. (64) The couple helped him a great deal during his various emotional crises,

their acceptance of and sympathy to him over Rose being especially helpful and so their practice of spiritualism was bound to make Ruskin take note of that religion.

Greek gods and spiritualism made an odd but effective combination to stop Ruskin from travelling the path to atheism and a total rejection of a spiritual life beyond death.

In 1867 Ruskin turned back to the Prayer Book and Bible for help with his personal problems over Rose La Touche. Relationships had fallen to a low ebb between Rose's parents and Ruskin, who was going through one of his periods of depression, compounded because of his desperation to know what Rose really felt about him; although probably her feelings would swing and be inconsistent. Rose was in London during February and apparently sent at least one kindly letter to Ruskin, for he wrote in his diary: 'Divine letter from R. in morning'. (1) Unfortunately this was followed two days later with an entry of just three crosses, with a later addition; 'The awful day when I learnt what Lacerta (Mrs. Touche) was'. (2) Van Akin Burd surmised that 'evidently Mrs. La Touche lost no time in writing to Ruskin that Rose was not to see him'. (3) By chance, or 'Fors' as Ruskin would later have called it, he found an old Prayer Book of Rose's. He used this Prayer Book to try and find 'signs' about how Rose felt and what he was to do about her; a superstition which he would have scorned in his public writings. As he wrote to Mrs. Cowper:

I got her prayer book - by true chance, as far as she was concerned - by God's grace indeed - as I have written in it - on my birthday, and though I had given up specialty of morning and evening reading as superstitious - I have gone back to it for the book's sake, now - and read a little bit . . . as much or as little as I find good. (4)

Ruskin told his friend that he dipped into the book claiming that he did this 'irrespective of the day's service or form'. (5) Yet he chose Epiphany 3 and Lent 1 in the correct order at roughly the right time of year. He felt that the Epistle for Epiphany 3 would have saved him much wrongdoing if he had read it and taken note of it before. (6) The Epistle, Romans 12.6ff., ended with instructions not to take vengeance on one's own behalf, but to leave it to the Lord, because evil was to be overcome by good. The Bible reading calmed Ruskin and his wrath against the La Touche parents for a while as he was trying to find peace and calm. Reading Rose's Prayer Book seemed to help, because it was to Ruskin a form of

communication with a woman to whom he could not often write and whom he could never meet.

He wrote this part of the letter to Mrs. Cowper in the evening, but added a post script the next morning, having slept badly and woken 'in the same horror'. (7) He picked up the Prayer Book again, to open it at '"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law - do ye not hear the Law?" So I cannot!' (8) Distraught and wanting to know what to do about Rose, Ruskin used Rose's Prayer Book as a guide, but in vain. 'Desire to be under the law' (9) was at the beginning, of the Epistle for Lent 4. Ruskin was to have written something 'horrid' to Mrs. Cowper, but reading this text prevented him.

The Epistle for Lent 4 (10) told the Old Testament story of Hagar, who along with her baby was rejected by Abraham and became 'outside the law'. Ruskin was himself feeling rejected, 'outside the law', the usual ways of life and friendships and also feeling alienated spiritually from his contemporaries. So he could identify with Hagar as being, 'outside the law'. Yet, wanting to be back 'in the law' with Rose, leading a conventional life, Ruskin believed that by chance opening of Rose's Prayer Book, he would find guidance to this end. So whatever passage of Scripture he read would hold meaning for him. If the Bible reading was not immediately of obvious help (and Paul's interpretation of the story about Hagar was obscure), then he would have to search more deeply, making abstruse connections to find a meaning, a meaning which on his premises must have been there because he had been led to open the book at that page. This method of interpretation had something in common with his method of interpreting Greek myths in Queen of the Air, digging ever deeper to find meaning, whether or not that meaning actually existed.

A month later, in March, he wrote to Mrs. Cowper on the theme of who was right, and who was wrong over the matter of religion. Ruskin felt that a nineteen-year-old girl who 'reads nothing but hymn-books and novels' should not expect 'a man whom Carlyle & Froude call

their friend, and whom many very noble persons call their teacher' to join her religion. It would be 'quite as reasonable' for Rose to submit to Ruskin's faith. (11) 'Rose must come out of her country and kindred for me, like Ruth or Rebekah.' (12) Ruskin was willing to abase himself, pester his friends, make enemies and look foolish in his love for the young Rose, but he was not going to give up whatever religious beliefs he had come to at this stage of his life.

It was about this time that Ruskin used a Bible as well as Rose's old Prayer Book to find help in his situation. He mentioned in his Diary some of the times he found a text. On Sunday 17 March (13) he had had a sleepless night, but 'Up . . . to do the best I can for everybody. Read "There shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water &c." to "These make ready".' (14) What significance he could put into this Biblical reference, he did not say.

After Ruskin's second cousin Joan (15) had received a letter from Rose (to whose brother Joan was for a short while engaged) in which Ruskin's name was mentioned, he read Psalm 61. Rose's wanting to mention his name in a letter was, he thought, a hopeful sign, which hope was reflected in the psalm which began as a plea for God to listen to the suppliant's prayer, and ended with the belief or hope that the Lord will grant a long and happy life. (16) Ruskin interpreted this as a signal for a happier future. This new-found interest in religion, if only as an aid in understanding and pursuing Rose, led even to prayer. In the summer Ruskin was spent a couple of months in the Lake District and when alone on the top of Skiddaw he began to pray. As he wrote to Joan:

I always - even in my naughtiest times - had a way of praying on hill summits, when I could get quiet on them; so I knelt on a bit of rock to pray - and there came suddenly into my mind the clause of the Litany, "for all that travel by land or water," etc. So I prayed it, and you can't think what a strange, intense meaning it had up there. (17)



From that he admitted to church-going: "Well, I've been to church, and have made up my mind that I shall continue to go". (18) At that service in August he found that the Psalms and Bible readings 'seemed to go straight at what was troubling me'. He elaborated to Joan on how he had found direction from that service. The Psalm appointed for that Day, Psalm 91, was about how the writer would be protected from all evil. 'He (God) shall cover thee with his feathers, And under his wings shalt thou trust' (19) was a typical verse of that Psalm. Ruskin was looking for assurance and found it in the psalm read at Keswick Church. Psalm 91 was a good omen, he hoped, for future peace, even though he hoped in vain. The first, Old Testament lesson, (20) was about Elijah confronting the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. He saw this reading as speaking to him and strengthening his lonely mission to expose the weakness of the Church. It 'fell in with much that I had been thinking about the fight I should have with the clergymen, showing how priests of Baal really believe their own mission, and have to be exposed and kicked out of it'. (21) The second, New Testament lesson was Paul's meeting Timothy the Greek and having him circumcised. (22) 'Paul's giving way to the useless matter of form, was very useful to me.' (23) Why it was useful, Ruskin did not explain to Joan; but he often thought that outward religious practices were of no use. That episode in the life of Timothy would have reinforced this, because Paul always felt that circumcision meant nothing, and so Timothy underwent the ritual, not for his own benefit, but merely to avoid trouble with the Jewish Christians, a pointless act of conformity to keep other people satisfied. But in the letter to Joan, Ruskin was keen not to appear too enthusiastic about the Bible; perhaps he was worried that his mother, who might read the letter, would feel that her son had returned to the Evangelical fold. Instead, he poured doubt on the Scriptures:

I notice in one of your late letters some notion that I am coming to think the Bible the "Word of God" because I use it . . . for daily teaching. But I was never farther from thinking, and never can be nearer to thinking, anything of the sort. Nothing could ever persuade me that God writes vulgar Greek. (24)

He felt that the Word of God was seen by him just as much in the clouds and calm skies of the Lake District. Ruskin finished the letter:

I came away on the whole much helped and taught, and satisfied that . . . I was meant to go to church again.  
(25)

Ruskin made this letter of Sunday, 18 August, 1867 sound as if that Sunday in August was a new beginning. But, according to his Diary, he had been attending Keswick Church regularly since arriving in that town in July. On the seventh he wrote in his Diary; 'Twice to church. 37th Psalm in evening!' (26) The next week he only attended once. On 21 July he resumed his old habit of writing what he thought about the preacher and sermon.

Sermon on Forgiveness of enemies - very direct at me, (he was thinking of Rose's parents) from nervous, open-faced, good, simple, Englishman of a preacher - rather stupid.  
(27)

The preacher might have been nervous at having the famous Ruskin in his congregation. The entries for 4 and 11 August had no reference to church-going. Either he did not attend, or the practice had become routine enough that he did not make notes. Yet his letter to Joan in mid-August seemed to suggest that the Church-going of that day was something new and that what he heard there was a significant pointer in his life. It was not dissimilar to his Unconversion many years before, but in reverse.

The Church-going habit remained with him after he left Keswick. When back in London on 25 August, he 'took Joan to church. Psalms nice. Sermon good.' (28) But the next Sunday he commented; 'frightful service, for coldness, in church at meeting of roads' (29) and later; 'Free seats; horrid woman; dreadfulest of false clergymen'. (30) Ruskin, falling back into his old habit of Sunday worship, also kept his old habit of criticizing severely the clergyman, sermon and church.

With matters over religion and over Rose, Ruskin developed a fatalism, almost a predestinarian attitude; for nothing happened by chance. References to roses in books were signs to Ruskin of his loved one and any Bible reading could be interpreted by him, no matter how much ingenuity was needed, to explain the present and to be a sign-post for the future. 'I was meant to go to church again' suggested that it was not his free will decision, but the divine purpose: a Calvinistic interpretation of life which was not in accord with Ruskin's public denunciations of Evangelical theology. He had rejected all the religious practices of his upbringing and early manhood. Yet having rejected it, he discovered a spiritual void in his life, which he filled by some sort of returning to his earlier attitudes, although in a very different and a less disciplined form.

At this time he also took to writing in his diary a daily text from the Psalms. On June 21st he wrote; '21st. Psalm finished' (31), and from then on, up to 11 October when he finished a volume of his Dairy, he wrote a daily text. Sometimes the text was only five verses apart in the same Psalm while sometimes the quotations were from two long Psalms following each other which indicated that Ruskin did not read a set amount of verses each day.

Ruskin was not so obsessed by Rose that he could not do some writing to publish. During 1867 he wrote a series of twenty five letters to Thomas Dixon of Sunderland, publishing them soon afterwards under the title Time and Tide by Weare and Tyne. Dixon, a cork-cutter, wanted Ruskin's opinion on the reform of Parliament. Besides these matters, Ruskin also discussed the Bible and the problem of evil. These letters were also addressed to Rose and her parents, because his public writings were at this time the only way Ruskin could communicate with Rose, for presumably she could obtain his books when published. In Time and Tide Ruskin put forward ideas, very much opposed to John La Touche's, which were about various religious topics. To Thomas Dixon (and to John La Touche) Ruskin refuted any literal interpretation of the Bible by saying that there were four

ways of interpreting it. The first way was that of the 'illiterate modern religious world', the Bible being 'dictated by the Supreme Being, and is in every syllable of it His "Word"'. (32) The second theory, the one held by 'most of our good and upright clergymen, and the better class of the professedly religious laity' (33) was that the Bible was absolutely true in essence although with verbal errors. Anyone who sought for truth and direction in the Bible would find it. The third way of interpreting the Bible was that although collected and written by men, the Scriptures 'relate, on the whole, faithfully, the dealings of the one God' with men - including Christ's life, miracles and resurrection. This was a 'theory held by many of the active leaders of modern thought'. (34)

These three could be contained within the Christian tradition. The last way of reading the Bible, which Ruskin supported, was not necessarily Christian, although he did not say so. In this last category of understanding the Scriptures there were 'merely the best efforts which we hitherto know to have been made by any of the races of men towards the discovery of some relations with the spiritual world'. (35) In this Ruskin gave the Bible primacy over the scriptures of other religions, but then contradicted himself by writing that the Christian Scriptures 'have no more authoritative claim on our faith than the religious speculations and histories of Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, and Indians'. (36) Ruskin could never make up his mind whether or not Christianity as taught in the Bible (as opposed to Christianity practised by his contemporaries) and the Bible itself were or were not superior to the teachings of other religions, some of which, like the Koran he had not studied.

However Thomas Dixon was supposed to take this letter, it was also written to inform Rose La Touche that her and her father's approach to the Bible was wrong. It was also to remind the public at large what Ruskin had written before; that the Bible was not the reason for doing good. A sense of honesty came from other sources, mostly up-bringing, which the Bible supported independently.

If you ask why you are to be honest - you are, in the question itself, dishonoured. "Because you are a man," is the only answer. . . . Make (your children) men first, and religious men afterwards, and all will be sound; but a knave's religion is always the rottenest thing about him. (37)

Honest and upright behaviour and thought could be, and should be, supported from the Bible and other religious writings. But those religious writings in themselves should not be used as first principles for behaviour and thought. Ruskin did not try to prove that these first principles of honest behaviour and thought were correct. He assumed that they should be followed and that reason, common sense and a good up-bringing would lead to these principles, without anywhere trying to prove these principles from reason.

Ruskin's attempt to define the basis of honest and right behaviour led him to debate the problem of evil. He came to this debate through two different channels; first his dislike of modern dancing and revelry, and secondly a conclave of clergy debating about and needing Satan. Ruskin compared the innocent joyous dancing of the Old Testament to decadent modern dancing. He cited Miriam 'and all the women (who) went out after her with timbrels and with dances' after the Israelites were rescued from the Egyptian army as the first example. (38) Ruskin realized that by taking the story literally he could be arguing against his own sceptical view of the historicity of the Bible. So he lamely suggested that

the author of the poem or fable of the Exodus supposed that, . . . the triumph of the Israelitish women . . . ought to have been, under the direction of a prophetess, expressed by music and dancing. (39)

The second example was Jephthah's daughter coming out singing and dancing to greet her victorious father. (40) Next 'the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul', again with music and dancing. (41) Ruskin did not care to mention the consequences of these last two events. After other Old Testament references, Ruskin used his only example from the New

Testament, which was the party on the return of the Prodigal Son.

(42) After his half-hearted attempt to refute the problems of historicity over the first example, Ruskin simply took the Bible stories as being true and then went on to compare these events, which normally he would have described as fables or myths, with the dancing and merry-making that were contemporary to him and of which he thoroughly disapproved. He had gone to see a Japanese circus and a Parisian Can-can. Of the latter he wrote; 'nothing could be better done, in its own evil way' in expressing 'insolence and vicious passions'. The dance 'is still rapturous enough - but it is with rapture of blasphemy'. (43)

He had the same jaundiced view of the inhabitants of a village outside Zurich. In Judges there is an account of the girls of Shiloh coming out dancing to celebrate the harvest. (44) Ruskin used this as an example of innocent joy and thanksgiving, although he omitted the wider events of the story. The villages near Zurich, however, celebrated their vine-harvest by firing 'horse-pistols, from morning to evening. At night they got drunk', yelling in a way 'only attainable by the malignity of debased human creatures'. (45) From innocent, delightful and religious dance and song the human race had degenerated into using debased and evil forms of these enjoyments - but without any joy. The seeds of destruction lay within innocent pleasures. Such celebrations used to be of God, but now, felt Ruskin, they were of the Devil.

On the second event which concentrated Ruskin's mind on evil, a conference of clergy, Ruskin wrote that

Our present religious teachers . . . preach their disbelief, in the commonly received ideas of the Devil, . . . and his work. (46)

But on the other hand, other clergy were in a panic at the moral dangers which 'must follow on the loss of the help of the Devil'.

(47) This clerical conference felt that 'there must be such a place as hell, because no-one would ever behave decently upon earth unless

they were kept in wholesome fear of the fires beneath it'. (48) The meeting, called to refute F.D. Maurice, included Keble. Ruskin was surprised that this 'most tender, gracious and beloved of . . . teachers' would have lent his authority to such teachings. (49) Ruskin wrote as if disapproving of both sets of clergy; those who ignored the devil and those who wanted him brought into greater prominence. But though Ruskin disliked using the threat of Hell to enforce good behaviour and flourishing Biblical texts to enforce honesty, he did believe in an evil influence and presence. There would be no need to fear the devil or hell if one did good by walking in the straight ways of God, (50) but once wrong has been done, then the devil should be recognized. Perhaps the conclave of clergy with Keble was right after all, but Ruskin would not associate himself with such people.

Where did all this evil come from? Ruskin wrote to Dixon that the seeds of evil were within any good, because 'every faculty of man's soul . . . by which he is meant to live, is exposed to its own special form of corruption'. (51)

Thus love could and should be noble and unselfish. Ruskin quoted a rather sentimental verse from Coventry Patmore's Angel in the House which declared the lover's unfeelingness towards his beloved as an example of the goodness of love, but then contrasted this with a newspaper account of a woman murdered and left naked near Dixon's home town. (52) The latter event showed the devil's side of the passion of love, as it was 'literally and accurately "Satanic."' (53) Religion could be good, as when it was 'the desire of finding out God, and placing one's self in some true son's or servant's relation to Him, (54) but the devil took over religion when he 'makes us think that in our love to God we have established some connection with Him which . . . renders us superior' to our fellow-men. (55) From that followed persecution and the burning of all who disagree, which was Satan's work. Likewise, good mutual help could degenerate into antagonism to all outside the group or nation; love of beauty (good), could easily degenerate into love of mere

sensuality, which was evil. This returned Ruskin to his criticism of the Can-can.

This analysis of evil begged the question, which had been all important to Keble and his clergy friends, of whether there was a devil, an independent source of evil. Ruskin avoided this most important question, saying that it did not matter. The Bible, Milton, Dante, had all 'the image of it (evil) as a mighty spiritual creature, commanding others, and resisted by others. (56) Hesiod and Aeschylus saw evil as 'a partly elementary and unconscious adversity of fate'. (57) Such things were part of life. Modern rationalists denied any objective Satan, for to them sin was 'mere treachery and want of vitality in our own moral nature'. (58) Ruskin wrote;

I do not care what you call it, . . . but the deadly reality of the thing is with us, and warring against us, and on our true war with it depends whatever life we can win. (59)

He was not willing to commit himself on whether the force of evil did have any reality, or was as the modern rationalist claimed, preferring to describe the effects without identifying the cause. But he should have answered that question before going on to work out any theory of the problem of evil. In many spheres of study - etymology, geology, Greek mythology, words of the Bible - Ruskin was often very interested in working back to find origins and basic truths from which other things stemmed. With the origin of evil, he preferred not to delve too deeply. Whatever evil was, its endeavours were usually successful, while right and goodness had no certainty of anything but failure; 'medicine often fails of its effect - but poison never'. (60) The only comfort Ruskin could give was that wickedness and mischief eventually ended in calamity. They had within them the seeds of their own destruction, just as goodness had within it the seeds of misuse and evil.



Ruskin was against sin, but was unwilling to say where it came from, whether it was internal to mankind or was an external force. In the letters to Thomas Dixon in 1867 he did not claim to accept the doctrine of original sin and Satan as an active force encouraging mankind to Hell. Nevertheless he had in these letters a strong sense of evil at work, not so very different to what was taught to him in his Evangelical up-bringing.

Ruskin's relationship with Rose did not improve in 1868, partly because Mrs. La Touche and Effie Millais were writing to each other about John's behaviour within marriage. Rose sent a letter or two, but gave him no hope. At this time, Ruskin was invited to Dublin to give a lecture, and had hoped to meet Rose in Ireland. But this was not permitted by her parents. The lecture itself (which he vainly hoped Rose and her parents would attend) was about The Mystery of Life and its Arts, or at least that was its title. (1) Ruskin began the lecture by saying that when preparing for it, he 'was not aware of a restriction with respect' to religion. (2) Although he would inadvertently break this restriction, he hoped that he would offend no-one, or

If I offend one, I shall offend all; for I shall take no note of any separations in creeds, or antagonisms in parties. (3)

The lecture that he gave was highly religious and full of Biblical quotations - eighteen in all. He compared life to clouds, as both could be thought to be nothing, reflecting the thoughts of Job. Everyone at some time or other (Ruskin in this lecture admitted it of himself, since he was speaking to Rose) thought of his life as nothing but 'vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away'. (4) Life is futile and leaves no mark. But on the other hand, human life can be of great power, for, 'in the cloud of the human soul there is a fire stronger than the lightning, and a grace more precious than the rain'. (5) Some human lives gave forth great good, others evil. This was a repetition of what he had written about good and evil to Thomas Dixon the previous year. Ruskin felt that in a way his own life had been a failure for he had not succeeded as he had hoped in influencing art and architecture, the reason for which was great apathy, not only in other people, but also in himself. There was also a lack of interest, again in himself as well as others, over matters spiritual, especially over the matter of death, heaven, hell and judgement. He pointed out that if he told someone in the audience that a great fortune and

estate awaited him, but that he had to 'give great energy' to find out where this fortune was and to obtain it, then that person would do all he could to obtain that earthly treasure. Ruskin was echoing two parables of Jesus; the Hidden Treasure and the Finest Pearl. (6) He then drew the obvious analogy between this and an

unlimited estate (which) is in prospect if they please the Holder of it. . . . And yet there is not one in a thousand of these human souls that cares to think, for ten minutes of the day, . . . what kind of life they must lead to obtain it. (7)

At this point in his lecture, Ruskin was blaming people for not caring enough about the next world to behave well in this one. But then he changed his attitude to saying that we cannot so behave in this life because in fact we know nothing definite about the next one. He asked his listeners:

Are you sure there is a heaven? Sure there is a hell?  
Sure that men are dropping before your faces through the pavements of these streets into eternal fire, or sure that they are not? (8)

The listeners could not be sure of their own fate one way or the other. It was perhaps as well that the La Touche family did not hear this peroration against any knowledge about life eternal. According to Ruskin, the only great writers who had dealt with this theme were Milton and Dante. Milton's account was dismissed as being 'evidently unbelievable to himself; . . . his poem is a picturesque drama, in which every artifice of invention' was used. (9) Dante, of whom Ruskin was a great admirer, had a greater concept. Even so, 'it is indeed a vision, but a vision only'. (10) Ruskin mentioned two other authors; Homer and Shakespeare - again authors whom he greatly admired as having had tremendous influence on European culture. Ruskin side-stepped Homer's opinion on the after-life.

But Shakespeare, he pointed out 'recognizes, for deliverance, no gods nigh at hand'. (11) All Shakespeare was willing to admit was,

in King Lear, that 'the gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us'. (12) Ruskin decided that the only people who had a key to the meaning of life were the ordinary 'hewers of wood, and drawers of water, - these, bent under burdens, or torn of scourges'. (13) But the message of these people can only be understood by joining them in work, 'not by thinking about them'. (14) One of the things that a labourer teaches is 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do - do it with thy might'. (15) Ruskin concluded that because mankind cannot be certain of what lies beyond death, for no-one has told us, it was important to make this life as good as possible for other people. (16) Whether or not his listeners had a belief in judgement after death, they should treat every day as a 'Dies Irae. . . . Think you that judgement waits till the doors of the grave are opened?' (17) So those of faith in life eternal, like those who did not believe, or who were uncertain, should live to improve the lot of existence in this life. There would be a religious bonus in feeding, clothing and sheltering the needy. 'On such holy and simple practice will be founded, indeed, at last, an infallible religion.' (18)

What the middle classes of Dublin had expected to hear from the lecturer is unknown. Ruskin refused, as he made clear in the lecture, to tell them pretty things about art. He likewise told them no pretty things about life. Instead, he used the platform to talk about what concerned him at that time, the physical state of the poor and the moral state of those who could but did not help them. As he often did, he saw this problem at least partly in religious terms even though he had publicly turned his back on any organized Church and any traditional doctrine, while quietly renewing his church-going activities. This lecture was delivered at a time of uncertainty in the speaker's life, but he used religious concepts to convince his audience on their, and not his own, religious grounds. Ruskin was not publishing very much, his personal life was in a mess, and his various crusades, so he told his audience at Dublin, had come to naught. In spite of all this he

lectured within a religious framework, reflecting his own fitful faith in private life.

Ruskin continued his church-going throughout 1868. He disapproved of a sermon to the poor that he heard in Dublin in which the listeners were told of Christ's body 'being hypostatically invested with his divine', and also that, if God had given us the good things and luxuries of this world, yet contemplating the fact of Christ's Ascension would enable 'us to combat them with great success, and set our hearts on things above', (19) which was was of a very different theme to Ruskin's lecture of ten days earlier. In spite of the Rose business, Ruskin began to be less depressed in 1868, and to take more interest in life. C.E.Norton came to Europe and met Ruskin several times, including when Norton introduced him to Charles Darwin. At the time Norton wrote to his mother: 'I was delighted to find Ruskin looking well', (20) although later he wrote that his friend

had become. . . mentally more restless and unsettled, and though often gay and always keen in his enjoyment of whatever charm the passing moment might offer, he no longer possessed even . . . moderate happiness and . . . imperfect peace. (21)

At the end of the year Ruskin had begun working on a series of lectures about Greek mythology in general and Athena in particular. These, called The Queen of the Air, were delivered in March 1869. Soon afterwards they were published along with other relevant, and not so relevant, thoughts on the subject of Athena. The book was liked at the time, especially by Carlyle, who wrote:

As to the natural history of these old Myths, I remained here and there a little uncertain; but as to the meanings you put into them, never anywhere. All these things . . . I (would) enforce and put in action on this rotten world. (22)

Carlyle saw some moral and improving purpose in Ruskin's lecture. Over the last few years, Ruskin had continued to be interested in ancient mythology as he unravelled the complex strands and

developments of the Greek legends. Athena was the Queen of the Air, and so Queen of the sky, clouds and storms (Ruskin was beginning to be obsessed with storm clouds). These facets of the Greek Athena myths attracted him. By 'Greek', Ruskin mostly meant the Athenian period of the fifth century B.C., with some looking back to the Homeric age. These periods were, he thought, kinder, simpler and more naive than the nineteenth century, when all the advantages of these ancient, better attitudes had disappeared, along with the natural heritage which had been ruined by industrialization and the misuse of religion.

The purpose of the lectures and the book, The Queen of the Air, was to suggest to his listeners and readers that in some ways the past was as good as (or better than) the present and that his contemporary society could learn from the Greeks. Ruskin treated the myths about Athena as seriously as the Greeks would have done, without, usually, comparing them unfavourably with Christianity. Ruskin was more sympathetic to how the Greeks understood their gods than in other writings he was sympathetic to the Christian believers of his day and their faith. There was, all through the book, an unwritten parallel with Christianity, for he sensed that religious feelings were universal and that what was relevant to the Greeks could be relevant to the British Christian.

Ruskin was interested, in this lecture, on how people believed, as well as what they believed.

You must forgive me . . . for not always distinctively calling the creeds of the past, "superstition," and the creeds of the present day, "religion"; as well as for assuming that a faith now confessed may sometimes be superficial, and that a faith long forgotten may once have been sincere. (23)

Underlying this was the sense that some modern religious Christian thought was as 'superstitious' as Greek religious thought.

Ruskin analysed how the different social classes in Greece understood their religion. Whatever basis he had or did not have for this analysis, he read back into ancient Greece what he saw of his contemporary religious scene. 'What real belief (did the Greek have) in these creations of his own spirit, practical and helpful to him in the sorrow of earth?' (24) Ordinary people believed the myths simply - 'Their idea of Athena was as clear as a good Roman Catholic peasant's idea of the Madonna'. (25) This was a clever comparison, for it emphasized the wholesome simplicity, yet religious gullibility, of the contemporary peasant classes, while showing the superstitious falsity of Mariolatry. The Greek upper classes had a more refined and spiritual creed than the peasantry. But there was a sting in Ruskin's comment for

the more worldly of them would play with a popular faith for their own purposes, as doubly-minded persons have often done since. (26)

This reflected what he believed many contemporary middle-class Christians were wont to do. The third category of the Greek faithful that Ruskin considered was 'the faith of the poets and artists'. (27) As in the other categories, he over-generalized by stating that ancient authors were like Milton and Dante. As they had firm beliefs and had the spiritual capacity to disagree with the myths they were told about, they were willing to alter those myths in order to fit them to what they thought should have been so. The only modern poet whom Ruskin mentioned to support his case was Wordsworth. 'Horace is just as true and simple in his religion as Wordsworth' (28), although Ruskin did not amplify whether he meant Wordsworth in his younger, Romantic days, or Wordsworth as a pillar of the Established Church. The last category of spiritual thinkers for Ruskin was that of the philosophers, Greek and contemporary. Aristotle he especially admired, but of modern philosophers he knew little, and what he knew he disliked, especially if they were German. Ruskin hinted that late classical Greek philosophers did not bother about religion, for

They ended in losing the life of Greece in play upon words; but we owe to their early thought some of the soundest ethics, and the foundation of the best practical laws, yet known to mankind. (29)

Ruskin did not use this lecture to talk overmuch about ethics and behaviour, but normally he felt that a sound ethic was more worth lecturing on than was any religious system, which is why he approved of those philosophers' heritage to the modern world.

When Ruskin wrote about Athena, he used language and symbols which echoed those of the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit and the spirit of man. But he seldom made an explicit analogy. Thus, he never actually mentioned the word 'ruach', meaning breath or Spirit. Yet there was a clear parallel in Ruskin's mind between Athena and 'ruach', for Athena was

The queen of the air; having supreme power both over its blessings of calm, and wrath of storm; and spiritually, she is the queen of the breath of man, first of the bodily breathing which is life to his blood, and strength to his arm in battle; and then of the mental breathing, or inspiration, which is his moral health and habitual wisdom; wisdom of conduct and of the heart, as opposed to the wisdom of imagination and the brain; moral, as distinct from intellectual; inspired, as distinct from illuminated. (30)

This could have described the Holy Spirit in parts of the New Testament (with the exception of the rhetorical but rather false juxtapositions which ended that paragraph). Even more did Ruskin put Athena on a par with the Christian Holy Spirit when 'by a singular, and fortunate, though I believe wholly accidental coincidence, the heart-virtue, of which she is the spirit' (31) was equivalent to the traditional Christian cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance; a coincidence forced by Ruskin to make Athena seem respectable to his listeners. Ruskin also nearly, but not quite, drew a parallel between understanding Greek myths and understanding Christian stories, using Hercules and the Hydra as an example. He explained how a Greek myth could be



taken at various levels. A myth could be accepted as a simple story; 'a tale about a real hero and a real monster'. (32) This was similar to a literal acceptance of the story of St. George and the Dragon. But the myth of Hercules and the Hydra could be taken at ever deeper levels, Hercules purifying marshes, or deeper still, contending 'with the venom and vapour of envy and evil ambition'. (33) Such depths of meaning were reached that it would eventually be thought that Ruskin 'never meant anything at all'. (34) Yet 'all the great myths (are) eternally and beneficently true', (35) being 'founded on constant laws common to all human nature.' (36)

In this first lecture Ruskin only once drew an explicit parallel between the Bible and Greek mythology when, near the beginning, he wrote;

To deal with Greek religion honestly, you must at once understand that this literal belief was, in the mind of the general people, as deeply rooted as ours in the legends of our own sacred book; and that a basis of unmiraculous event was as little suspected, and an explanatory symbolism as rarely traced, by them, as by us. (37)

Ruskin wanted his listeners to take the Greek myths as seriously as the Christian ones, especially as he felt that much worthwhile research and study were being done on the former.

Sometimes Ruskin put forward the case for the pre-eminence of Christianity, though more often he did not. In the second lecture he quoted the episode of Paul preaching about a statue to the Unknown God. (38) That statue, Ruskin took the liberty of stating, was opposite the statue of Athena. Paul rejected the Greek gods, proclaiming that the God now known through Christ was the one who 'giveth to all life, and breath, and all things'. (39) Yet, even after noting this comment by Paul with approval, Ruskin went on to suggest that in some ways contemporary society was worse off than the Greeks, for we 'know less, perhaps . . . than they, what manner

of spirit we are of, or what manner of spirit we ignorantly worship'. (40)

By this, Ruskin came close to but did not elaborate on a favourite theme of his, the contemporary worship of money and selfishness. Near the end of the third lecture he affirmed that

Christianity has neither superseded, nor, by itself, excelled heathenism; but it has added its own good . . . to all that was good and noblest in heathenism. (41)

Ruskin had become fascinated by Greek mythology, and his understanding of myths in some, albeit disorganized, ways preceded that of Karl Jung (42): that there were universal truths behind mythical stories. Ruskin saw Greek life as being in some ways superior to the industrialized society of his day and so the myths of ancient Greece were as good as the myths of his own era. On the whole, he treated Greek and Christian myths alike, as stories with meanings, by-passing the whole question of the truth of the Scriptures. He found the Greek religious system as congenial as Christianity to his way of thinking at this time in spite of his occasional protestations to the contrary.

Another indication of his doubt towards Christianity as the only truth appears in an exchange of letters with Charles Norton in October 1869. Norton had written to Ruskin saying, which the latter probably knew already, that he, Norton, could not accept that there was any proof of the existence of God. 'The supernatural part of Christianity is, in my opinion, without proper historic foundation', wrote Norton. He could 'bind up the Gospels with Marcus Antoninus' Thoughts, and regard one as sacred as the other'. (43) This lack of belief did not worry Norton but, as he asked Ruskin, how could he bring up his children to be honest and upright, while leaving out all religious teaching? Ruskin's answer was that Norton should be true to himself, even though he was wrong. (44) Like Norton, he did not believe that he was immortal. But both men believed that children should be taught to care for others, to be kind and honest

in a life of love and honour. That they 'must live, and die - totally', in obedience to a Spiritual Power above them. (45) The two friends differed in their understanding of any Spiritual Power. Norton had rejected all religious faith and supernatural life - but the only faith which he mentioned as rejecting was that of Christianity. To him there seemed to have been no other religion. On the other hand Ruskin accepted a Supernatural Being, but in no way did he refer to this Being in a Christian context, for he envisaged a simple theism, perhaps embracing many religions, as he almost seemed to do in The Queen of the Air.

In 1869, the Arundel Society (1) had asked Ruskin to go to Italy to study and write about some tombs in Verona. He did so, always pleased to travel to that country. But while there, an event happened which gave his life a new enthusiasm, for he was appointed Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford. (2) His candidature had been pressed by his friend Henry Acland, but had been opposed, privately rather than publicly, by Henry Liddell (3) who had written to Acland that Ruskin 'will never make a Professor. He may be a great Drawing-Master, or a great artistic Poet, . . . never anything more'. (4) This post was a new one without any tradition of what could or could not be lectured upon. This freedom suited Ruskin as he always used his ideas on art to discuss other, wider, issues and he expected to use the lecture rostrum at Oxford to air his opinions on more than fine art. As Dinah Birch writes;

It was clear that he would not limit his work to the field of art. Like poetry, art had become so vitally connected in his mind with religion and mythology, and with associated moral issues, that he could not speak of it in isolation. Indeed, he was not certain that art could be taught at all. (5)

Ruskin gave several series of lectures, subsequently published, in which he often set out to be controversial and to annoy; thus confirming Liddell's doubts. Art, mythology, morality, heraldry and science were all touched upon, sometimes in relation to religion. He also, though he did not seem to realize this fully, tried to isolate religion and its practices from all other spheres of life; which was contrary to what he had once felt. It was as if by isolating and neutralizing religion, he could cope with it, and so in the second lecture of the introductory series, The Relation of Art to Religion, in Lectures on Art, Ruskin contradicted his own title by stating that there was no relationship between art and religion. In this he contradicted not only commonly held opinions partly educated by himself, but what he had previously written. He tried to show the separateness of art and religion by putting on them his own definitions. The purpose of art at its highest was

To set before you the true image of the presence of a noble human being. It has never done more than this, and it ought not to do less. (6)

He definition of religion was;

The feelings of love, reverence, or dread with which the human mind is affected by its conceptions of spiritual being. (7)

The former was man-centred, the latter was divine-centred. Ruskin also made here, as he did in other lectures, a sharp distinction between religion and morality, suggesting that as morality was independent of religion, the latter could have morally bad precepts and followers, which of course he held to be the case in much of his contemporary society.

We should always keep clearly distinguished our ideas of Religion, as thus defined, and of Morality, as the law of rightness in human conduct. For there are many religions, but there is only one morality, . . . which receives from religion neither law, nor place. (8)

It is uncertain from where he obtained the idea that there is only one morality. However, he felt that religion and art were so totally separate that wrong is being done when the one is used to understand or illuminate the other:

You must not allow the expression of your own favourite religious feelings by any particular form of art to modify your judgement of its absolute merit; nor allow the art itself to become an illegitimate means of deepening and confirming your convictions, by realizing to your eyes what you dimly conceive with the brain; as if the greater clearness of the image were a stronger proof of its truth. (9)

Religious visions have not helped religious art, for visions were 'always, the sign of some mental limitation or derangement'. (10)

Ruskin, as an ex-Evangelical, was very wary of religious visions, even though some of his visions and night-mares during his breakdowns could be attributed to the psychological suppression of the Evangelical teaching of death and judgement.

Religion had not emboldened. A section of the original draft of his lecture which was not used discussed this matter. Religious art painted for secular reasons was in fact 'founded entirely on the beauty and the love of this present world'. (11) Ruskin had in mind paintings of specifically religious inspiration. The building of cathedrals had nothing to do with religious feelings, for their magnificence was as much the result of skills acquired in building aqueducts, castles and military fortifications as to any religious feeling. In this draft, Ruskin recanted his more youthful position. He had previously stated that before Titian

All the nascent and dawning strength of art had been founded on pious faith; whereas I now with humiliation, but I dare not say with sorrow, recognize that they were founded, indeed, upon the scorn of death, but not on the hope of immortality - founded, indeed, upon the purity of love, but the love of wife and child, and not of angel or deity; and that the sweet skill . . . came not by precept of religion, but by the secular and scientific training which Christianity was compelled unwillingly to permit.  
(12)

Ruskin did not use this piece in his lecture, perhaps because he did not altogether accept the complete recantation of his more youthful and pious opinions. Maybe the word 'humiliation' was not one which he could use.

Just as religion had not helped art, so likewise, art had not helped religion.

Our duty is to believe in the existence of Divine, or any other, persons, only upon rational proofs of their existence; and not because we have seen pictures of them.  
(13)

He chose to illustrate this by the obvious example of the Madonna. Bad and cheap pictures and statuettes of the Madonna had always been available, much to Ruskin's annoyance. Even if the assumption 'that the Madonna is always ready to hear and answer our prayers', (14) is true, people of 'honest, faithful, and humble temper' would be satisfied with only 'so much of the Divine presence as the spiritual Power herself chose to make felt'. No mature faith would want or need any physical portrait of the Virgin Mary, and no physical representation should make 'us believe what we would not otherwise have believed'. (15) By this, Ruskin meant that any religious conclusion arrived at through art was based on a false premise and not a rational proof. To make this conclusion less harsh, Ruskin differentiated between various forms of art. The lowest - bloody crucifixes, gilded virgins, chapels of the Sepulchre painted 'so as to look deceptively like corpses' - were for, and harmed, 'the uneducated orders of partially civilized countries'. (16) Worst of all, these forms of art have 'occupied the sensibility of Christian women, universally, in lamenting the sufferings of Christ, instead of preventing those of His people'. (17) On the other hand, Ruskin was willing to praise what he called higher religious art - Raphael, Titian and Holman Hunt (in The Light of the World). He felt that the art of these men did no good, but at least could not harm because though

nominally real, are treated as dramatis-personae of a poem, and so presented confessedly as subjects of imagination. All this poetic art is also good when it is the work of good men. (18)

For the purposes of the lecture, Ruskin divided art into good and bad. He also divided religion into good and bad. The two categories overlapped; good religion and good art could live together without any harm, although not enhancing each other. But bad, idolatrous religion fed upon and was increasingly being corrupted by bad art. The reason that this was so, Ruskin held, was that good art about religious subjects was poetic and imaginative. Bad art was merely sensationalist. He could not accept that what he

considered to be poor art and which was very popular could be a genuine religious help to some people of faith. Worship with the aid of poor visual aids was no good, nor did Ruskin see much point in any other sort of worship.

One of quite the chief reasons for the continual misery of mankind is that they are always divided in their worship between angels or saints, who are out of their sight, and need no help, and proud and evil-minded men, who are too definitely in their sight, and ought not to have their help. (19)

Instead, people should simply do God's will. Ruskin claimed that it would have been better if art had been used to depict the best men and their deeds but that this was a much neglected theme in painting.

Ruskin had one more reason for condemning the influence of art on religion, thus forgetting that the two were separate for the purposes of the lecture. Religious art, by which here he meant mostly but not entirely architecture, limited 'the idea of Divine presence to particular localities'. (20) He wrote approvingly about 'a rough stone for an altar under the hawthorn on a village green', (21) because such a primitive arrangement would not localize a god. He forgot the Old Testament concepts of a stone or other object making a place holy, Jehovah's usual dwelling place, like the stone where Jacob had a vision in Genesis 28.17,18.

But, instead of a wooden fence, build a wall, pave the interior space; roof it over, so as to make it comparatively dark; - and you may persuade the villagers with ease that you have built a house which Deity inhabits. (22)

To Ruskin, God was to be seen in all nature and not to be confined within a church building. By this criticism of religious architecture, or rather the whole concept of buildings dedicated to worship, he did not give credit to the traditional Christian teaching and belief that God is not confined to any building. An additional criticism of Ruskin's, linked to this, was that money



would be better spent in making more people's homes comfortable rather than on making churches beautiful.

The lecture, The Relation of Art to Religion, was criticized by Henry Liddell. On receiving an outline of it before it was delivered, he wrote to Acland:

It is difficult to believe that the religious paintings of Orcagna & Fra Angelico, or even of Raffaele, had the effect of debasing Xty. . . . The human character of the Saviour as represented in the Gospels seems to invite representation by Art. (23)

Dean Liddell was the more upset because Ruskin applied the same points about the relationship between art and religion to Greek as well as to Christian art. Liddell was a clergyman and an Hellenist. He did not see any incongruity in pursuing his interests in both these faiths. As Dinah Birch states, he also loved art. 'The idea that a mutually beneficial relation between religion and art could be said to exist in both Greek and Christian ages was important to him (Liddell). Yet Ruskin claimed no such relation.' (24)

Ruskin expanded his ideas on Greek art in his second series of lectures, Aratra Pantelici, during November and December 1870, while also using these lectures to give his opinions on how Greek and Christian art were related, and, through that, his opinions on the state of the modern world. He did so by using the concept of evolution. Ruskin was not an evolutionist in the Darwinian sense (25), but he did believe, if only for the purposes of this series of lectures, that the world and humanity were changing, sometimes for the worse, but mostly for the better. In Aratra Pantelici he said that the human race had improved over the centuries. The present state of manhood has become

if not more wise, at least more manly, with every gained century. . . . When the day comes, as come it must, in which we no more deface and defile God's image in living clay, I am not sure that we shall any of us care so much for the images made of Him, in burnt clay. (26)

Ruskin believed that man has always had an inherent wish to worship. All the societies which he had studied had some type of religion, even if it had become *impure* and debased. First came an instinct to portray what was seen. He used a rather far-fetched example (27) of a little girl who modelled mice out of a lump of dough. Models, idols, ~~and~~ mice themselves: 'Play with them, or love them, or fear them, or worship them.' (28) Second, as graphic art developed in time with human intellect, the sculptor depicted, not a reindeer, but 'the Maker and Giver of the reindeer'. (29) Besides this instinct to depict the Maker and Giver, there also developed the human instinct to possess and give a personality to that god. How was a race to choose the right god to possess and idolize (make into an idol)? 'You must have not only the idolizing instinct, but an  $\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$  which chooses the right thing to idolize!' (30) This  $\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$  could only come if the

heart of the nation shall be set on the discovery of just or equal law. . . . The Greek school of sculpture is formed during, and in consequence of, the national effort to discover the nature of justice. (31)

In this (besides begging a lot of questions about how the right ethos would be known), he did not only return to his pre-Slade Professorship opinion, abandoned in his first series of lectures, that art and society were linked to religion. He also recalled his old theme in Modern Painters and The Stones of Venice that individuals and nations could only produce great art if they were themselves of pure mind and morality. Venetian art and architecture were at their greatest when the leaders and people of Venice were at their most noble in Christian strength and purity.

Ruskin made a distinction between those nations which practised the worship of idols (like Ninevites and Phoenicians of ancient times or contemporary Indian and Chinese societies), and those other nations which, while attaining a high standard of architecture and art, did not see those created objects as being holy in themselves. Ruskin described these latter states as having 'now learned to make these

statues beautifully human, and to surround them with attributes that may concentrate their thoughts of the gods'. (32) The objects of art led the viewer to contemplate the divine which lay behind that object, not the object itself. The main point about this was that a good moral state and a worthy religion went together, and both enabled the viewer to use art as an aid to contemplation and worship. For now Ruskin had in a rather confused way again linked a relationship between art, morality and religion.

He then went on to describe another stage in the evolution of the moral and religious progress of a state. As intellect developed,

the leading minds of literature and science become continually more logical and investigative; . . . a very few years are enough to convince all the strongest thinkers that the old imaginative religion is untenable, and cannot any longer be honestly taught in its fixed traditional form, except by ignorant persons. (33)

Traditional religion would be found to be untenable, as it had become for Ruskin himself. What would happen once the prop of religion had been taken away? If the people were well versed in and had practised virtue, then that state would continue and the minority of bad characters would not be important.

This is the condition of national soul expressed by the art, and the words, of Holbein, Dürer, Shakespeare, Pope, and Goethe. (34)

But on the other hand

If the people, at the moment when the trial of darkness approaches, be not confirmed in moral character, but are only maintaining a superficial virtue by the aid of a spectral religion; the moment the staff of their faith is broken, the character of the race falls like a climbing plant cut from its hold: . . . half a century is sometimes enough to close in hopeless shame the career of the nation in literature, art, and war. (35)

The society involved would fall apart and live a life of shame. Religion, Ruskin assumed for this form of evolution, was an integral part of framing a good moral code. After the decline of that same

religion, science (here seen as good though usually Ruskin disapproved of scientific advances) would expose the falseness of religion.

Ruskin used this analysis of the evolution of art, religion and civilization to attack his contemporary society, which was contrary to what he had previously told his listeners about the gradual improvement of the human race.

England, especially, has cast her Bible full in the face of her former God; and proclaimed, with open challenge to Him, her resolved worship of His declared enemy, Mammon.  
(36)

Almost as bad, and indicating this corruption, was the state of art and sculpture in contemporary Britain; it was 'effete and corrupt', (37) to a degree never before known. As a prime example of this, Ruskin described a sculpture used in the Crystal Palace (38) to celebrate Christmas; a face of a clown with moving parts.

This time Ruskin said that the Greek religion was inferior to the Christian. The former was good if child-like, but the latter was better because it built upon the best of Greek religion and mythology.

Ruskin was beginning to understand the continuum between Greek and later European civilization. Yet he was ambiguous (muddled would be another word) about this because he felt that his modern society was worse spiritually and morally (and thus artistically) than the Christian Gothic era and the classical Greek society. When Ruskin stated that Christianity was superior to, because built upon, Greek religion, he was idealizing a type of Christianity which was perhaps nothing more than a moral code based upon Christ's teaching, just as he was also idealizing the Greek religion.

In the next series of lectures, The Eagle's Nest, Ruskin tried to outline his understanding of the relationship between science, art

and nature, thus rekindling his interest in natural history. He denigrated contemporary science and the scientific method, which was surprising because from his youth upward he had practised the scientific method of close observation and making deductions from those observations. This had started when he was fifteen years old, when he published a short article Enquiries on the Causes of the Colour of the Water of the Rhine. (39) All his geological studies and drawings were based on close observation. But in the Oxford Lectures, he came to see the scientific method as almost sterile, both in merely cataloguing and describing, and also in its obsessive attempts, as he saw it, always to discover what was new at the cost of forgetting what was old.

Perhaps no progress more triumphant has been made in any science than that of Chemistry; but the practical fact which will remain for the contemplation of the future, is that we have lost the art of painting on glass, and invented gun-cotton and nitro-glycerine. (40)

Ruskin wanted a new science or form of knowledge which he called 'sophia'. To illustrate this he took a parable of two girls looking at stars through a telescope. One is 'versed somewhat in abstract Science; . . . she will probably take interest chiefly in questions of distance and magnitude, in varieties of orbit, and proportions of light'. (41) The other girl

will probably receive a much deeper emotion, from witnessing in clearness what has been the amazement of so many eyes long closed; . . . yet saw true miracle in them, thankful that none but the Supreme Ruler could bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion. (42)

This latter girl represented a 'far nobler sophia'. (43) This faculty of sophia taken from Aristotle was the virtue of combining the faculties of art, literature and science, meaning all knowledge. (44) Thus the second girl at the telescope had sophia. Ruskin linked this to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, quoting Proverbs in which Wisdom

is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Lay fast hold upon her; let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life. (45)

Ruskin was trying to bridge the gap between science and religion, a gap which was continually widening during the nineteenth century. For Ruskin, using sophia meant seeing further into knowledge and science than merely describing and putting into categories. True science was knowing not only about the material world but also about its spiritual dimension. Because of this link, as Ruskin understood it, between science, sophia and religion, theology was a science.

What we call theology, if true, is a science; and if false, is not theology; . . . the distinction even between natural science and theology is illogical. . . . The noblest (force) we can know is the energy which either imagines, or perceives, the existence of a living power greater than its own. (46)

The use of the alternatives 'imagines or perceives' suggested Ruskin's unhappiness at assuming an actual outside force. The worst force, of which he had a deep belief, was 'the devil, or betraying Spirit'. (47)

In the The Eagle's Nest Ruskin showed a deep apprehension about what science was doing to society. He was lecturing at Oxford, to intelligent students and senior staff, and he wanted to influence them to take a broader view of education than just learning facts. (48) Sophia, a higher way of understanding the world, was essential to see the vital relationship between the subject of scientific scrutiny, the wider created world and its Maker. Ruskin was not putting this forward as a specific Christian doctrine, but in a more generally theistic way, which would be understandable to the student whose Christian faith was weak, even if he attended Chapel regularly.

Ruskin took a lot of care in preparing his lectures at Oxford. They drew large audiences, maybe partly because Liddell's apprehension

about Ruskin's straying beyond the limits of Fine Art to air his controversial views over the wider fields of his interests was justified. Ruskin had many aims and purposes of which one, although not the most important, was to put his varied ideas into the framework of his faith, such as it was. Christianity, classical Greek religion, mythology, the natural world could all do this. In The Relation of Art to Religion Ruskin separated religion from all other spheres of human activity and belief. But in the following lectures he found religion coming back into the human field. This reflected his own ambiguities, a wish to be rid of his religious background, but an ultimate inability to do so.

Besides lecturing the the academic world of Oxford, Ruskin was trying to educate a wider, less academic audience by means of open letters called Fors Clavigera, a series which he began in 1871 and was his longest-running and largest enterprise. In some ways he could be less sophisticated in these than he was in his lectures. Thus instead of the detailed arguments for or against the nature of religion in contemporary society, he could more directly praise or abuse his subjects, targets which by this time were not altogether new. At the beginning of of 1871, Ruskin wrote the first letter of the series, explaining in it his ideas about the ills of the present society and his plans to improve it. In practical terms this resulted in the idealistic and ill-fated Guild of St. George. Until 1878 Ruskin usually published a letter every month, but after his first mental break-down in that year the letters became less regular. Although absorbed in lecturing at Oxford, Ruskin knew that his lectures, at least until published, could not reach a wide audience. More importantly, these lectures could not be a totally satisfactory vehicle for explaining his social views, even though he stretched the lectures' subjects to their limits in his attempts to do so. He hoped that the Fors Clavigera letters would be a more effective way to disseminate his views on subjects outside art.

The title was enigmatic, although he tried to explain it in his second letter. (1) 'Fors' meant force, fortitude, 'chance' or 'fate', and Ruskin wrote that his subject matter would be whatever fate, or Fors, decreed he should tell his readers. 'Clavigera' meant a rudder, or else a 'key-', 'nail-' or 'club-bearer' representing the strength, patience or the legal abilities of Greek mythological figures. Under this abstruse (maybe ultimately meaningless) title Ruskin covered, as fancy rather than fate dictated: art, stories, English history, Greek mythology, the state of the nation, religion, recipes, children's education, and every other topic that interested him at the time, or any book which he wanted to share. Underlying all this great enterprise was a desire to educate and lead society into better standards of behaviour and



thought. However, Fors was so long at three quarters of a million words, so discursive over so many years and reflected so many of its author's differing moods that it is impossible to distil Ruskin's attitudes described in these letters to any coherent whole, which is perhaps why no major study has yet been written on Fors Clavigera.

He sometimes wrote directly about religion and the Church, along with ethics, his religious up-bringing, clergy and his attitude to religion. Besides direct biblical quotations, he used phrases and sentences with biblical resonances and style. Some of the contents suggest a religious debate within Ruskin, even though not acknowledged.

After his visit to Italy in 1874, when Ruskin had returned to some sort of religious faith, the tone of the letters changed, becoming more sympathetic to Christianity. Up to that date, Ruskin had but few good words to write in Fors about his contemporary religious and ecclesiastical world because he continued to see a great discrepancy between how society should live and how it actually did live, between the Christian ethic and the real contemporary ethic. He described this discrepancy when he wrote a list of

Three Material things, not only useful, but essential to Life. No one "knows how to live" till he has got them. These are, Pure Air, Water, and Earth. There are three Immaterial things, not only useful, but essential to Life. No-one knows how to live well till he has got them. These are, Admiration, Hope and Love. (2)

But modern society had destroyed these six. Physically, industrialism and man's carelessness had destroyed the three material things of pure air, water and earth. As for the immaterial things, Ruskin claimed that instead of honouring admiration and hope, society had substituted hate and despair. With the third item of Love,

You were ordered by the Founder of your religion to love your neighbour as yourselves. You have founded an entire Science of Political Economy, on what you have stated to

the the constant instinct of man - the desire to defraud his neighbour. (3)

The way to amend society was to live according to the three immaterial things. Ruskin heard a clergyman 'in the last sermon I heard out of an English pulpit' say that it was impossible for any honest man to live by trade in England. The clergyman concluded 'not that the manner of trade in England should be amended, but that his hearers should be thankful they were going to heaven'. (4) Ruskin wrote that the surest way to heaven for those traders would be for them to amend their ways, rather than to sit in Church. Clergy were not Ruskin's only targets, and he reached the heights of his considerable skill in invective during a letter three years later, in 1874, which was directed against the squires and landed gentry. He felt that the traditional sports of hunting and shooting were at best a waste of time, and at worst a positive evil. He also felt that the land-owners exploited those over whom they had power.

All this monarchy and glory, all this power and love, all this land and its people, you pitifullest, foulest of Iscariots, sopped to choking with the best of the feast from Christ's own fingers, you have deliberately sold to the highest bidder; - Christ, and His Poor, and His Paradise together; and instead of sinning only, like poor natural Adam, gathering of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, you, who don't want to gather it, touch it with a vengeance, - cut it down, and sell the timber. (5)

The clergy connived at this behaviour. But instead, those land-owners should treat their God-given land with respect, fix the rent fairly, put the profits back into improving the land and allow the tenants to benefit from any improvements that they had made. Although the landlords would be at church on a Sunday 'for propriety's sake', looking at carved angels;

If ever you did see a real angel before the Day of Judgement, your first thought would be, - to shoot it.  
(6)

Ruskin's attack on the landed gentry came from three sources. First, there was the parable of the talents; what should be done with extra talents or land? (7) Second was Ruskin's thoughts on the Day of Judgement, and thirdly his wish to have a more just society. It suited Ruskin's purposes to turn the ethic of Jesus' teaching as he understood it to rail against the powerful land-owners of his time and try to make them improve the lot of those for whom they had responsibility. (8)

From the beginning of Fors Clavigera Ruskin hoped to start the Guild of St. George in order to put right the wrongs of British society. It was to be funded by wealthy people giving 10% of their capital to establish simple communities of working men and their families living a non-industrial life. (9) Ruskin's example of donating 10% of his own capital was not widely followed and the whole scheme became a business and administrative failure, for his idealism was not matched by his business acumen. At its foundation, Ruskin made it clear that the Guild was not to have any Christian basis, except in a very un-doctrinaire way. In his first Fors reference to the Guild, Ruskin stated that the only rule of the 'Founder of your religion (was) to love your neighbour as yourselves'. (10) This rule had not been followed in society, but it would be in his Utopia, for the Guild was to put an emphasis on good works, the pure life and living 'faithfully, for the sake of the joy of their homes'. (11) 'Good works', according to Ruskin three years later, was to take 'the model, very simply stated for you in the nursery tale of Genesis' (12) by assisting God's creation of nature rather than by spoiling it by pollution and industrialization.

Ruskin compared those true good works to the false good works proclaimed by clergy from their pulpits of

going to church and admiring the sermon on Sundays, and making as much money as possible in the rest of the week.  
(13)

Ruskin was wont to compare the way church goers behaved on Sundays with their behaviour on the other six days of the week. This was one of Ruskin's most common indictments of the English way of using or mis-using Christianity. He found, or it suited him to say that he found, that Church life was bordering on the hypocritical; this even though he had many friends amongst the clergy. Sometimes this matter revolved around the use of Sunday. He claimed to remember his own childhood Sundays with dislike. This could lead to a vague sense of ill-conscience.

Everybody about me is gone to church except the kind cook, who is straining a point of conscience to provide me with dinner. Everybody else is gone to church, to ask to be made angels of, and profess that they despise the world and the flesh, which I find myself always living in. . . . And I am left alone with the cat, in the world of sin. (14)

More often, he was convinced that the keeping of the Sabbath as a day of rest in imitation of the creator God of Genesis was only of use if people then kept 'the rest of the week in imitation of God's work'. (15)

The evil of people who professed to be Christians greatly exercised Ruskin's mind in a letter he wrote from Italy in April 1872 (16) in which he linked behaviour with the pardoning of sins. The two great pardoning religions, he stated, were the Evangelical and the Papal sects.

Only a year or two ago, close to the Crystal Palace, I heard . . . another Pardoner announce from his pulpit that there was no thief, nor devourer of widow's houses, nor any manner of sinner, in his congregation that day, who might not leave the church an entirely pardoned and entirely respectable person, if he would only believe - what the Rev. Pardoner was about to announce to him. (17)

Ruskin also put forward the old accusation that, for Roman Catholics, absolution was felt to be needed only towards the end of life. (18) He compared the pardoning of sinful people with his contemporary situation.

There are some things, however, which Edinburgh and London pardon, nowadays, which Rome would not. Penitent thieves, by all means, but not impenitent; still less impenitent peculators. (19)

He then launched out into one of his attacks on lending money upon usury, a use of money which he abhorred, but which was countenanced by society generally, including the Church. The Church, he felt, should be more willing to denounce evil. It has always been a matter of debate within Christianity how far wicked people, wicked that is in the opinion of the Church, should be denounced and rejected, or how far they should continue to be accepted within the Christian community. If accepted, was the Church condoning the sin, as well as the sinner? Ruskin was unsympathetic to a genuine ecclesiastical dilemma. He wrote, two months after his discussion on absolution:

All the churches, of late years, paying less and less attention to the discipline of their people, have felt an increasing compunction in cursing them when they did wrong. (20)

The Church took the weak course in the misguided belief that, by using 'cursing little, and blessing much', (21) the clergy could retain influence over its members. Or, as he put it later, clergy should teach the whole Bible 'and not merely the bits which tell you that you are miserable sinners, and that you needn't mind'. (22).

Much of the blame for the Church's weakness and the consequent ills of society he laid at the feet of the clergy. In some ways Ruskin remained a clergyman mangue for all his life; a preacher or lecturer, a writer, a man of ideas, with an interest in religion (whether for or against the Church and God) and a desire to improve the world. He had clergy friends and mixed happily in their company. And yet, on occasions, he had a hatred of the profession, blind to any good that clergy, of whatever denomination, might be doing in the slums of the day - areas which Ruskin desperately wanted to have improved. His references to clergy in Fors Clavigera began mildly enough. In the first letter of January 1871 he wrote

Kings should keep their crowns on their heads, and Bishops their crosiers in their hands; and (children) should duly recognize the significance of the crown, and the use of the crook. (23)

He wrote this without saying (as he had in Sesame and Lilies) whether or not the bishops, as crook holders, were worthy of their office. He changed his attitude to clergy in the harsh winter later that year.

The over-charitable person who was bought to be killed at that price (thirty pieces of silver), indeed, advised the giving of alms; but you won't have alms, I suppose, you are so independent, nor go into almshouses . . . and all the clergy in London have been shrieking against almsgiving to the lower poor this whole winter long, till I am obliged, whenever I want to give anybody a penny, to look up and down the street first, to see if a clergyman's coming. (24)

Just as bad was clerical exploitation of the bereaved;

Your ecclesiastics have . . . made you pay for guidance out if it (the world) - particularly when it grew dark, and the sign post was illegible where the upper and lower roads divided; - so that as far as I can read or calculate, dying has been even more expensive to you than living. (25)

Clergy charge money to be shepherds of the flock, claimed Ruskin. But if they were bad shepherds, the sheep might decide that they would be better off without any shepherd. As a result,

you should now set your hope on a state of instruction in Irreligion and Liberty. (26)

Six months later, in October 1871, Ruskin returned to this theme of the rapaciousness of clergy, complaining that all the professional classes, including the clergy, lived off the poor.

There is, first, the clerical person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for giving him moral advice. . . . If he really gets moral advice from his moral adviser; . . . they are all of them worth their daily turnips. But if, perchance, it happen he get immoral advice from his

moralist . . . it is time to look into such arrangements,  
(27)

with the understanding that many professional people are not worthy of their daily hire - but the poor peasant still has to pay them.

Ruskin's worst invective in Fors, as in other parts of his writing, was against the Evangelical clergy, rather than just clergy in general. He objected to their use of the Bible, with its acceptance of the Scriptures as literal truth - a stance which Ruskin himself had rejected while still at Oxford thirty four years before.

The confusion of the two characters (of honest men and of rogues) is a result of the peculiar forms of vice and ignorance, reacting on each other, which belong to the modern Evangelical sect. . . . They consist especially in three things. First, in declaring a bad translation of a group of books of various qualities, accidentally associated, to be the "Word of God". Secondly, reading, of this singular "Word of God", only the bits they like; and never taking any pains to understand even those. Thirdly, resolutely refusing to practise even the very small bits they do understand, if such practice happen to go against their own worldly - especially money - interests. (28)

Here Ruskin happily combined his hatred of Evangelicals, his liberal understanding of the Bible and his dislike of money-minded clergy. He even included clergy wives in his diatribes, for in a discussion about the expense of buying fish, the poverty of fishermen and wealth of the middlemen, Ruskin rather unnecessarily launched out against the clergy. The clerical wives should be willing to carry fish, or coals, for the poor - as Jesus had brought coals for the disciples after his resurrection. (29)

"How dreadful - how atrocious!" - thinks the tender clerical lover. "My wife walk with a fish-basket on her back!" Yes, you young scamp, yours. You were going to lie to the Holy Ghost, then, were you, only that she might wear satin slippers and be called a "lady"? Suppose, instead of fish, I were to ask her and you to carry coals. (30)

Ruskin later castigated the Evangelical understanding of the Bible. A reader had given him the text "Deal courageously, and the Lord do that which seemeth good." (31) 'It sounds a very saintly, submissive, and useful piece of advice' he commented; and then looked up the quotation, only to find it was spoken by 'quite one of the most self-willed people on record in any history, - about the last in the world to let the Lord do that which seemed Him good.' (32) The speaker was Joab, one of the worst of King David's followers.

Yet occasionally Ruskin would try to be constructive when writing about clergy if only by pointing out occasionally better examples from the past. He often liked to look on this past to find some ideal. While he had no praise for his contemporary Evangelicals, he wrote of his admiration of Frederick the Great's father, Frederick William, who was (33)

an Evangelical divine of the strictest orthodoxy, - very fond of beer, bacon, and tobacco, and entirely resolved to have his own way, supposing, as pure Evangelical people always do, that his own way was God's also. (34)

Another ideal Evangelical clergyman - more contemporary this time - was the author of Mirror of Peasants, the Swiss pastor Gotthelf. (35) Ruskin said of him that, 'though he gave both (sermons and novels) excellent in their kind, . . . his congregation liked their sermons to be short, and his readers, their novels to be long.' (36) He continued;

Though I am not prejudiced in favour of persons of his profession, I think him the wisest man, take him for all in all, with whose writings I am acquainted; chiefly because he showed his wisdom in pleasant and unappalling ways. (37)

Gotthelf's story of Hansli the broom merchant had no direct reference to Christianity or the Church. But the simple and good character of Hansli obviously reflected the character of his creator. In this Ruskin implicitly contrasted the worldly and



uncharitable style of the life which he saw being led by the clergy and church-goers of his own land with the life of a Swiss pastor and peasant. Ruskin believed that there was some good in recent Swiss Church life, but by contrast, as he looked around his contemporary Britain, he saw only evil.

While criticising the users and mis-users of the Bible Ruskin seemed to have needed the Bible for himself more than he was willing to admit. Brought up with daily readings, as he explained in June 1875 (38), he ostensibly turned away from putting emphasis on the Scriptures and he was scathing about how the Bible is understood. Yet his writings contained many biblical quotations and allusions, and he took those parts of the Bible which were useful for him to make a point in any particular letter. Over the years, as Ruskin studied the Bible, he could still find new and interesting passages, almost in spite of himself, as when he was struck by; 'If it were not so, I would have told you!' (39) 'I read those strange words of St. John's Gospel this morning, for at least the thousandth time; and for the first time, that I remember, with any attention'. (40)

If a Bible, or any other book is read and re-read often, then previously familiar passages which have been passed over are suddenly noticed as it were for the first time. The parts of the Bible to which Ruskin was most attracted at this time and to which he wanted to draw the attention of his readers were those passages that gave instruction or example of how people should behave to each other. He did this at length with Psalms 14 and 15. Ruskin first mentioned these Psalms, and gave Sir Philip Sidney's metrical version of them, towards the end of 1872. (41) Ruskin returned to these Psalms a year later and described them in more detail. Psalm 14 is about the wickedness of the people surrounding the the author, while Psalm 15 is about the good qualities needed by those who will dwell in the Lord's tabernacle or temple. First, Ruskin used Psalm 14 to criticize the Evangelicals, saying that they read the second verse - that no-one seeks after God - in conjunction with the fifth

verse, that God is in the generation (or company) of the righteous. 'From which statements, evangelical persons conclude that there are no righteous persons at all.' (42) Whether any readers could follow his reasoning is uncertain, for this was a very forced and false interpretation which Ruskin wanted to attribute to Evangelicals. Psalm 14 opened with the statement that 'The fool hath said in his heart; there is no God.' and later, verse 6, that the poor knows there is a God and finds a refuge in him, an interpretation clearer from the Prayer Book translation than from the Authorized Version. From this Ruskin concluded, having decided what the Evangelicals thought, that

evangelical persons conclude that the fool and the poor mean the same people; and make all the haste they can to be rich. (43)

From that anti-Evangelical interpretation of Psalm 14 Ruskin gave what he saw as his true and simple interpretation, based on the fourth verse; 'Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord'. Ruskin stated that some men are born of the Spirit, and some born of the flesh, which is the Pauline interpretation of man with its conflict between body and spirit. (44) Those of the flesh, wretches and vagabonds, will exploit or eat up

God's own people as they ate bread. . . . Just and godly people can't live; and every clever rogue, and industrious fool, is making his fortune out of them. (45)

This state of affairs had always existed, but never more so than in Ruskin's time, so he thought. He then claimed that 'pious people universally reject (this interpretation) with abhorrence' (46) because the pious people are amongst the worst exploiters, thus almost equating the rich exploiters with those so-called Christians, or at least church people, whom he most hated. The exploited and poor he equated with God's people, those born of the Spirit. This exposition of Psalm 14 was somewhat tortuous, with non-sequiturs and strange juxtapositions of sentences. Ruskin stretched the natural

meaning for purposes not intended by its author, to make a point about justice which was already in his mind.

The fifteenth Psalm gives a list of good qualities needed to dwell in God's tabernacle or on his holy hill. People with such gifts do justice, speak truth and despise vile people. 'On these conditions the promise of God's presence and strength is finally given' (47), claimed Ruskin, but ended by pointing out that

If your heart is dishonest and rebellious, you may read them (the two psalms) for ever with lip-service, and all the while be "men-pleasers," whose bones are to be broken at the pit's mouth, and so left incapable of breath, brought by any winds of Heaven. And that is all I have to say to you this year. (48)

Ruskin dealt with these two psalms at length. He knew the scriptures, was able to think about them word by word, as in distinguishing between a tabernacle, or tent, and the Holy Hill. He would go back to Latin word roots if necessary, and use the scriptures as a weapon against those whom he despised, in this case the Evangelicals and rich exploiters, to put forward his own social message of justice.

Two years earlier, in December 1871 Ruskin had used the festival of Christmas, which he felt was being spent too much as a secular holiday, to make the points he wanted concerning society. He wrote that care in interpreting the Bible was necessary, that true religion lay in pleasing rather than praising God, that honest work should not be despised, and that obedience to good authority is a virtue. In this, Ruskin was not concerned with the literalness or otherwise of the nativity story. But 'The people whom I envy not at all are those who imagine they believe it, and do not'. (49) This was written in a way which suggested that Ruskin thought that some people should be more like him and honest in stating their beliefs. As in Psalm 14, Ruskin used the text in ways which strict Biblical exegetes would find somewhat unusual. The angels praised God and proclaimed 'good will' amongst all people. (50) Ruskin preferred to

translate εἰρηνη by 'love' rather than the more literal 'good will'. But whatever the advantages of using the word, 'love' is a mis-translation. Another word Ruskin wanted to use was 'well-pleasing', with the same emphasis of actions pleasing to God. The whole tone of this passage in Fors Clavigera was on doing good rather than thinking good. But doing pleasing things for God was not the emphasis of the original Greek, for Luke's emphasis, was 'good will' an attitude of mind.

Nevertheless:

Now, my religious friends, I continually hear you talk of acting for God's glory, and giving God praise. Might you not, for the present, think less of praising, and more of pleasing Him? . . . You hear that you may be pleasing to Him, if you try:- that He expected, then, to have some satisfaction in you. (51)

The shepherds of the Nativity were an example of good honest work. Even though there had been a display of the heavenly host and the shepherds had been to see the holy infant, (52) the shepherds simply returned to their fields. 'Can it be', asked Ruskin, 'that the work is itself the best that can be done by simple men?' (53) He suggested that the importance of Bethlehem being David's city was not that David had been a king, but that as a youth he had been a shepherd, an unusual understanding of the concept of David's city.

The wise men were examples of obedience. Ruskin had a strong authoritarian outlook, perhaps derived from habitual obedience to his dominating parents. The wise men or Zoroastrians of that period taught obedience, and the magi of Luke's story were obedient to the call of the star.

These men . . . came . . . not to see, nor talk - but to do reverence. They are neither curious nor talkative, but submissive. And, so far as they came to teach, they came as teachers of one virtue only: Obedience. (54)

Lastly, Ruskin gleaned from the Christmas story the lesson of looking forward. He linked Christ's first birth with his second at the resurrection. Ruskin avoided discussing the future life. He simply wrote;

The Child is born to bring you the promise of new life.  
Eternal or not, is no matter; pure and redeemed, at  
least'. (55)

The story of Christmas was used by Ruskin as he later used Psalms 14 and 15; as a means of making a point to his readers. A strained interpretation of the Bible was allowable if it suited his purposes.

In one passage, he was driven to acknowledge the existence of God through his hatred of modern society. Having to choose between opposing either scientific or religious teaching, both of which he hated, he chose to oppose the former. On academic lecturing he wrote:

My friend told me that the lecturer said, "the object of his lectures would be entirely accomplished if he could convince his hearers that there was no such thing as a flower." . . . Modern science . . . gives lectures on Botany, of which the object is to show that there is no such thing as a flower; on Humanity, to show that there is no such thing as a Man; and on Theology, to show there is no such thing as a God. No such thing as a Man, but only a Mechanism; no such thing as a God, but only a series of forces. (56)

If modern science, being the evil monster that Ruskin thought it, taught that there was no God, then Ruskin in his perversity would claim that there was a God.

In Fors Ruskin had many aims, especially the improvement of his readers' attitudes. To achieve these aims, Ruskin would contradict himself with themes of which at other times he would disapprove. The concept of souls was one such example, to counteract industrialization. Normally in Fors Clavigera he preferred to avoid the question of immortality, although he had been more explicit in a

letter to Charles Eliot Norton three years before in 1869: 'I am no more immortal than a gnat, or a bell of heath. . . . But . . . a power shaped both the heath bell and me.' (57) Whenever this belief in a divine being but no after-life was mentioned in Fors Clavigera, Ruskin wrote with all the ambivalence that he could muster towards religious matters. But when writing about the destruction done by factories and their smoke, he stated:

You know, if there are such things as souls, and if ever any of them haunt places where they have been hurt, there must be many about us, just now, displeased enough! (58)

In spite of the conditional 'if', it suited Ruskin to parade souls in this passage as existing beings. In both these cases, Ruskin defended a religious concept to suit his own argument. This also happened a year later when he was asked to contribute to a fund set up in memory of F.D. Maurice. He refused, because he disagreed with Maurice's teaching on the doctrine of justification by faith.

I can quite understand how pleasant it was for a disciple panic-struck by the literal aspect of the doctrine of justification by faith, to be told . . . that "We speak of an anticipation as justified by the event. Supposing that anticipation to be something so inward, so essential to me, that my own very existence is involved in it, I am justified by it." But consolatory equivocations of this kind have no enduring place in literature. (59)

Ruskin understood Maurice as explaining away too easily the harshness of the doctrine of justification by faith. By doing so, he appeared to be supporting that doctrine. Yet ever since he had left the Church, and the Evangelical wing in which he had been brought up, he had denied justification by faith, putting in its place the idea that, whatever God or judgement there might be, the criteria for salvation would be good works and a kind disposition. If one opposes too many things at once, as Ruskin was wont to do, contradictions are liable to appear.

Ruskin conjured up a future life, or denied its existence to suit his own purposes. He also debated Heaven and Hell in a letter of 20

February, 1873 (60) when he looked at the Bible text 'Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own'. (61) Ruskin concluded that 'his own' meant his own place or abode. From that he asked, 'And do you not think it of any consequence to ask what sort of a place your own is?' (62) Just as Judas Iscariot was lost from Heaven and had 'his own' place (63), so there is an ultimate eternal resting place for us all. Yet this contradicted what only a month earlier he had written, that Christ had given us no clear concept of judgement and eternity. 'Alas, had He but told us more clearly that it (his father's house having many places) was so!' (64) Yet Ruskin felt that it might be right for 'poor wretches' to pray to saints, which was against the 'vulgar and insolent Evangelical notion' (65) that saints should not be prayed to. This superstitious practice was a good thing to do because it gave comfort and was anti-Evangelical. Even so it was a useless exercise, because there were no saints in Heaven. 'They (saints) are dead, and cannot help us, nor hear!' (66) Ruskin used Christian beliefs and teachings which he disbelieved to suit his own purposes, in this case suggesting that comfort could be given to 'poor wretches'. Yet even while suggesting this practice, he claimed that their prayers would be out of ignorance, while his own writings were from knowledge.

In Fors Clavigera Ruskin insisted that he wrote only of what he had definite knowledge. His opinions, so he said, he kept to himself until those opinions became certainties: a piece of self-deception that could be seen in some of his references to the Church, religion and faith. The Christian teachings were useful to further his own purposes, whether he believed them or believed them not. This reflected his own internal doubts and changes of opinion. In spite of his denials he had not completely abandoned his religious upbringing: nor, in the early 1870's, could he put anything definite in its place. Whatever the motives Ruskin had for writing Fors Clavigera, one of them was for him to air anything in his mind, a thing which he did better for readers of his letters and books than he did in the privacy of his letters. 'Anything in his mind' included religion.

But then he ventured to Italy again, and more especially to Assisi in the second half of 1874; this had a profound effect on him, as he explained in the Fors of that time.



In the early 1870's, Ruskin was extremely busy writing and lecturing. It was perhaps the busiest and most productive phase of his life. What was going on behind this outward busy-ness was not known to his reading public because during much of this time he was suffering from depression and great emotional strain because of Rose La Touche. One of the forms his depressions took was that as he grew older, he attached more importance to his earlier life. Harmlessly, he liked to stay in hotels which he had visited as a child with his parents and to read his old diaries. More significantly, he regressed into baby talk and a child-like dependence on people like Joan Severn and Thomas Carlyle (whom he called 'Papa'). He was greatly upset in March 1871 at the death of his old nurse Annie Strachan, for a person from his childhood was no longer present. His mother died at the end of the same year. To relive or find comfort from his childhood included finding relief and comfort from his childhood religion, which he had publicly rejected. Although denying that he held to any traditional faith, although saying that to him the Bible was of no more importance than any other scripture or book containing good moral advice, he could not, in the long run, alienate himself entirely from the faith given to him by his parents. Indeed, in the first half of the 1870's, at this very busy period of his life, he became more interested in the Christian faith than he had been in the decade before.

But unwillingly, for although in 1871 he intended to edit and republish his earlier works of Modern Painters, Seven Lamps of Architecture and The Stones of Venice, which was in itself another example of his harking back to happier, earlier days, he wanted to omit much of the religious content 'since he now rejected its "fine writing" and its religion.' (1) Yet a month later, after the wedding of Joan Agnew to Arthur Severn, he resumed his old habit of opening his Bible at random and on one occasion read some of St. Matthew's gospel (2), a passage was about the 'abomination of desolation' and the end of the world, which was a suitable description about the state of his mind at that time: Joan had left

him, there was no good news from Rose, his ninety year old mother was declining and his aged nurse Annie had died. All this led, soon after Joan's wedding in April 1871, to a mental and physical breakdown which was the precursor, though he did not know it, of future, more serious, bouts of insanity. He wrote to Norton at the time of Annie's death that

Everything is infinitely sad to me - this black east wind . . . most of all. Of all the things that oppress me - this sense, of the evil-working of nature herself, - my disgust at her barbarity - clumsiness - darkness - bitter mockery of herself - is the most desolating. I am very sorry for my old nurse - but her death is ten times more horrible to me because the Sky and blossoms are Dead also. (3)

The relationship which continued to cause the greatest turmoil in Ruskin's life was his friendship, or otherwise, with Rose La Touche. In 1868 Maria La Touche, her mother, had obtained legal, though mistaken, advice that Ruskin was not free to marry. In 1871 Ruskin told Rose that her mother was wrong and confirmed this the next year. (4) Their mutual friends and occasional go-between, the MacDonalds, acting on a plea from Rose, unwisely arranged for Rose La Touche and John Ruskin to meet - which arrangement made Ruskin cut short his holiday in Venice. Rose was becoming increasingly unstable in her mind. One reason she gave for not marrying Ruskin was, as he wrote to a friend, Alfred Hunt, 'because "I don't love God better than I do her"'. (5) Later, a harsh letter came from Rose, returning his own last one unopened. 'When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished".' wrote Ruskin bitterly in his diary. (6) He added a note some time later that 'This was my chance verse, not insolently chosen as it looks', so he had happened upon that verse during his daily reading. Ruskin summed up the relationship in a letter to Dr. Brown (7) that she 'gave me a week of perfect life, - but would'nt marry me - wants to be a Saint.' (8)

The last few years of the friendship - whether seen as a doomed love affair, or as a slightly ridiculous relationship of an elderly man

and young woman - was between two people with mental problems; Ruskin's mind was very volatile, for he was gradually moving towards his breakdown of 1878, and Rose's mind was in a worse state still. They contributed to each others' problems, yet they needed each other. Their differences were partly because of Ruskin's first marriage, partly differing temperaments and age. But part was their religious attitudes. These all intertwined. In her twenties (she was twenty-seven when she died) Rose, as far as can be known, was trying to escape her parents' influence - which included the religiosity imposed on her by John La Touche. Yet, one of the reasons that she felt she could not marry John Ruskin was because of his 'heathenism', a reason not only when she was eighteen, but also towards the end of her life. As Rose could not change Ruskin's mind or attitude, she would not have him unchanged. For his part, Ruskin felt that the main cause for Rose's mental collapse was not himself but the religious influence, especially the incompatible opinions, of John and Maria.

Ruskin was concerned with his religious state of mind, independent of Rose. His singing hymns in the evening and taking Rose to church on a Sunday might have seemed his trying to fit in with Rose's wishes in a half-hearted manner, but he had been for some time taking up some form of religious practice. This could be seen in an exchange of letters between Ruskin and Norton, neither of whom were conventionally religious. Norton had sent to his friend the manuscript about the influence of religion on the life of Italy. The two men looked back wistfully to a time when Christianity was a force for good and Ruskin wondered:

Q . . . - Should we not rather say, - the failure of the qualities which render religious faith possible, - and which, if it be taught - make it acceptable? How far religion made - how far destroyed - the Italians is now a quite hopelessly difficult question with me. My work will only be to give materials for its solution. (9)

Norton, usually more coherent and rational than his correspondent, answered that

In childish & undeveloped stages of the life of an individual or of a community, superstitious feelings and notions are very strong; they get embodied in some sort of religious creed, & find expression in all manner of forms, ceremonies & acts of devotion. . . . But with the increase of wealth, with the development of trade & art, - each year took away something of the superstition on which her faith had depended. . . . (Until eventually) faith gets shut into a cloister with Fra Angelico; while Lippi and Botticelli are already happy pilgrims . . . (to) the sacred Hill of Venus. (10)

Ruskin and Norton both felt that religion, although primitive and mistaken, was a force for good and cohesion - which benefits were lost when there was a decline in Italian religion, which was similar to Ruskin's conclusion in Stones of Venice.

In his diaries Ruskin traced his religious practices and reading, sometimes giving virtual Bible commentaries. In January of 1872 he had been feeling very depressed, with comments like; 'No use saying tired and ill: always, now.' 'Month gone, and I fell quite beaten by it. Sleepless last night.' 'All in confusion and arrear, and I weary and sad.' (11) Part of the depression might have been because, following the death of his mother, he was in the process of giving up the house at Denmark Hill with all its memories. At his rooms in Oxford, on opening his Bible at random. he read '1st Chron. XVII.23 and this morning at the 17th psalm. Then read my own day psalms in chapel.' (12) (That day, 8 February, was his birthday, so he read the psalms appointed for the eighth day.) A few weeks later, on Good Friday, he opened the Bible by chance at Ezekiel 39 and Psalm 16. (13) The former was a description of how the enemies of Israel would be destroyed and God's people will again be in divine favour, while the psalm described how the Lord will preserve and help the writer. In these scripture readings, perhaps Ruskin was moving towards some hope and comfort during his deep depression.

In February the next year, he read Ecclesiasticus, chapters 17 and 18, which were about behaving well and having done with sins; chapters of advice of which Ruskin approved, because they did not

have any doctrinal or theological teaching. He confided to his diary 'I must try to make my daily life more perfect as I grow old'. (14) For some reason Ruskin began to put the names of the saints in his diary, occasionally with a comment.

'Oct 16th. Thursday. St. Michael. And so we have got our archangel mainly associated with goose. If I could only make it a Henry-the-Fowler day of St. Michael, and beat down the devils of desire and discontent, and get the close of life in shielded peace! (15)

Sometimes he did not know why he wrote down the saints' names. 'Dec. 11th. Thursday. St. Fuscien. (If only I knew who the people are!)' (16)

Ruskin continued to confide in his diary, almost holding brief conversations with his Biblical texts by interpreting them in very personal ways. '"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God": a nice verse, from my lady R(ose).' (17) But a week later he felt about himself; 'I heartless because of false Bible and dark skies. No power of religion left - or a shadow only - less and less, like my life blood.' (18). At the end of February he wrote; 'Morning text bad - 'be not high-minded': the last text in the world for me, always ashamed of myself. But texts can't be always what one needs. This is to be a day of fight, I suppose. Well: we'll have at it. (Was sadly beaten). (19) Ruskin was not helped by the foggy, damp weather which always depressed him. On 9 March he wrote in a similar vein: 'Text: 'Rejoicing in hope'. It's all very well, but what hope have I, but for others?' (20)

Yet amidst all this gloom, Ruskin had seen some light in his life. He underwent some sort of religious feeling just before he left England for Italy in 1874, on going for a walk up the Old Man of Coniston. 'Sun set clear. I knelt down to pray that it might not go down on my wrath, and conquered, for the time, but at cost of strength, too. Hard fight with anger all day.' (21) In all this depression, and perhaps rage, he saw his interior struggles in terms of religion and faith. Wholeness included having some faith and

trust in God, seen as an outside source of strength and maybe a divine father-figure.

At the beginning of April 1874, to escape his depression, the bad English weather, the influence of Rose, and also to study the frescoes of Giotto for the Arundel Society, Ruskin took himself to Italy. He stayed there for seven months, two months of which were at Assisi. While on his Italian trip, he continued his daily Bible readings, sometimes with optimism. 'Ate too much dinner and am therefore out of heart this morning. Yet I find wonderful things in Bible.' (22) Keen as he claimed to be, and was, in working out the meanings of writings, he puzzled over obscurities in the Scriptures, usually of the Old Testament.

In his studies, he looked for great meanings, perhaps finding in the texts more than was actually there, as long as there was support for his opinions. Thus, while he was staying in Assisi, he 'came on Isaiah XXI, and was puzzled with it; then on XXIV which is exactly parallel with the Jeremiah I found yesterday'. (23) These Bible excerpts showed that Ruskin could find a reflection of his own thoughts in the Bible, in this case the evil of the world and its future punishment, along with an enjoyment of the style of writing. The prophecies of the first Isaiah passage, chapter XXI, in a very obscure and maybe corrupt text, were about the fall of Babylon and the tribe of Kedar. Another chapter, XXIV, reflected Ruskin's pessimistic mood, for it described the destruction of the world.

The earth shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled:  
for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth  
and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away,  
the haughty people of the earth do languish. (24)

This quotation was parallel to Jeremiah 4.23, which he had 'chanced on' (25), and, as he wrote the next day, was 'the very picture of the present state, not of Judah, but of the world'. (26) But, as often happens in the Old Testament, a prophet changes from depression to hope. So Isaiah, Ruskin read in chapter 24, v.23,

(27) proclaimed the final victory of God. 'The Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.' This was a vision of the ultimate victory of God, with which Ruskin would not have agreed, for he usually did not have the optimism to see a glorious end coming out of the world's evil. The prophets of Israel and Judah proclaimed that the end of the world would come through a mixture of foreign armies and God's apocalyptic action. To Ruskin, the end of the world, or at least the end of civilization, would not happen though any divine intervention, but through a mixture of man's greed and industrial spoiling of the environment. Ruskin, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, felt called to be a prophet of doom, whose task it was, at this time mainly through Fors, to tell what disasters would befall unless his readers or listeners repented and changed their ways. He, like the ancient prophets, would be ignored or ridiculed.

Ruskin enjoyed trying to work out the meanings of Old Testament passages. He found this occupation more congenial than contemplating some of the contemporary religious scene, although he used the former to throw light on the latter. After noticing the curiosity of reading about olive trees in Isaiah when he was actually among the same type of trees at Assisi, he reported the bad side of religion in the person of

A priest (who) had begged of me in the street . . . who I find is the chaplain of the hospital - has 2½ francs at every death, 1 franc for every mass, some patrimony besides - gambles all away at the lotto, and begs of me - 'una lira per messa'. (No harm in transubstantiation, but much in payment for it.) (28)

The highlight of his Italian trip was his stay in Assisi, first for a preliminary, short stay of a week, and then later for two months. He felt better, although still with fits of depression and still casting a jaundiced eye at the purveyors of religion. He quoted the Greek text from Psalm XVI v.1 ('Preserve me, O God,' for in thee do I put my trust.') in his diary, and continued; 'Wonderfully recovered in health, coming here yesterday'. (29) A few days before this he

had written to Norton that he was willing to 'say a few words for Christ's sake against Philosophers and Radicals'. (30) After his first, brief stay in Assisi, Rome put Ruskin in a bad mood again, for he did not approve of the monks and friars he met. He wrote to Carlyle that

I am greatly exercised in mind about the monks here. One sees more of them than in other towns; and last night . . . a priest was preaching energetically . . . - vociferously - it seemed in sincerity. But if one could only be in their hearts for one moment. What puzzles me is that the rougher monks certainly live entirely wretched lives. What do they gain by hypocrisy? My life is one of swollen luxury and selfishness compared with theirs; and yet it seems to me that I see what is right and they don't. How is it - how can it be? (31)

He was happier at Palermo, writing in his diary that he should take more care over his Bible reading: 'read 1st of Zephaniah. I must now re-read my Bible, with my new mind'. (32) He returned to Assisi in early June for his stay of nearly two months. Although he was there primarily to study and report on the Giotto paintings for the Arundel Society, he found other things to interest him in the town, for he discovered the paintings of Cimabue (33), a revelation which made him return to his earlier belief that a faith can be an advantage rather than a hindrance to artistic ability.

(Cimabue) was a man of personal genius equal to Tintoret, but with his mind entirely formed by the Gospels and the book of Genesis; his art . . . and his main disposition, compassion. (34)

Ruskin was disgusted at the poverty, dirt and beggary of Assisi, especially as it was supposed to be a religious town. 'The thirsty, lazy, miserable and totally uncared for population is coming upon me like a swarm of rats. . . . The sense of the extreme and utterly hopeless misery of the country almost unfits me for doing any work in it at all.' (35)

Beyond this, although Ruskin was often hot and tired, he liked the town. He struck up a friendship with Fra. Antonio, who allowed him



to use his own cell or small room thirty yards from St. Francis' grave and who brought him coffee, thus giving him a chance to discuss religion.

I never heard so good a sermon in my life as Fra Antonio has just preached to me, on the text 'la donna è facsimile del diavolo'. He branched out into a general account of the devil, and St. Michael, and pride, and St. Matthew, and the three Baptisms . . . all spoken utterly from his heart and very wonderfully. Fast as his tongue could fly, and all well. (36)

The two men were not above religious disagreement, for Ruskin challenged Fr. Antonio's faith. 'I challenged (him) to raise one of his dead friars out of the cemetery, if he wanted me to believe'. (37) Ruskin found it easier, after that taunt, to turn to his Old Testament and read about the story of Jehoram and Ahaziah, the two sons of Ahab, along with other minutiae of 2 Kings.

The quiet of the Franciscan cell itself seems to have influenced Ruskin for good. According to John Dixon Hunt, Ruskin liked it so much that he was 'tempted by the idea of a hermit life, perhaps upon the model of the Beaupré Antiphony which he owned and which depicts a Brother John working contentedly in his cell'. (38)

Ruskin was not tempted long to be a Roman Catholic hermit or friar at Assisi. He preferred to involve his mind again on Old Testament prophets and himself in relation to them. 'I chance on, and read carefully, and as an answer to much thought last night, Isaiah VI. (39) This chapter described the great revelation of the Lord to Isaiah, his cleansing of sin and his commissioning as a messenger to the people of Israel. If Ruskin took the passage at its face value of God speaking to Isaiah, then he would have seen himself as a latter-day prophet to the people; which he did. It was not clear whether he felt that his task in life was divinely imposed - as was Isaiah's - nor whether he felt himself to be sinful and in need of cleansing. For all his mental instability and problems, Ruskin, at this stage, did not have any great sense of sinfulness. Ruskin

returned to England improved after his long stay abroad. Soon after this return he saw the dying Rose for the last time and involved himself in a lot of lecture work as well as in Fors. In religion there had been a change.

All the good was undone with another crisis over Rose. In 1874, while Ruskin was on another long visit to Italy, Rose, by then seriously ill, wrote asking to resume their friendship, and they saw each other several times in London after his (this time) scheduled return. During this happy interlude of their relationship they sang hymns together one evening and went to church and lunch. All through this, Ruskin knew that John and Maria La Touche disapproved of him. 'Can't he (John) then leave the issue in the hands of His Master?' (1) Rose then returned to Ireland, dying there in May 1875.

Ruskin was devastated and was the beginning of four turbulent years which ended in his first attack of madness, an attack which brought out some of his religious contradictions and suppressions. During these years he tried and mostly succeeded in working out a faith and religion which would satisfy him intellectually and emotionally; this while almost consciously holding madness at bay. How far the two were linked is impossible to say, but the rest of his life was really the falling apart of that which he had been able, more or less, to hold in tension and with sanity. It was only outwardly that Ruskin seemed to be coming to terms with Christianity. He wrote in a Fors letter of 1877:

You cannot but have noticed - any of you who read attentively, - that Fors has become much more distinctly Christian in its tone, during the last two years. . . . This is partly because I am every day compelled, with increasing amazement, and renewed energy, to contradict the idiotic teaching of Atheism which is multiplied in your ears. (2)

His contradiction of Atheism was more often an attack on the incompetence of clergy, while supporting the Christian tenets which they were supposed to uphold, but did not. For Ruskin's dislike of things clerical and ecclesiastical continued unabated in these years, though he remained on friendly terms with many clergy. He believed that he had to spend so much time and energy preaching the

true gospel, which he understood as the gospel of caring for people in giving them justice, because the clergy did not do so. Bishops continued to be one of his targets because they did not know about the people committed to their care. He repeated what he had written in Sesame and Lilies and Time and Tide, that

Bishops cannot take, much less give, account of men's souls unless they first take and give account of their bodies: and that, therefore, all existing poverty and crime in their dioceses . . . must be . . . clearly known to, and describable by them, or their subordinates. (3)

Because they lacked this knowledge, the 'present Bishops of the English Church . . . have forfeited and fallen from their Bishoprics by transgression; and betrayal of their Lord.' (4) Ruskin's one exception to this was his old friend Bishop Colenso. The Bishop of Oxford had banned the Bishop of Natal from preaching in the Oxford diocese. According to Colenso's daughter Fanny, whom Ruskin knew from the days when she was a pupil at Wymington Hall, the Bishop of Natal was one of the very few white people in South Africa concerned about the welfare of the black people and about the justice to be given to them. Besides friendship's sake and respect for what the Bishop was doing in his diocese, Ruskin defended Colenso because theologically he agreed with him, felt that he was unfairly treated by the Established Church and saw in him the nearest the Anglican Church could manage to a Bishop cast in the Ruskinian pastoral role. (5)

Ruskin's chief invective was, as usual, against the ordinary clergy whose failures meant that he had to do their work for them. The reasons for young men entering the clerical profession seemed to him to be dubious. When asked why he did not give advice to clergy, Ruskin wrote that if a young man

has something to do and say for men which he honestly believes himself impelled to do and say by the Holy Ghost . . . he is likely to see his way without being shown it.

But on the other hand if the young man has no true vocation but is of a group of men who treat their vocation as an ordinary, secular job then they

are practically lying, both to men and to God; - persons to whom, whether they be foolish or wicked in their ignorance, no honest way can possibly be shown. (6)

In a later letter Ruskin claimed that the clergy

connived at every abuse in public and private conduct, with which they felt it would be considered uncivil, and feared it might ultimately prove unsafe, to interfere. (7)

Ruskin portrayed the clergy as merely wanting to draw a reasonable salary, feeling self-important, not getting their hands dirty by actually helping other people and, worst of all, being unwilling to upset their congregations by denouncing the wrong doers amongst them. By their behaviour, the clergy added to the social evils which Ruskin denounced. Even the clergy's learning Ruskin despised. In a letter to a clergyman he wrote:

You believe what you wish to believe; teach that it is wicked to doubt it, and remain at rest and in much self-satisfaction. (8)

This was an accusation of intellectual and spiritual laziness. In contrast if not in modesty Ruskin felt that

I believe what I find to be true, whether I like or dislike it. And I teach other people that the chief of all wickedness is to tell lies in God's service. (9)

Ruskin would do this, he told the Rev'd F.A. Malleon in the same letter, because he studied the New Testament:

I examined every syllable (of an 11th. century Greek MS.) and have more notes of various readings and on the real meanings of perverted passages than you would get through in a year's work. But I should require you to do the same work before I would discuss a text with you.

No more did Ruskin spare the congregations of the churches, for he claimed that there was a collusion between clergy and well-off church people, to look after their own interests and pretend that all was spiritually well.

Persons desiring to be rich, and accumulating riches, always hate God, and never fear Him; the idol they do fear (for many of them are sincerely religious) is an imaginary, or mind-sculptured God of their own making, to their own liking; a God who allows usury, delights in strife and contention, and is very particular about everybody's going to his synagogues on Sunday. (10)

Ruskin assumed that it was mostly the middle classes, rich people, who went to church. It was this class who, with the connivance of the clergy, were exploiting the poor for their own gain, and all this was against Christ's teaching, although within the teaching of Adam Smith. Ruskin's invective was a sign of his mental deterioration as it became more wild while lacking the incisiveness of his earlier polemics.

Yet even in his anger he was happy to be constructive, for at the time he was trying to organize a society which contained elements of what the Church should contain. This was the Guild of St. George, which was to found a non-industrial society of working men and their families, financed by voluntary donations from the rich. When Ruskin first thought of this impractical society in 1871, he wanted to keep out all religion; but after his return from Venice in 1874 he partly changed his mind. The people of the Guild would be taught the two great commandments - of loving God and of loving one's neighbour. All work would be done 'in love of God and your neighbour, and in hatred of covetousness.' (11) However, the members of the Guild of St. George would not concern themselves with doctrine:

It is important that the accepted Companions should now understand that although in creed, I ask only so much consent as may include Christian, Jew, Turk, and Greek, - in conduct, the Society is to be regulated at least by the law of Christ. (12)

To aid this, children of the families working in this Utopia would be kept free from the wider world's corruption by being allowed to read only the few books which Ruskin felt to be most edifying, and forbidden the modern 'improving' children's books disliked by him. Most importantly, Ruskin hoped to institute a proper form of supervision and caring for all members of the community, a system which the Churches had obviously failed to provide.

The duty of the government, as regards the distribution of its work, is to attend first to the wants of the most necessitous. . . . It is the duty of . . . all bishops, to know thoroughly the numbers, means of subsistence, and modes of life of the poorest persons in the community, and to be sure that they at least are virtuous and comfortable. (13)

The duty of pastoral supervision would be carried out by the leaders of the Guild; in practical terms, Ruskin would take the advice of Jethro to Moses (14) to appoint 'able men, such as fear God, men of truth' (15) to supervise groups of thousands, hundreds and tens. Ruskin must have realized the enormous gap between theory and practice, between what he wanted and what the public thought of him, for he wrote, almost as a premonition:

You think I jest, still, do you? Anything but that; only if I took off the Harlequin's mask for a moment, you would say I was simply mad. Be it so, however, for this time. (16)

While Ruskin was attacking the Church, and drawing plans for his Guild, he was also struggling with his own faith, which had been renewed to some extent by his stay at Assisi.

It was strengthened in two positive ways. One of these ways was through his study of Giotto's paintings in Assisi during his stay there in 1874. 'I discovered a fallacy which had underlain all my art teaching . . . since the year 1858.' (17) 1858 had been the year of his 'unconversion', and after that event he had thought that 'Religious artists were weaker than Irreligious'. (18) The greatest artists, such as Turner, Tintoret (19), Titian and Veronese

stood, as heads of a great Worldly Army, worshippers of Worldly visible Truth, against (as it seemed then to me), and assuredly distinct from, another sacred army. (20)

This 'sacred army' bore the 'Rule of the Catholic Church in the strictest obedience' and so was in reality far from sacred. This Catholic Army,

headed by Cimabue, Giotto, and Angelico (were) worshippers not of a worldly and visible Truth, but of a visionary one, which they asserted to be higher. (21)

But Ruskin had believed these artists were self-deceived and at fault because of their Catholic loyalties, for

under the (as they asserted - supernatural) teaching of the Spirit of this Truth, (they were) doing less perfect work than their unassisted opposites! (22)

Ruskin's judgement was that artists not religiously motivated had greater and more sincere merits than more divinely inspired ones. This judgement influenced and was reinforced by Ruskin's 'unconversion'. He changed his mind again in 1874, while studying Giotto's paintings at Assisi, so reverting to his first, Evangelical attitude that religious artists could be as great as or greater than non-religious ones. He came to this conclusion, he claimed, (23) because he realized that Giotto's short-comings compared to other artists such as Titian were through lack of technical knowledge about such things as perspective, light and shade.

But I found he (Giotto) was in the make of him, and contents, a very much stronger and greater man than Titian; . . . that the Religion in him, instead of weakening, has solemnized and developed every faculty of his heart and hand. (24)

In this Fors of March 1877 Ruskin assumed that his art-criticism had lead to a change of faith, rather than the other way around. This was an outward rationale of what was in his mind during the 1870's,



when he was struggling towards a personal faith more traditionally Christian but still independent of the Church. He could use these early Italian painters as a reason or excuse for this new step of faith.

Ruskin believed that these early Italian artists portrayed a personal, individual faith of the Spirit, not a corporate faith through the Catholic Church. His own sense of faith led him to declare himself a Catholic, while denying that this Catholicism involved any belonging to a Church; he felt himself to be higher than and detached from any organized religion. He denied renewed rumours about his turning to Rome:

Don't be afraid that I am going to become a Roman Catholic, or that I am one, in disguise. I can no more become a Roman-Catholic, than again an Evangelical - Protestant. I am a "Catholic" of those Catholics, to whom the Catholic Epistle of St. James is addressed - "the Twelve Tribes which are scattered abroad". (25)

What might have fuelled this rumour was his long-standing friendship with Manning. Ruskin wrote to the Cardinal in 1878, a short time before his own mental break-down, reminding him that he (Ruskin) had said:

"No educated man could be a Christian, without also being a Catholic" - and yet, your Eminence's interpretation of that last would be - is - so much other (and so much narrower!) than mine, that I fear you are a long way yet from being able to rejoice over your "piece which was lost." (26)

Yet this toying (it was no more than this) with the idea of becoming a Roman Catholic had been in Ruskin's mind for a long while; he had thought about it in Assisi, and raised it, with of all people, Thomas Carlyle, on his return to England. Carlyle did not like Manning: 'Yon beggarly bag of wind' was his description of the Cardinal. 'I saying,' continued Ruskin in his Diary, 'that I felt greatly minded sometimes to join the Catholics . . . C. said "he would desire in such case rather to have me assassinated".' (27)

Some of Ruskin's pro-Catholicism, as he defined the word, was a reaction against his youthful and bigoted Protestantism, as he understood it. He increasingly felt that denominations fighting each other was a total waste of time and that the whole Catholic Church should be fighting against evil and poverty.

Ruskin had his ebbs and flows of faith, along with ebbs and flows of depression. In early 1875 he wrote: 'Read 45th Isaiah again, which strikes hard, for I have been striving with my Maker, this last month, sullenly.' (28) This referred to verse 9; 'Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! . . . Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?'

The next January Ruskin was 'wholly bewildered about this world and the next' (29), but a week later, unable to go to church, had a service at home: 'Y(esterday) a very happy Sunday . . . with sweet evening home service and music.' The weather also influenced his moods, and so he wrote about the same evening, 'but the day clouding over after music, remained black with bitter northeast wind, to end.' (30)

He worried about eternal life, for he answered Susan Beever,

How can you ever be sad, looking forward to eternal life with all whom you love, and God over all? It is only in so far as I lose hold of the hope, that anything is ever a trial to me. But I can't think how I'm to get on in a world with no Venice in it. (31)

He also wrote to her that God should still be thanked when 'He hurts me', as he often seemed to.

Worldly people say "Thank God" when they get what they want; as if it amused God to plague them, and was a vast piece of self-denial on His part to give them what they liked. . . . But I can't praise Him, because - I don't understand why. (32)

In this unstable part his life, mental comfort, if not spiritual conformity, came from Ruskin's understanding of and links with Rose

La Touche, now in the next world. Ruskin believed that he sensed the presence of Rose near him when he was staying at Broadlands a few months after her death in December 1875. The Cowper-Temples were still much involved in spiritualism, although Ruskin himself had ceased to have anything to do with seances since he wrote 'have done with "Mediums".' to Mrs. Cowper (as she then was) in 1868. (33) During this visit Ruskin had a heavy cold, and to his surprise, a medium called Mrs. Wagstaff, while in a trance, told him that the cold came from an acid stomach: 'the result of a long life of variously mismanaged digestion'. (34) Whatever the actual truth or otherwise of this medical diagnosis, a depressed and sick Ruskin, in a susceptible state of mind, was impressed. (35) This renewed respect for spiritualism and its contact with the spirit world increased during his stay with the Cowper-Temples. Mrs. Wagstaff and two other mediums told him about spiritualism.

A fourth medium, Mrs. Acworth, presented him with 'the most overwhelming evidence of the other state of the world that has ever come to me; and am this morning like a flint stone suddenly changed into a firefly, and ordered to flutter about - in a bramble thicket'. (36) Ruskin had asked her if she had seen any spirits lately: "Oh, yes, there was one close to you . . . last night. . . . Fair, very tall & graceful, - she was stooping down close over you, as if she were trying to say something". (37) Mrs. Acworth claimed that she had seen the spirit of Rose (who in her real life had sometimes stayed at Broadlands at the same time as Ruskin) a few days before, and had been told by that spirit that she (the spirit) had not been married. "I think", Mrs. Acworth concluded, "she has not been long in the spirit world - not a year perhaps". (38) George MacDonald visited Broadlands a few days later, and wrote to his wife that Mrs. Acworth 'has seen and described, without ever having seen her, Rose whispering to Mr Ruskin. He is convinced.' (39) Whether everybody else was convinced is uncertain, but the new contact with spiritualism gave Ruskin a more hopeful dimension to his beliefs, especially as it included the Spirit of Rose. Yet in his more rational moments and while writing to his sceptical atheist

friend, Norton, he realized that he could be wrong and might be making a fool of himself.

Here in England - Atheism & spiritualism mopping and mowing on each side of me. At Broadlands, either the most horrible lies were told me, without conceivable motive - or the ghost of R(ose) was seen often beside M<sup>rs</sup> Temple, or me - Which is pleasantest of these things - I know; - but cannot intellectually say which is likeliest and meantime take to geology. (40)

In the coming months, Ruskin romanticized Rose in his mind, thinking of her as a guardian angel to whom he could look for help. Although this way of thinking might be a common enough form of bereavement, in the mind of Ruskin, and a mind not at its most stable, this clinging to the memory of Rose took on artistic and religious dimensions. Also, being Ruskin, his thought processes led to pen being put to paper. The idealized Rose was closer to him in death than she had been in life. She was even finding books for him in the Oxford Library and pointing him to the correct Bible passages to read.

And, not by Fors now, except as angelic, I am today brought to look at the entry in Greek MS. of Gospels. . .  
. The Shield of Faith. 'Thy faith hath saved thee'. (41)

Ruskin had, under his emotional stress, changed the more general 'Fors' or 'fate' into a protective spiritual being, his angel Rose.

This angel Rose merged into another, new obsession of Ruskin's, St. Ursula, and led to some sort of emotional and spiritual vision during the Christmas and New Year of 1876-7, when Ruskin was again in Venice. (42) Ruskin had become fascinated, even besotted, by the painting of St. Ursula's Dream by Carpaccio. (43) The legend, with variations, of St. Ursula was that she had been promised in marriage by her father to a heathen king. She agreed, but only on the condition that before marriage she was allowed three years to make a pilgrimage to the holy places. While on this pilgrimage she and other young women travelling with her were murdered by pagans. Although Ruskin admitted that this story was almost certainly

mythical, St. Ursula and Rose became mingled in his mind as he drew parallels between Rose's self-imposed three-year wait before giving an answer to his proposal of marriage and Ursula's three year wait, and to the premature deaths of both women.

During the winter of 1876-7 Ruskin studied and copied Carpaccio's painting of St. Ursula's Dream, seeing in it the dead Rose, from whom he wanted some sort of sign, as he wrote to Joan in England. (44) At Christmas not one, but several signs appeared. One was from a friend, Lady Castletown (45) who brought Ruskin a dianthus plant whose name meant a flower of God, with a note; "from St. Ursula out of her bedroom window, with love". This referred to Carpaccio's painting, for in it was a dianthus signifying Ursula's holiness. Ruskin also received, more prosaically through the post, a sprig of vervain. This plant was also in one of Carpaccio's St. Ursula paintings, symbolizing domestic purity. Finally, Ruskin received a letter from Joan Severn which enclosed one from Mrs. La Touche to her. Ruskin interpreted these three events as being not chance nor coincidence, but, as he wrote to Joan:

a succession of helpful and sacred suggestions, presented so as to connect themselves with the best feelings and purpose of my life. (46)

The supernatural guidelines of Rose, or Fors, led the next day, Christmas, to a parcel of shells being sent by a friend. Unremarkable in themselves, Ruskin gave them symbolic importance because he had been drawing the same type of shells when Mr. La Touche had refused to let him see Rose in London in 1867, ten years earlier. 'This,' Ruskin concluded, 'was St. Ursula's order to forgive the Master. No other sign of him . . . could have been sent.' (47) As a result, he went to pray in St. Mark's Cathedral. Later that day he called on his gondolier and met his daughter. 'And of all the Madonnas I've ever seen, . . . this young mother beat!! - the very purest type of simple Venetian beauty at 18." (48) He had hoped to finish this momentous day at the Chapel of San Giorgio degli Schiavoni where he noticed yet more flowering vervain

in another Carpaccio painting. He wrote to Joan, ending the description of that Christmas:

"That's enough, little Bear (Ursula) for today," I said - "I can't take any more." So I knelt under the St. Jerome and returned thanks'. . . . Christmas day was done, and lesson ended. (49)

But other, less pleasant, events occurred that evening, for the powers of evil, rather than the powers of good, came to Ruskin. This was deliberate on the part of St. Ursula/Rose, because he was now ready 'to take any painful or ugly lesson she chooses, as well'. (50) Ruskin met a gondolier who seemed to be of the devil; 'a horrid monster with inflamed eyes, as red as coals - crying Barca, Barca - I turned away in great disgust'. (51) This man was opposed, in Ruskin's mind, to the Madonna-like young woman he had met earlier in the day. Finally he had the frightening experience of becoming lost twice in the evening fogs of Venice while travelling by gondola. At the time, in his diary, Ruskin did not make much sense of these events - he worked out the meanings in letters to Joan over the new year and in Fors letter 74. He wrote to Joan that the purpose of all these latter, bad events was to show that 'the virtue required was throughout Defiance and Resistance, - distrust and refusal, instead of trust and acceptance'. (52) The great use of the lessons

will be in their exhibition of the three spiritual powers, good, evil, and human, in entirely distinct action, the Will, and the reason of the Humanity called up to obey in the one case, to resist in the other; and acting, itself, by powers . . . given to it by God. (53)

However reasonably or otherwise Ruskin interpreted the events of that Christmas, they made him more cheerful and hopeful for a while. On Sunday, 7 January he wrote in his diary 'Just a fortnight since St. Ursula sent me her love; and she has helped me ever since, but I had a terrible fight with my piggish disbelief and with the devil's trials yesterday.' (54) But the previous day's entry did not refer to 'devil's trials', but to the fact that he was 'languid enough;

but yet things taught me, when I asked: the use of the collect chiefly, 'Unto whom all hearts be open'. ' (55) His mental and spiritual instability showed on the Monday when he wrote: 'my own faithlessness terrible, still.' (56) Another fortnight later he lamented that

The loss of all the good feeling I had in the first days of the year, connected as it is with little slips and failures in duty . . . is immensely deadly and humiliating. I take it for a hard bit of devil-fighting, and hope to be helped out it, for it's too strong for me, without help.' (57)

Yet in June, six months later, he was again more cheerful, giving Rose/St. Ursula the credit. 'Wonderfully better in spirit, and gaining strength, and given, by St. Ursula, five new Turners.' (58) St. Ursula even helped him physically. Ruskin had a tendency to hypochondria, his teeth and stomach often giving him trouble. 'St. Ursula has kept my poor little mouth for me better than ever I did myself.' (59) Joan Severn was naturally worried at these events and the state of her cousin's mind. Perhaps she discouraged Ruskin from thinking positively about these events (60), for in September 1877 he wrote 'am now nearly recovered from Venetian mischief' (61), which was a slightly pathetic end to a remarkable series of events and its interpretation. There was nothing hopeful in Ruskin's life to take the place of St. Ursula and his sense of Rose's looking after him. He only had his work which was becoming chaotic with all the calls made on his time and pen.

The last major reference to St. Ursula, and his last statement on his religious beliefs before his mental breakdown, were given in a lecture at Oxford in January 1878 when he went from the example of the faith of St. Ursula to a debate on faith and the truth of what is believed in. St. Ursula, he told his listeners, (62) waited for her death in perfect faith, although whether the faith was well-founded scarcely mattered. What did matter to Ruskin for this lecture was the effect that a faith had on an individual. Ruskin showed his audience a copy of Carpaccio's Death of St. Ursula.

'What truth there was in such faith I dare not say that I know; but what manner of human souls it made, you may for yourselves see.'

(63) Faith was a source of strength for St. Ursula and her fellow martyrs. But; 'you hear it openly said that this, their faith, was a foolish dream. Do you choose to find out whether it was or not?'

(64) Ruskin felt that if a person desired Christianity to be untrue, then that is the 'rational' conclusion he would reach. A better way to test the truth or falsity of a faith was to 'suppose that it is, or may be, true' (65), in which case 'we must attend to what it says of itself'. (66) On an assumption that what Christianity says of itself is true (an assumption Ruskin in his more stable periods would not have made) he came to the conclusion that any inquiry into the Christian faith involves adopting a way of behaviour. 'Do that first, and you shall know more.' (67) The only way of finding out the truth of Christianity was to take it on its own terms. 'You are called simply to be the servant of Christ, and of other men for His sake'. (68) Then the truth of faith will be shown. The way of non-faith leads to death, both in its internal logic and because 'God also tells us that in such refusal we shall die'. (69) Ruskin's whole argument was open to the serious criticism that doing right to other people would not necessarily lead to an acceptance of any Christian faith.

Regrettably, of course, many so-called Christians did not follow the course recommended by the Bible or by Ruskin. Such a person was content to sit 'himself, enjoying his muffin and Times, and contentedly allows the slaughter of fifty thousand men, so it be in the interests of England, and of his own stock on Exchange'. (70) This callous but comfortable behaviour, Ruskin compared unfavourably to Elijah destroying fifty prophets on Mount Carmel. (71)

Three months later Ruskin had his first mental breakdown and remained delirious for about six weeks. The immediate cause was ostensibly over-work and a sense of hopelessness at putting his projects into order. But there were other, deeper seated causes. One of them was his obsession with Rose and the mental breakdown



could have been in part delayed grief. As the recovering patient wrote to Norton afterwards;

I went crazy about St. Ursula and the other saints - chiefly young-lady saints: and I rather suppose had offended the less pretty Fors Atropos, - till she lost her temper. But the Doctors know nothing either of Ste Ursula or Ste Kate or Ste Lachesis - and not much else of anything worth knowing. (72)

The editor of these letters added: 'Throughout the illness Ruskin's ravings were fraught with references to St. Ursula and to Rose'. (73)

Another thread of Ruskin's life came to the surface in his attack of madness: his rejection or suppression, of his Evangelical upbringing. Ruskin described his attack as beginning when

I became powerfully impressed with the idea that the Devil was about to seize me, and I felt convinced that the only way to meet him was to remain awake waiting for him all through the night. . . . (So I) awaited the Evil One. (74)

Later that night;

As I put forth my hand towards the window a large black cat sprang forth from behind the mirror. Persuaded that the foul fiend was here at last in his own person, . . . I flung it with all my might and main against the floor. (75)

It was significant that in this mental breakdown Ruskin saw the devil as about to seize him. Brought up in an Evangelical family, he had been used to the concept of the Devil. He never lost his sense of right and wrong and much of his social writings were an indictment of the wrongs in society. But amongst all his uncertainties of faith, there was no concept in his theology for the person of the Devil or Satan, and even after his return from Italy in October 1874 and his consequent regaining of some sort of Christian faith, the devil was not in his thoughts. Only at Christmas in 1876, at Venice, did he see the devil, albeit disguised

as the ugly gondolier. His early childhood religious upbringing with its concept of the Devil could not be put away entirely and came closer to the surface as his mind deteriorated. The other pressures, mostly of work, put on him in early 1878 meant that his mental defence mechanism of repressing his childhood faith collapsed in his attack of madness. His mother's sowing was reaped by her son when 'I became powerfully impressed with the idea that the Devil was about to seize me'.

In the eleven years between 1878 and 1889 there were other, often more serious breakdowns, but Ruskin did some lecturing and writing with occasional flashes of the old genius, as in the lectures on The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century and in parts of The Bible of Amiens. At other times his writings lapsed into mere ramblings, and anyway, he said little new in this last decade. As he himself wrote when he was re-appointed Slade Professor in 1883: "It (is) desirable that I should re-state many of the principles for which I have so long contended". (1)

The year after his first mental breakdown, while he was at Brantwood a neighbouring Vicar prevailed upon the unwilling Ruskin to write a series of letters on the Lord's Prayer. Many of Ruskin's comments were a repetition of his old gospel of Christianity, how church people did not practise what was preached to them, and how clergy glossed over the fact of sin:

Could any subject be more vital to the purposes of your meetings than the difference between the present and the probable state of the Christian Church which would result, were it more the effort of zealous parish priests, instead of getting wicked poor people to come to church, to get wicked rich ones to stay out of it? (2)

The clergy themselves liked to take the privileges of being called a priest when it suited them, but they quit that description "whenever there is any good, hot scolding or unpleasant advice given them by the prophets." (3) In this letter, Ruskin was thinking of Malachi's diatribe against the temple priests. "I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. (4) Ruskin continued to portray the clergy and church-goers as people who prayed with little meaning on Sundays, while doing nothing during the other six days to reach the standard they professed on that Sunday. "Faithful prayer implies always correlative exertion", as he pointed out. (5)

And yet in these letters Ruskin tried to put forward a positive attitude to religion, perhaps out of regard for his clerical

readers. He wrote that "The pastor's duty (is) to prevent his flock from misunderstanding it" (the clause "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us"). (6) With his dislike of loans, interest and investments Ruskin preferred to translate "debita" by "debts" rather than "trespasses". He was in a difficult position over the clergy. He was very critical of them, as a profession, but also had quite a few clerical friends, who he felt were doing a reasonable job. Also these letters were to rather than about clergy, which dictated some politeness.

The letters of clergy commenting on Ruskin's letters reflected the different attitudes that there were towards him when he took to showing that profession how they should be pastors. Ruskin asked what a priest was: an answer of the most Catholic and traditional came back;

We are presbyters and deacons, deriving our authority from the episcopate, who themselves form links in that spiritual chain which binds both ourselves and them, by perpetual succession . . . with the Apostles, and to whom has been committed the office of consecrating and sending forth labourers to work in the Lord's vineyard. (7)

The job of a priest, this traditional cleric believed, was to teach faithfully the doctrines of the Church of England, and Ruskin had no more right to ask what a clergyman's business was than he had the right to ask that question of a doctor or a lawyer. (8) This response to Ruskin's letters showed the lack of understanding between the sections of the Church which emphasized a priestly function for clergy and Ruskin's desire that the function of clergy was to provide a social and pastoral lead.

Another cleric approved of what Ruskin said about the role of the clergy, declaring him to be the equal of F.D. Maurice. "It is most refreshing to find two such teachers in accord; and probably there will be many who will learn from Mr. Ruskin what they never would have learnt . . . from Mr. Maurice. (9) Perhaps the the Rev. Henry

A.T. Davidson did not realize that Ruskin and Maurice had fallen out many years before.

The clergy had some grounds for criticizing Ruskin's understanding of the theology of the Church of England. (10) When Ruskin wrote about the basis of faith for the Church, he suggested that the Gospel of Christ could perhaps be "gathered out of Thirty-nine Articles", (11) though he felt that there should be a better vehicle than these for the "plain man" to understand the basics of the faith. A clergyman wrote that the relationship between the Gospel and the Thirty-nine Articles could "only be equalled by a supposition that a treatise on military tactics is embodied in the Articles of War". (12) In his fifth letter Ruskin entered the theological debate about forgiveness of sins. He was interpreted by some to claim that salvation comes through the Son and not the Father, for he wrote that people 'are to be thankful, not to the Father, but to the Son' (13) for deliverance from Satan. Although parodying Evangelical doctrine, he was taken seriously by some readers and even accused of reverting to his childhood Evangelical faith. Ruskin was still not well when he wrote the letters and was sometimes careless in how he expressed himself. Here he had, maybe unwittingly, entered the more arcane theological questions of the relative roles of the Father and of the Son in salvation.

The next year, at the request of Rev. F.A. Malleon, Ruskin wrote an explanation or justification of the letters in which he mostly reinforced what he had originally written, but also added that the Church's liturgy had declined since medieval times. (14) He felt this because his latest enthusiasms were two medieval missals, one from St. Chappelle written for St. Louis and another one of the same date written for the Lincoln Diocese.

In his other published works at this time Ruskin continued the same grumbling tone against the church, while still trying to sort out his faith and its contradictions. Thus, in The Bible of Amiens he wrote that "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" was a "precept

which Christians now-a-days are perfectly ready to obey, if it is somebody else who has been injured". (15) He linked this with "the difficulty in such cases (which) is usually to get them to think of the injury even while the Sun rises on their wrath". (16) In this he was thinking of the injuries done to people like coal-miners. He held St. Martin as an example of a good Christian because he did not proselytise or cause trouble to others for his faith, even enjoying his wine and good company. "St. Martin teazes nobody, . . . understands . . . that undipped people may be as good as dipped if their hearts are clean; helps, forgives and cheers". (17) This is an echo of a remark he wrote many years before that early Christians were martyred not so much for their faith as for their incivility.

He touched upon the theological matter of Christ's sacrifice, which had previously been mentioned in the fifth letter to the clergy. In The Art of England he wrote that although he did not agree with any Evangelical Preacher who taught the "doctrine of vicarious Sacrifice", (18) yet he approved of the necessity of sacrifice in everyday life:

That is the final doctrine . . . not of Christianity only, . . . - Have I a religion, have I a country, have I a love, that I am ready to die for? (19)

Ruskin seemed to be more certain in his public writings about life after death. Dinah Birch writes that:

The death of Rose had driven him into an acceptance of the doctrine of Resurrection and had intensified his conviction of personality in the spiritual government of the world. (20)

She is correct in the end result, but over-simplifies the causes for Ruskin's coming again to a belief in a personal resurrection. There were more causes than a sense of Rose's presence. Thus in The Art of England he believed that future life rewarded present pains:

For all human loss and pain, there is no comfort, no interpretation worth a thought, except only in the doctrine of the Resurrection; of which doctrine, remember, it is an immutable historical fact that all the

beautiful work, and all the happy existence of mankind, hitherto, has depended on, or consisted in, the hope of it. (21)

Ruskin felt that as Christianity taught that this life contains misery to be endured patiently there must be a better life for those who suffer in this one.

He became interested again in the history of religion and in the lectures The Pleasures of England, he saw the Greek and the Christian civilizations as one continuum. The classical Golden Century began a process which continued into the nineteenth century. To show the links between these two eras, he made confused assumptions about different myths and religions, which reflected the confusion of his mind. Thus Sophia, a mythical Christian saint was "the shade of the Greek Athena, passing into the 'Wisdom' of the Jewish Proverbs and Psalms, and the Apocryphal 'Wisdom of Solomon'" - as Ruskin put it. (22) As proof of this he stated that Athena was to be found in the arches of a Norman church at Iffley. (23) This tendency to syncretism led him to link together several mythical references to lions. The Nemean lion killed by Hercules was identified with the lion of Judah, the lions of St. Mark and St. Jerome and on to Christ's resurrection. "Now here is the Christian change of the Heracleian conquest of Death into Christ's Resurrection. (24)

His only really new idea after the 1878 breakdown appeared in The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century, which were lectures delivered in 1884. He firmly linked the state of the weather with moral degeneracy. Throughout his life, Ruskin took close note of weather patterns. He believed from his observations that industrial processes and pollution were harming the environment and the skies; all this being the result of moral degeneracy and greed. He used Scriptures to justify these observations; "The light shall be darkened in the heavens therof, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." (25) To Ruskin moral degeneracy and the evils of industry

went together. "For the last twenty years, England, and all foreign nations, . . . have blasphemed the name of God deliberately and openly". (26) He later defined blasphemy as "'Harmful speaking' - not against God only, but against man, and against all the good works and purposes of Nature". (27) Blasphemy was a facet, a result, of the modern scientific mind. "The universal instinct of blasphemy in the modern vulgar scientific mind is above all manifested in its love of what is ugly, and natural enthralment by the abominable". (28) The antidote to blasphemy, the spoiling of man and nature, was for man to

know that his only true happiness is to live in Hope of something to be won by him, in Reverence of something to be worshipped by him, and in Love of something to be cherished by him, and cherished - for ever. (29)

In his private correspondence, Ruskin's religious ambivalence and doubts were more apparent. His inner uncertainties could also be seen in the last letters of Fors Clavigera, where he sometimes wrote in a more discursive style than would have been appropriate in his published lectures and other formal writings. Sometimes he acknowledged an almost traditional faith by showing the positive side of Christianity and the Church. In the Fors letter of February 1878, he wrote:

I . . . write as a Christian to Christians; that is to say, to persons who rejoice in the hope of a literal, personal, perpetual life, with a literal, personal, and eternal God. (30)

Yet earlier in the same letter he had written that he would not

retract the assertion, so often made in my former works, that human probity and virtue are indeed independent of any hope in futurity; and that it is precisely in accepting death as the end of all, . . . that the hero and the patriot of all time has become the glory and safety of his country. (31)

Then in a later letter, he felt that

As a Christian, I believe prayer to be, in the last sense, sufficient for the salvation of the town; and



drainage, in the last sense, insufficient for its salvation. (32)

In his diary he took up again his habit of writing the names of the saints for the appropriate day. On All Saints' Day he wrote;

I find my little English Calendar, quite precious for this month - so much to made out in it. . . . It seems like getting a word from them!(various saints). (33)

While thinking about any future life, he claimed not to fear judgement for his friends, nor, it seemed, for himself. He wrote to his old friend George Richmond on the death of Mrs. Richmond in January 1881:

Men say the time is near - a day is near, at least, of such trial of the spirits of all flesh as may well be called one of Judgement. I thank God that I am able still . . . to be thankful beside the places of rest of those whom I have loved, to whom Christ has said; "Arise, thou, my fair one - and come away". (34)

Through the jumble of words in the letter comes the feeling that future life was to be welcomed as the next step after death. Judgement there would be, but also salvation in the "day of Restoration". (35)

He enjoyed - as he so often did in his life - reading the Bible. So he was pleasantly surprised at working out for the first time Galatians 1.10:

For do I (Paul) now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

His explanation in the Diary does not seem to make clearer an already clear passage of Paul's writings. But he was pleased with himself at understanding Paul to mean: "Do I now persuade men, or God - namely - is it I, or God who appeals to you?" (36)

In 1881 he gave a Christmas party for all the children of Coniston. In front of the children he proclaimed an orthodoxy that would have seemed strange to the girls of Wimington School. The address that he gave was of total religious propriety with Ruskin accepting the biblical Christmas stories at their face value. He quoted a Sankey and Moody hymn with approval, saying; "It is right we should be punished for the sins which we have done; but God loves us, and wishes to be kind to us, and to help us, that we may not wilfully sin." (37) The most traditional of clergy could have given that address.

And yet at the same time, another part of Ruskin was debating against this viewpoint of religion that he seemed to be holding. In the year of his Christmas address of January 1881, he laughed at himself for starting family prayers at Brantwood. His second mental breakdown soon after was "brought on by my beginning family prayers again for the servants on New Year's Day - and writing two little collects every morning." (38)

At this time he wanted to continue to his affirm his 'heathenism' and complain about his lack of faith. In the same Fors letter in which he spoke as a Christian, he also claimed: "I am myself so nearly as you are, - so grievously faithless to less than the least grain of - Colman's - mustard, that I can take up no serpents, and raise no dead." (39)

Sometimes he did not believe in the resurrection, or at least was as sceptical as he felt everyone else was about this matter. He wrote to Miss Acland (the daughter of Sir Henry Acland) on the death of one of her friends:

I should be no less crushed than you, if my entire life were not now in the Shadow of Death. I have seen these last twenty years that no one really believes in the Resurrection. Why . . . should you be thankful for being "spared" if you did? Ought you not rather to be sorry that God passes you by? (40)

He took no pleasure in reading the Bible:

Among other sadnesses and weaknesses of this bad time, I find so much of the Bible, of old read with pleasure for their mystery, now useless. All Obadiah and Jonah as nothing; the first ch(apter) of Micah a mere rattle of words. (41)

Church worship was, as so often, irksome to him. A bout of bad weather do doubt aided him to write in his diary that

My mind gets lower as I grow old. I never felt church service so empty for myself as I did yesterday. But it was very empty for other people, too. (42)

During the last journey abroad that he made in 1888 he wrote to Joan:

As for the first time in my life, I'm travelling without a Bible could you find and send me (one) . . . and you might as well send with it a small . . . prayer book. (43)

Almost the last entry in his diary, in September while in Italy was; "I don't know what is going to become of me." (44) What became of him was that he soon relapsed into almost total apathy and all the questions he asked of religion, and of so many other spheres of life, became as nothing.

Norton once complained that Ruskin dissipated his great talents on too many projects.

I do fear that you work always too hard, & on too many things. I wish you could rest. . . . Like a revolving light you shine first toward the religious east, then toward the artistic south, then toward the political west, and last toward the cold North of science. (1)

Just before his his first mental breakdown, Ruskin's desk was a litter of different projects started, but only half finished. These two symbolize in some ways not only Ruskin's whole life, but also the problems of those who study his work in making a unity of the different interests.

Ruskin has been rightly claimed as one of the great thinkers of the nineteenth century. His interests were so wide and he brought one topic to bear on an another in such a way that he was unable to concentrate entirely on any one theme. This was both a strength and a weakness. Religion was, in some ways, only one interest, illustrating and being illustrated by others.

But in another way religion was different from other preoccupations, for it was not merely one among many, but the one which underpinned the others, and through which those others were held in dialogue. Ruskin did not always want religion to be at the front of his life; at his unconversion he tried to turn his back on the whole business. Yet even in that rejection, his lack faith was central to him. Wherever he turned, whatever topic he addressed himself to, he saw it, at least partly, through his own religious or anti-religious stand. Art and the study of nature was to make clear God's work of creation, as is found in the first volumes of Modern Painters. The social problems of the day would be solved by people acting as Jess commanded, even if against the ethos of the contemporary Church as he proclaimed in Fors Clavigera. His love for Rose was troubled

partly because of her faith and his 'heathenism'. His madness presented itself as the devil in the form of a black cat coming to attack him. His relationship with his mother was at least partly his trying to escape her Evangelical faith. His geological studies as a young man helped to undermine his Evangelical faith, with the geological hammers hammering in his brain as he learnt at Oxford. His love of Gothic could never be fully reconciled with the anti-Catholicism which he was taught, but never fully accepted, for his controversy against Pugin was the controversy of the opposites within himself.

All these things can be seen as negatives - a restless mind of great knowledge and brilliance never coming to terms with itself, its world and its faith. Yet there were great positives for Ruskin and his readers; for he was not, at heart, a negative personality.

First, he had the desire to see God's handiwork in nature, God's second book. Whatever the validity or otherwise of the proof of God through creation, the 'first mover', or 'Paley's watch', Ruskin reflected the common, often unspoken, sense of awe and the divine that mankind has in the face of nature.

The second positive was Ruskin's deep learning, understanding and love of the Scriptures. It is easy to forget how much he read and retained.

Thirdly, there was the importance that Ruskin attached to an ethic or way of life based on the teachings of Jesus. Christ's social gospel Ruskin never doubted, no matter how much he doubted the motives and behaviour of members of the Christian Churches in his contemporary society.

Following this was the fourth positive of his highlighting the hypocrisy that undoubtedly did exist in the established Church. Many clergy must have felt uncomfortable at the truths they read about themselves. Lastly, there was the positive aspect of his

desire to educate and improve. This included teaching a better understanding of what the Bible actually meant (as interpreted by Ruskin), and what was the will of God. Whether the working men to whom Ruskin theoretically addressed Fors Clavigera actually read or understood the letters or agreed with his social message; whether the girls of Warrington and elsewhere understood or accepted the role he wanted them to play; whether the leading industrialists appreciated his attempts to reform their outlook, cannot be known. But Ruskin had a desire to teach, educate and improve.

He never could, quite, abandon his Christian faith, no matter how much he claimed that he did. He could not abandon the Bible, no matter how much he doubted its literal truth or how much he felt others were misusing it. He never, even, completely abandoned organized religion, no matter how he despised and railed against the clergy and church people. Perhaps, in his last years, during and after his first mental breakdown, his inner contradictions became too great. He could only reconcile them by the anodyne Praeterita and his final silence.

There is a children's game, in which one hits a ball on the end of strong elastic which in its turn is attached to an anchor. The ball can never leave that anchor. Such was Ruskin's life and his Christianity. No matter how hard he, or others, or Fors knocked his Christianity, no matter how hard he himself tried to cut the elastic, no matter how far he strayed from the anchor given to him by his parents, especially his mother, in his childhood, he could not break free from this Christian anchor. From his 'unconversion' until the death of Rose and his stay in Italy, he was perhaps furthest from any religion, whether depressed or working with enjoyment. But even then, he was never free from his heritage.

There is another analogy. George Eliot wrote, in Middlemarch,

Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of

illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. (2)

John Ruskin's interests were so wide (to the despair of at least one of his friends), and his personal life so chaotic on occasions, that it is very difficult to see a coherent pattern. 'Little suns' can be made of his sensitivity to art and to nature, his feelings towards women, his social concern, his relationship with his parents, his wish to air his views in public and so on. One 'little sun' that has been partly ignored by the late twentieth-century students of his work (perhaps because religion is no longer important in our society) is his faith, even when he was reacting against it. To make 'a little sun' of his Christian up-bringing and religious struggles can give a form or pattern to make the life and writings of one of the greatest thinkers of the nineteenth century a little better understood.

## REFERENCES: ABBREVIATIONS

I have used the following abbreviations for the books which have been most used for reference. I have followed John Dixon Hunt's method of using references for Cook and Wedderburn's Complete Works.

Diary

Joan Evans and John Howard Whitehouse, Eds., The Diaries of John Ruskin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

Carlyle

George Allan Cato, Ed., The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin (California: Stanford University Press, 1982).

Norton

John Bradley and Ian Ousby, The Correspondence of John Ruskin and Charles Eliot Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Rose

Van Akin Burd, John Ruskin and Rose La Touche (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

Spiritualists

Van Akin Burd, Ruskin, Lady Mount-Temple and the Spiritualists (London: Brentham Press, 1982).

Wider Sea

John Dixon Hunt, The Wider Sea; A Life of John Ruskin (New York: Viking Press, 1982).

Winnington

Van Akin Burd, Ed., The Winnington Letters (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969).



## REFERENCES: ABBREVIATIONS

Works

E.T.Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, The Works of John Ruskin  
(London: George Allen, 1909).

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John Dixon Hunt wrote as follows;

'It is . . . likely that readers will own other editions of separate works, and need to know the titles signalled by a volume number, (so) I summarize below the main contents of the most important volumes in the Library Edition' (i.e. Cook & Wedderburn, Eds.).

1. The Poetry of Architecture and other early prose.
2. Poetry.
- 3-7. Modern Painters.
8. The Seven Lamps of Architecture.
- 9-11. The Stones of Venice.
12. Lectures on Architecture and Painting.
14. Academy Notes.,
16. A Joy for Ever; The Two Paths.
17. Unto This Last; Munera Pulveris, Time and Tide.
18. Sesame and Lilies; The Ethics of the Dust,  
The Crown of Wild Olive.
19. The Cestus of Agalaia; The Queen of the Air
20. Early lectures as Slade Professor, 1870s.
21. Ruskin School at Oxford.
25. Proserpina.
26. Deucalion.
- 27-29. Fors Clavigera.
30. Guild of St. George.
35. Praeterita.
- 36-37. Letters.

CHAPTER 1

1. 1 Samuel 1.11.
2. Works, Vol.35, p.40.
3. Ibid., p.128.
4. Ibid., p.26.
5. Ibid., p.130.
6. Works, Vol.5, p.366.
7. Ibid., p.366.
8. Works, Vol.35, p.14. Ruskin kept this gift of learning by heart for all his life.
9. e.g. Deuteronomy, Chapter 28.
10. Works, Vol.35, p.14.
11. Works, Vol.5, p.344.
12. John D. Rosenberg, The Darkening Glass (New York, 1961), pp.110ff.
13. Works, Vol.1, pp.358,9.
14. David Cox Hanson, Ruskin and the Protestant Beholding (University of Chicago, Ph.D. Thesis 1988), p.74.
15. James S. Dearden, John Ruskin's Camberwell (St. Alban's: Brentham Press, 1990), p. 27.
16. Anthony Symondson, Ed., The Victorian Crisis of Faith (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), p.51. This is from the essay Evangelicalism and the Victorians by Geoffrey Best.
17. Works, Vol.35, pp.71,2. The Rev'd. Edward Andrews (d.1841), an Evangelical Congregationalist, was the minister at Beresford Chapel.
18. Diary, p.259.
19. Works, Vol.35, p.25.
20. Works, Vol. 1, pp.391-3. Dr. Thomas Dale (1797-1870) became the Vicar of St. Matthew's Chapel, Denmark Hill in 1830. In 1836 his life became a mixture of university lecturing and holding incumbencies. According to the D.N.B. he was a "high church evangelical".

CHAPTER 1

21. Works, Vol.1, p.433.

22. Ibid., p.532.

CHAPTER 2

1. Works, Vol.35, pp.189,90.
2. Henry Acland (1815-1900), who was a year senior to Ruskin, became a life-long friend to the latter. He was the Radcliffe librarian for over forty years, encouraging the study of the natural sciences and medicines and becoming an authority on cholera and public health.
3. Diary, p.124.
4. Patrick Connor, The Savage Ruskin (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.17.
5. Works, Vol.1, p.390.
6. Diary, p.212.
7. Works, Vol.1, p.465.
8. The Rev'd. Osborne Gordon (1813-1883), censor at Christ Church and Reader in Greek. In 1839 he became Ruskin's private tutor.
9. Works, Vol.29, p.92.
10. The Rev'd. William Buckland (1784-1856). In 1819 he became Reader in Geology at Oxford. His inaugural address dealt with the relationship between geology and religion. He organized the Oxford Geological Museum, but in 1845 left academic life to become Dean of Westminster.
11. Genesis 1.1.
12. The Rev'd. Edward Clayton (c.1817-1895) was two years senior to John Ruskin at Oxford.
13. Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875) was a pupil of William Buckland. His chief work was Principles of Geology (1830-4) in three volumes.
14. Works, Vol.1, pp. 475,6.
15. Ibid., pp.476,7.
16. Ibid.; p.484.
17. Ibid., p.480.
18. Ibid., p.478.
19. Ibid., p.478.
20. Ibid., pp.485,6.

CHAPTER 2

21. Geoffrey Rowell, Hell and the Victorians (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p.1. The quotation is from O. Shipley, The Church and the World, 1866.
22. Ibid., p.117. Rowell quotes from Essays and Reviews, 1860, pp.205,6.
23. Works, Vol.1, p.435.
24. Ibid., p.459. The quotation is Luke 20.35.
25. Ibid., pp.377-8.
26. Diary, p.116.
27. Ibid., p.131.
28. Works, Vol.1, p.532.
29. Diary, p.181.
30. Works, Vol.1, p.346.
31. Ibid., pp.397-8.
32. Ibid., pp.395,6.
33. Ibid., p.397

CHAPTER 3

1. Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) became the greatest British landscape painter of the nineteenth century, in spite of a poor background, and very limited education. Ruskin admired him from an early age, and became a friend. Though eventually they quarrelled, Ruskin was an executor of Turner's will.

2. Works, Vol.8, p.3.

3. He still read the Bible regularly, though sometimes the studies were somewhat arid. Thus, in 1842 he delved into all the references about Edom, Diary, p.225. In 1849 he wrote; 'Consider the full force of Daniel II. 37,38 ('over the beasts of the field and fowls of heaven'), comparing with IV.21. Comp. with other passages already quoted Lam. III.38.' Diary, p.439.

4. John D. Rosenberg, The Darkening Glass (New York, 1961), p.7.

5. Works, Vol.7. p. 9.

6. Works, Vol.3, p.141.

7. Ibid., p.48.

8. Works, Vol.4, pp.79,81

9. Ibid., p.128, 1 John 1, 5.

10. Ibid., p.128.

11. Ibid., p.64.

12. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was a French-Swiss writer and philosopher. He extolled the virtues of the 'noble savage', nature and reason. In his philosophy he reacted against the catholicism in which he was raised.

13. William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was the co-author, with S.T. Coleridge, of Lyrical Ballads which emphasized a mystical union with nature. At this time his religious faith was bound up with his attitude to nature. In later years he became a supporter of more traditional Christianity.

14. Ernest Hunter Wright, The Meaning of Rousseau (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963) p.125.

15. Ibid., p.127.

16. Ibid., p.145.

17. Robert Rhodes & Del Ivan Janik, Eds., Studies in Ruskin (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1982), p. 65.

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18. Ibid., p.64.
19. Basil Willey, The Eighteenth-Century Background (London: Chatto & Windus, 1940), p.272.
20. Ibid., p.272.
21. Stephen Prickett, Romanticism and Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.83.
22. Ed., E. de Selincourt, The Prelude by William Wordsworth (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1926), p.25, lines 401-4.
23. Prickett, Romanticism and Religion, p.81.
24. Eds., E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, Volume 4 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1947), page 11, from Composed Upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty, the beginning of Part 2.
25. Works, Vol.3, pp.44,5. Ruskin quoted from Luke 8.15.
26. A.E.Taylor, Plato, The Man and His Works (London: Methuen, 1960),p. 289.
27. Ibid., p.289.
28. John D. Rosenberg, The Darkening Glass (New York, 1961), p.20. For Ruskin, this pilfering might not have been altogether unconscious.
29. Diary, p.322.
30. Works, Vol.3, pp.44,5. Unfortunately for Ruskin, his artistic hero, Turner, was not a particularly Christian person, and did not see himself in any way as revealing or describing any Divine Beauty.
31. Works, Vol.4, p.210.
32. Pietro Perugino (?1446-1523) Italian Painter, one of whose pupils was Raphael.
33. Works, Vol.4, p.212.
34. Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). He was a Flemish artist who painted many religious, mythical and secular subjects. His versatility and often hurried technique made him appear an artist without spiritual depth.

CHAPTER 3

35. Titian (c.1490-1576) was a Venetian painter, perhaps the greatest of the Italian School. He used religious and mythical subjects, as well as being a portrait painter.
36. Works, Vol.4, pp.212,3.
37. J.L.Bradley, Ed., Ruskin: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 81. This is quoted from an article in The Foreign Quarterly Review, Vol.37, July 1846, pp.380-416.
38. Works, Vol.4, p.329.
39. Ibid., p.318.
40. Works, Vol.3, p.111.
41. Ibid., p.136.
42. Ephesians 4. 18,19.
43. Works, Vol.4, p.49
44. Perhaps also there is in this passage a hint of Ruskin's sexual uncertainties towards women. He felt that certain art is appreciated at the level of 'lust', but, wanting to avoid these feelings in himself, he spiritualized that art.
45. Kenneth Clark, The Gothic Revival (London: Constable, 1950), p. 126.
46. Augustus Welby Pugin (1812-1852), the architect and designer who pioneered the Gothic Revival. He believed that true Christian architecture must be Gothic and that all other styles were pagan.
47. Clark, Gothic Revival, p.202. .
48. Ibid., p.185.
49. Ruskin was one of the first people to campaign against the destruction of paintings and buildings in Venice, drawing and taking photos to keep a record of what he expected to be lost.
50. Works, Vol.8, p.45.
51. Ibid., p.41, note 3.
52. 2 Samuel 24. 24.
53. Works, Vol.8, pp.37,8.



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54. Ibid., pp. 267,8. In later editions, Ruskin deleted the section which he felt was 'a vulgar attack on Roman Catholicism'.
55. Ibid., p.44.
56. Bradley, Critical Heritage, pp.113,4. This is quoted from J.M. Capes in The Rambler, Vol.4, July 1849, pp.193-201. J.M.Capes was a Catholic apologist.
57. Ibid., p.78, from the article in The Foreign Quarterly Review.
58. Works, Vol.4, pp.28,9.

CHAPTER 4

1. Works, Vol.9, p.21.
2. Ibid., p.23.
3. Ibid., p.35. Constantine the Great (c.288-337) was Roman Emperor from 306. He was baptized at some time in his life and made Christianity the official state religion.
4. Ibid., p.35.
5. Works, Vol.10, p.20.
6. Ibid., p.21.
7. Ibid., p.21. 2 Corinthians 4.9.
8. Ibid., p.138.
9. Ibid., p.141, Genesis 18.19.
10. Works, Vol.11, p.146.
11. Ibid., p.85.
12. Ibid., p.88.
13. Ibid., p.113. They reigned between 1658 and 1700.
14. Ibid., p.114.
15. Ruskin did not consider whether this change of attitude to death was independent of or because of the Renaissance and classical learning. He simply tended to think that after the Gothic period all things were bad and were caused by the change in the intellectual and religious climate.
16. Works, Vol. 11, pp.109,110.
17. Ibid., p.111.
18. Works, Vol.9, p.27.
19. Clement V (1264-1314) was Pope from 1305. He was responsible for moving the Papacy to Avignon.
20. Works, Vol.9, p.24.
21. Ibid., pp.24,5. Enrico Dandolo (c.1110-1205) was the founder of Venetian power. He took part in the Fourth Crusade, when Zara was captured.

CHAPTER 4

22. Works, Vol. 11, p.195.
23. Works, Vol. 10, pp.91,2.
24. Ruskin spent much time and effort in trying to educate the British and Italian people about the importance of conservation in Venice.
25. Raphael (1483-1520) was one of the most important Italian painters. He bridged the old religious style and the new neo-classical.
26. Michelangelo (1475-1564). Like Raphael, Michelangelo bridged the new and old styles, and he is perhaps the greatest of the Renaissance artists.
27. Works, Vol.11, p.70
28. Ibid., p.131.
29. Carlo Dolci (1616-1686), an Italian painter, veered towards the sentimental.
30. Guercino (1591-1666) was an Italian historical painter.
31. Benjamin West (1738-1820) was born in the U.S.A. but settled in England. President of the Royal Academy, he painted The Death of Wolfe.
32. John Martin (1789-1854). He depicted massive, overbearing landscapes contrasted to the smallness of man.
33. Works, Vol.10, p.125.
34. Ibid., p.126. Salvator Rosa (1615-73) was an Italian painter who specialized in wild and savage scenes, designated 'picturesque'.
35. Works, Vol.11, p.66.
36. Ibid., p.66.
37. Ibid., p.68. Job 42. 1-6.
38. Ibid., p.70.
39. Ruskin, of course, never had to earn his living and never drew a day's wage.
40. Works, Vol.11, p.63.
41. Ibid., p.129.

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42. Ibid., p.129.
43. Ibid., p.124.
44. Works, Vol.10. p.89.
45. Works, Vol.9, pp.45,6.
46. Works, Vol.11, p.123.
47. Ibid., p.127.
48. Ibid., p.132.

CHAPTER 5

1. Works, Vol.35, pp.495,6.
2. Consequent to this title, Ruskin had complaints from some border shepherds who had taken the title too literally.
3. Works, Vol.12, p.526.
4. Ibid., p.529.
5. Ibid., p.530.
6. Anthony Symondson, Ed., The Victorian Crisis of Faith (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), p.110. This is from the essay by R.C.D. Jasper, The Prayer Book in the Victorian Era.
7. Works, Vol.12, p.538. The quotation is from the Mattins and Evensong Prayer of Absolution.
8. Acts 14.23.
9. Works, Vol.12, pp.537,8.
10. Ibid., p.555.
11. Ibid., p.558.
12. Ibid., p.525, Ephesians 5.27.
13. Ibid., p.525, Acts 13.1.
14. Ibid., p.526.
15. Ibid., p.533.
16. Ibid., p.551, Note. 2 Timothy 2.25.
17. Ibid., p.551, Note. Titus 2.15.
18. Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872). He had to resign from being Professor of Theology at London University because he denied the doctrine of eternal punishment. He then allied himself with the Christian Socialists.
19. Works, Vol.12, p.567, Matthew 7.1.
20. Ibid., p.567. See 1 Corinthians 5. 9,13.
21. Geoffrey Rowell, Hell and the Victorians (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p.81. The quotation is from Maurice's Theological Essays (Cambridge, 1854), p.433.
22. Works, Vol.12, p.lxxvi, Introduction.

CHAPTER 5

23. George Gorham (1787-1857). The controversy arose when he was appointed Vicar of Brampford Speke in 1847.
24. Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, Part 1 (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), p.254.
25. Works, Vol.12, p.574.
26. Ibid., p.577.
27. Ibid., p.577.
28. Matthew 7.16.
29. Works, Vol.12, p.584, Matthew 5.13.
30. Ibid., p.584, Luke 8.13.
31. Ibid., p.584.
32. Ibid., p.589.
33. Ibid., p.589.
34. Works, Vol.16, later published under the title A Joy for Ever.

CHAPTER 6

1. Tim Hilton, John Ruskin; The Early Years (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985), p.254.
2. Works, Vol.36, p.115.
3. Diary, p.389.
4. Mr. Oldfield was the father of Edmund Oldfield, a friend from school-days, and who later founded the Arundel Society with Ruskin and others.
5. Diary, p.370.
6. Mary Lutyens, Millais and the Ruskins (London: John Murray, 1967), p.156. This was in a letter to her parents just before the separation. Almost all the correspondence quoted in this book is in the Bowerswell Papers, Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York. 'Bowerswell' was the name of the Gray's home.
7. Hilton, Early Years, p.115.
8. Quoted by Lutyens, Millais and Ruskins, p.17, from a letter to her parents.
9. Diary, p.442.
10. Virginia Surtees, ed., Sublime & Instructive (London: Michael Joseph, 1972), pp.16-8. Louisa, Marchioness of Waterford (1818-1891) was an amateur artist who knew Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites.
11. Luke 24.28.
12. Surtees, Sublime & Instructive, p.17.
13. Diary, pp.465,6.
14. Ibid, p.465.
15. Ibid., p.383.
16. At great expense and while John James was complaining to Effie's father about his daughter's high expenditure in house-keeping.
17. William Russell (b. 1818).
18. Hilton, Early Years, p.169. Lord Feilding was the eldest son of the Earl of Denbeigh.
19. Lutyens, Millais and the Ruskins, p.16.
20. Ibid., p.20.

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21. Ibid., p.20.
22. Ibid., p.17. Manning, already a Roman Catholic, stayed at Rome for three years.
23. Ibid., pp.109,10, footnote.
24. Ibid., p.194. Effie was using the word 'Jesuit' with two meanings - a member of the religious order and one who was well versed and argumentative in religion.
25. Diary, pp.497,8.
26. Ibid., p.500.
27. Anna Blunden (1829-1915), although impecunious, was determined to become an artist, which she did with some success. She fancied herself in love with Ruskin, much to his irritation.
28. Surtees, Sublime & Instructive, p.93.
29. Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) was a Baptist minister and perhaps the greatest revivalist preacher of his day. He founded and was minister of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.
30. Works, Vol.36, pp.275,6.
31. Works, Vol.34, p.659.
32. Hilton, Early Years, p.203.
33. Ibid., p.262.
34. Robert Browning (1812-1889) was a poet and man of letters whose poetry was not fully recognized in his life time.  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) was the wife of the above. One of the leading poetesses in the English language.
35. Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) was seen to embody Victorian poetry. He became Poet Laureate in 1850.
36. Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), historian and social critic. He much influenced Ruskin, who saw him as a father-figure. The two men had very similar views about the state of society.
37. Rose La Touche (1848-1875) was the daughter of an Irish Protestant landowner. At the age of ten she had drawing lessons with Ruskin, who fell in love with her when she was a teenager.
38. But not alone, for he took his Swiss guide Couttet and his valet with him.



CHAPTER 6

39. Ruskin emphasized 'turning points', as when in The Stones of Venice he dated the beginning of the decline of that city exactly at the death of Moro in 1418. In The Seven Lamps of Architecture the perfection of Gothic and at the same moment the start of its decline was at the point when the Gothic window achieved a perfect balance between glass and tracery.
40. Paul Veronese (1528-1588), a Venetian painter. His large, rich paintings with lots of pomp led to his being accused of irreligion.
41. John Hayman, ed., John Ruskin: Letters from the Continent, 1858 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p.123.
42. Norton, p.46.
43. Works, Vol.36, p.292.
44. This might have been linked with his beginning to be attracted to young girls.
45. Works, Vol.36, pp.287,8.
46. Works, Vol.7, p.xli.
47. Hayman, Letters from Continent p.xxii, Introduction.
48. Diary, p.535. '11,241' refers to the days left until Ruskin was 70 years old.
49. Hayman, Letters from Continent p.157.
50. Ibid., pp.106,7.
51. Ibid., p.152.
52. Ibid., p.170.

CHAPTER 7

1. Winnington, p.69.
2. John Stuart Mill (1806-73) was an economist who developed the Utilitarian philosophy, positing 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. To him is attributed a laissez faire doctrine of economics.
3. Works, Vol.16, p.251.
4. Ibid., pp.289,90.
5. Ibid., p.290.
6. Ibid., p.396.
7. Ibid., p.397.
8. Ibid., p.397, Psalm 10. 2,3.
9. Ibid., p.397, Psalm 73. 8.
10. Ibid., pp.397,8.
11. Ibid., p.398.
12. Matthew 20. 1-16.
13. Works, Vol.17, p.38.
14. Ibid., pp.39,40.
15. Ibid., p.40.
16. Ibid., pp.75,6.
17. Ibid., p.93, Zechariah 5.1ff.
18. Ibid., p.93, Zechariah 5.6ff.
19. Ibid., p.114, Matthew 20.14.
20. Ibid., p.112, Psalm 85.10.
21. Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908) first met John Ruskin in 1856. He was an influential American art critic, who became Professor of Fine Arts at Harvard. He and Ruskin corresponded regularly during their long friendship. Perhaps their not meeting too often helped to keep that friendship intact till the end.

CHAPTER 7

22. Matthew 8.28-32.
23. Norton, p.53.
24. Ibid., p.57.
25. Ibid., p.59.
26. Ibid., p.54.
27. Rose, pp.45,6, quoted by the editor from a letter to the Brownings, May 1859. The letter is in the Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York.
28. Works, Vol.36, p.315.
29. Ibid., p.309.
30. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96) was the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin.
31. Works, Vol.36, p.338.

CHAPTER 8

1. Works, Vol.7, p.301.
2. Ibid., p.9.
3. Maria la Touche (1824-1906). Van Akin Burd believed that she was herself in love with John Ruskin and wanted to wield influence over this great man, as she saw him at this time.
4. Works, Vol.7, p.253.
5. Psalm 19.1,4b,5.
6. Genesis 1.26.
7. Works, Vol.7, p.259.
8. Ibid., p.259.
9. Though Ruskin was doubtful about the existence of a soul.
10. Works, Vol.7, p.262. This refers to 1 Corinthians 13.12. 'Looking glass' is the correct translation.
11. Ibid., p.262. .
12. Works, Vol.1, pp.1ff.
13. Works, Vol.7, p.268. Ruskin did not give a reference.
14. Ibid., p.268.
15. Ibid., p.269.
16. Ibid., p.271.
17. Ibid., p.271.
18. Ibid., pp.272,3.
19. Ibid., p.283.
20. Ibid., p.283.
21. Ibid., p.283.
22. Ibid., pp.287,8.
23. Ibid., p.459.

CHAPTER 9

1. Margaret Alexis Bell (1818-89). Her only profession was teaching and being Headmistress of Winnington Hall School was the most important part of her life. She died poor and in obscurity.
2. Samuel Wilberforce (1805-73) was Bishop of Oxford and upheld traditional orthodoxy with the truth of the creation stories.
3. Julius Hare (1795-1855). Clergyman and essayist.
4. Winnington, p.72. The Diaries of John James are at Bembridge, but have not been edited.
5. Sometimes the whole letter would be copied out by the girls. As some of the originals no longer exist, the editor of the letters has had to rely on these copies.
6. Winnington, pp.113-7. Although addressed to Miss Bell, the letter was really for the girls to read as well.
7. Isaiah 2.12,16.
8. Winnington, p.114. The next quotations are from pp.114,5.
9. Today's English Version.
10. Ibid.
11. Winnington, pp.114,5.
12. Ibid., p.115.
13. His Greek and Latin were adequate, although he never felt at ease using these languages.
14. Winnington, pp.132-6.
15. Ibid., p.134.
16. Matthew 5.3.
17. Ibid., 5.6.
18. Winnington, p.133.
19. Revelation 20.12.
20. Ibid., Chapters 2,3.
21. Winnington, pp.133,4, Revelation 2. 8-11.
22. John 3.1-21.

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23. Winnington, p.143.
24. Ezekiel 36.26.
25. Winnington, p.143, Revelation 7.14.
26. 2 Kings 5.
27. Winnington, p.143.
28. Ibid., p.143, John 3.19,21.
29. Winnington, p.144.
30. Ibid., p.148.
31. Winnington, p.145, Matthew 7.23.
32. Today's English Version.
33. Winnington, p.145.
34. Ibid., p.145, Micah 6.8.
35. Ibid., p.147.
36. Ibid., p.146, Mark 9.38-40.
37. Ibid., p.146.
38. Ibid., p.146, Matthew 6.5.
39. Acts 19. 32.
40. Winnington, pp.160-4.
41. Ibid., p.161, Hosea 10. 12.
42. Ibid., p.161, Isaiah 64.5.
43. Ibid., p.161.
44. Ibid., p.143.
45. Ibid., p.162.
46. Ibid., p.162, Psalm 51.9.
47. Ibid., p.165.
48. Ibid., p.166.

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49. Ibid., p.168.
50. Ibid., p.171.
51. Ibid., pp.169,70, 1Corinthians 15.34, Colossians 3.1.
52. Ibid., p.171; taken, roughly, from Colossians 3.12.
53. Winnington, p.171.
54. Ibid., p.172.
55. Ibid., pp.178-80.
56. Ibid., p.177.
57. Ibid., p.179.
58. Ibid., p.179.
59. Ibid., p.180.
60. Ibid., p.181, from the Te Deum, a canticle for Matins.
61. Ibid., p.181, Romans 7.12.
62. Ibid., p.182.
63. Works, Vol.36, pp.308,9, to Mrs. John Simon, who was the wife of Sir John Simon, the first medical officer of health for London.
64. Winnington, p.187.
65. Ibid., p.188.
66. Ibid., p.179.
67. Ibid., pp.192-5.
68. Ibid., p.193.
69. Ibid., p.193, Luke 18.43.
70. Ibid., p.192.
71. Ibid., p.198.
72. Ibid., pp.198-202.

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73. Ibid., p.201.
74. Ibid., pp.199,200.
75. Psalm 1.3.
76. Winnington, pp.206-9, Psalm 2.7.
77. Hebrews 5.5.
78. Rose, pp.45,6. The unpublished letter is at the Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York.
79. Winnington, p.209, John 14.9.
80. Works, Vol.36, p.330.
81. Winnington, pp.224,5.
82. Ibid., p.224.
83. Ibid., p.228.
84. Ibid., pp.228,9.
85. Ibid., p.230.
86. Naturally enough, since it was not even written by David.
87. Winnington, p.231.
88. Ibid., pp.233-6.
89. Ruskin occasionally mis-quoted literature in his letters, suggesting that he did not always have the text to hand, but could recall reasonably accurately. To do this, he had to have confidence in his memory.
90. Winnington, pp.234. Ruskin had a very idealized and sentimental view of young girls, and in fact there was a great deal of strife and ill-atmosphere in the school, though this seems to have been kept hidden from him.
91. Ibid., p.233.
92. Ibid., p.233.
93. Psalm 59. 1,5,13.
94. Winnington, p.234, Luke 19.27.



CHAPTER 9

95. Winnington, p.235, Acts 23.3.
96. Winnington, pp.234,5.
97. Ibid., p.235, Acts 7.60.
98. Winnington, p.235.
99. Ibid., pp.238-42 and pp.244-7.
100. Ibid., p.239.
101. Ibid., p.240, Matthew 18.21. Ruskin substituted 'err' for 'sin', thus lessening the force of the passage.
102. Winnington, p.241.
103. Ibid., pp.241.
104. Ibid., pp.243.
105. Ibid., pp.244-7.
106. Ibid., pp.245,6.
107. Ibid., pp.251-3.
108. Ibid., p.252.
109. Ibid., p.271.

CHAPTER 10

1. Cited in Rose p.34; from 'Preface', The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons by C.H. Spurgeon 1862 (London: Passmore & Alabaster [1863]) VIII vii.
2. Ibid., p.35.
3. George MacDonald (1824-1905) was a Scottish Congregationalist Minister who left his church and earned his living by writing novels and religious works.
4. Lady Pauline Trevelyan (1816-66) was a clergyman's daughter married to Lord William Trevelyan of Wallington Hall. She became a patron of the arts.
5. Lady Georgina Mount-Temple (1822-1901) was a close friend of Ruskin, and helped him through some of his worst depressions. He often stayed at Broadlands, the Mount-Temple's home.
6. Rose, pp.158,9.
7. Ibid., p.59. Van Akin Burd quoted from an unpublished letter at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.
8. Charles T. Cook, Ed., C.H.Spurgeon's Sermons on The Miracles (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1977), pp.90,1.
9. Works, Vol.36, p.435.
10. Ibid., pp.368-72.
11. Rose, p.51.
12. Mark 4. 28,9.
13. Works, Vol.36, p.370.
14. Norton, p.64. 'Byepath Meadow' is a reference to John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.
15. Genesis 11.1-9.
16. Daniel 3.13-30.
17. Exodus 5.6-23.
18. John Colenso (1814-83) was the Bishop of Natal from 1853. He was a celebrated mathematician as well as theologian, and supported the Zulus against the Boers. His books on the historicity and theology of the Bible caused much protest.
19. Rose, p.161.

CHAPTER 10

20. Ibid., p.161, Psalm 40. 2.
21. Ibid., p.81.
22. Works Vol.36, pp.428,9.
23. Ibid., p.429.
24. Ibid., p.429. Ruskin was quoting the letter from Rose, to his father in the letters quoted in notes 22 and 23 above.
25. Norton p.77.

CHAPTER 11

1. Winnington, p.73.
2. Ibid., p.392, n.3.
3. Ibid., p.377, n.1.
4. Ibid., p.376.
5. Ibid., p.376.
6. Ibid., pp.380,1.
7. James Anthony Froude (1818-94), historian and friend of Carlyle, whose biography he wrote. Froude was originally associated with the Tractarians, but he later lost his faith in organized religion.
8. Winnington, p.457.
9. Ibid., p.384.
10. Ibid., p.397.
11. Olive Wilson, Ed., My Dearest Dora (Kendal: Frank Peters), pp.37,8.
12. Greville MacDonald, George MacDonald and His Wife (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), p.328.
13. Wider Sea, p.290.
14. MacDonald, MacDonald, p.337.
15. Ibid., p.338.
16. George Allan Cate, Ed., The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin (California, Stanford University Press, 1982), p.5.
17. Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus (London: J.M.Dent & Sons, Everyman Library, 1910), p.149.
18. Ibid., p.127.
19. Ibid., pp.127,8.
20. Ibid., p.162.
21. Ibid., p.163.
22. Cate, Correspondence, p.17.

CHAPTER 11

23. Ibid., p.89.
24. Works, Vol.36, p.396. The Rev. Daniel Moore succeeded Canon Melvill as incumbent at Camden Chapel. He wrote many devotional works.  
Peter Bayne (1830-96); Journalist and essayist. He was editor of the Edinburgh Witness and Weekly Review.
- Lord Shaftesbury (1801-85) spent his life and much of his fortune in philanthropic works. He was a strong Evangelical churchman.
25. Works, Vol.36, p.396.
26. Virginia Surtees, Ed., Reflections of a Friendship (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p.158.
27. Cate, Correspondence, p.92.
28. Works, Vol.36, p.400.
29. Ibid., p.410.
30. Ibid., p.410.
31. Diary, p.564. Anathoth was Jeremiah's home town. The reference to the head was about a copy Ruskin was making of a painting of St. Catherine by Luini.
32. Works, Vol.36, p.443.
33. Works, Vol.36, p.464; Acts 8.18-20. Captain Charles Booth Brackenbury (later Colonel) (1831-1890) was a soldier and military writer.
34. Ibid., p.464.
35. W.H.Harrison. As editor of Friendship's Offerings, 1837-41, he was responsible for having John Ruskin's works first printed. He continued to take a critical interest in Ruskin's writings..
36. Works, Vol.36, p.483.

CHAPTER 12

1. This was published in 1865 in the book titled Sesame and Lilies.
2. Works, Vol.18, p.70.
3. Ibid., p.70. Ruskin was quoting from Lycidas.
4. Ibid., p.72.
5. Ibid., p.70.
6. Ibid., p.74.
7. Ibid., p.75.
8. Ibid., p.76.
9. Ibid., p.128.
10. Ibid., p.127.
11. Ibid., p.128.
12. Ibid., p.453.
13. Ibid., p.446.
14. Ibid., pp.446,7.
15. Ibid., p.447.
16. Ibid., p.447. It was Tetzels open selling of indulgences in 1517 that led to Luther's protest, thus giving a date and cause for the beginning of the Reformation.
17. Ibid., p.447.
18. Ibid., pp.427,8.
19. Ibid., p.456.
20. Ibid., p.457.
21. Ibid., pp.394,5.
22. Ibid., p.395. The Bible quotation is Philippians 1.23.
23. Ibid., pp.412,3.
24. Ibid., p.413.

CHAPTER 12

25. Ibid., p.440.
26. Kenneth Clark, The Gothic Revival (London: Constable, 1950), p.252.
27. Works, Vol.18, p.441.
28. Ibid., p.442.
29. Ibid., pp.421,2.
30. Ibid., pp.447,8.
31. Ibid., p.431.
32. Ibid., p.203.
33. Ibid., p.217.
34. Ibid., p.303.
35. Ibid., p.304.
36. Ibid., p.305, referring to descriptions of heaven in Revelation.
37. Ibid., p.302.
38. Ibid., p.301.
39. Ibid., p.360.
40. Works, Vol.5, p.92,ff.
41. Works, Vol.18, p.364. Ruskin sometimes spelt names as it suited him. Thus 'Athena' rather than 'Athene', 'Michael Angelo' rather than 'Michelangelo' and 'Tintoret' rather than 'Tintoretto'.
42. Ibid., p.364.
43. Ibid., p.316 ff.
44. Ibid., p.318.
45. Ibid., p.319.
46. Ruskin usually respected female saints.

CHAPTER 12

47. Lord Mount-Temple, 1811-88, started life as 'William Cowper'. In 1869 he added 'Temple' to his name, to become 'William Cowper-Temple'. In 1880 he became 'Lord Mount-Temple'.
48. William Howitt (1792-1879). He wrote several books on spiritualism, having become interested in the 1850's.
49. Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-1886). He started giving seances in the early 1850's, and travelled extensively in Britain and on the Continent.
50. Van Akin Burd, Ruskin, Lady Mount-Temple and the Spiritualists (London, Brentham Press, 1982), p.11.
51. John Lewis Bradley, Ed., The Letters of John Ruskin to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), p.26.
52. Mary Marshall (c.1800-75).
53. Burd, Spiritualists, p.13.
54. Annie Andrews (c.1841-1903).
55. Burd, Spiritualists, p.14.
56. Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a Swedish scientist, philosopher and theologian.
57. Bradley, Letters, p.30.
58. Ibid., p.31.
59. Burd, Spiritualists, p.16, Unpublished letter, Typescript MSS. Eng. lett. c.35, fol.272, Bodleian.
60. Ibid., p.17, from Mme. Home, D.D.Home: His Life and Mission, p.213.
61. Ibid., p.19, from an unpublished letter at Broadlands' Estate Documents.
62. e.g. 1 Samuel 28.3, and Matthew 24.24.
63. Burd, Spiritualists, p.19.
64. Works, Vol.35, p.503.
65. Burd, Spiritualists, pp.19,20.



CHAPTER 13

1. Diary, p.610.
2. Ibid., p.610. In Works, Vol.35, p.529 Ruskin described Mrs. La Touche as "'Lacerta," - to signify that she had the grace and wisdom of the serpent, without its poison'. But Lacerta showed her poison on this occasion.
3. Rose, p.108.
4. John Lewis Bradley, Ed., The Letters of John Ruskin to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), p.110.
5. Ibid., p.110.
6. Ibid., p.110.
7. Ibid., p.110.
8. Ibid., p.110.
9. Galatians 4.21.
10. Paul's explanation of the story of Hagar, which is one of the most abstruse readings in the Book of Common Prayer.
11. Bradley, Letters, p.114.
12. Genesis 24.61, Ruth 1.6,7.
13. Diary, p.613.
14. Luke 22. 11-13.
15. Joan Agnew, Ruskin's relative, came to the Ruskin household as a seventeen-year old in 1864 to be a companion to Margaret after John James had died. She looked after Margaret, and then John until his death. For a while she was engaged to Rose's brother, Percy, but eventually married Arther Severn, an artist.
16. Diary, p.617.
17. Works, Vol.36, p.537.
18. Ibid., p.539.
19. Psalm 91.4.

CHAPTER 13

20. 1 Kings 18.
21. Works, Vol.36, p.539
22. Acts 16.1-4.
23. Works, Vol.36, p.539.
24. Ibid., pp.538,9.
25. Ibid., p.589.
26. Diary p.623.
27. Ibid., p.625.
28. Ibid., p.631.
29. Ibid., p.633.
30. Ibid., p.635.
31. Ibid., p.621.
32. Works, Vol. 17, p.348.
33. Ibid., p.349.
34. Ibid., p.349.
35. Ibid., p.349.
36. Ibid., p.349.
37. Ibid., p.348.
38. Ibid., p.352, referring to Exodus 15.20.
39. Ibid., p.353.
40. Ibid., p.353, Judges 11.34.
41. Ibid., pp.353,4, 1Samuel 18.6.
42. Ibid., p.354, Luke 15.23-5.
43. Ibid., pp.358.

CHAPTER 13

44. Judges 21.21. The biblical account does not mention the harvest season.
45. Works, Vol.17, p.356.
46. Ibid., p.359.
47. Ibid., p.359.
48. Ibid., p.360.
49. Ibid., p.361.
50. Ibid., p.361.
51. Ibid., p.362.
52. Ibid., p.363.
53. Ibid., p.363.
54. Ibid., p.363.
55. Ibid., p.363.
56. Ibid., p.365.
57. Ibid., p.365.
58. Ibid., p.365.
59. Ibid., pp.365.
60. Ibid., pp.374.

CHAPTER 14

1. Works, Vol.18, p.145. Ruskin attached this lecture to the two main lectures of Sesame and Lilies.
2. Ibid., p.145.
3. Ibid., p.145.
4. Ibid., p.146. James 4.14.
5. Ibid., p.147.
6. Matthew 13.44-46.
7. Works, Vol.18, pp.154,5.
8. Ibid., p.155.
9. Ibid., p.157.
10. Ibid., p.157.
11. Ibid., p.161.
12. Ibid., p 162, King Lear, Act 5, Scene 3, lines 170,1.
13. Ibid., p.166, Joshua 9.21.
14. Ibid., p.166.
15. Ibid., pp.175, Ecclesiastes 9.10.
16. Ibid., p.182.
17. Ibid., p.180.
18. Ibid., p.185.
19. Diary, p.648.
20. Norton, p.86.
21. Ibid., p.86.
22. Carlyle, pp.146,7.
23. Works, Vol.19, pp.295,6.
24. Ibid., pp.346,7.

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25. Ibid., p.347.
26. Ibid., p.347.
27. Ibid., p.348.
28. Ibid., pp.348.
29. Ibid., pp.349.
30. Ibid., pp.305,6.
31. Ibid., p.306.
32. Ibid., p.298.
33. Ibid., p.296.
34. Ibid., p.297.
35. Ibid., p.300.
36. Ibid., p.310.
37. Ibid., p.298.
38. Acts 17.23 ff.
39. Acts 17.25.
40. Works, Vol.19., p.387.
41. Ibid., p.418.
42. Karl Jung, (1875-1961) was a psychologist and psychiatrist who developed theories concerning the depth and importance of myths in the individual and racial subconscious.
43. Norton, p.175. Marcus Antoninus (121-80 A.D) was Roman Emperor (161-80) and a Stoic philosopher.
44. Ibid., p.179.
45. Ibid., p.179.

CHAPTER 15

1. The Arundel Society was established in 1849 to further interest in art, but was dissolved in 1897. Ruskin was an original member of its council and took an active part.
2. In 1868, Felix Slade had bequeathed money to endow new Fine Art Professorships at Oxford, Cambridge and London. Election for these were for three years. Ruskin was elected in 1869, 1873, 1876, and, after a break, in 1882.
3. Henry George Liddell (1811-98) was Dean of Christ Church, and joint-editor of a famous Greek-English lexicon. Liddell and Ruskin did not like each other, but remained on outwardly civil terms.
4. Dinah Birch, Ruskin's Myths (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp.136-7, quoting an unpublished letter; Bodl.MS Acland d.69 fo56 (10 Oct 1864).
5. Ibid., p.134.
6. Works, Vol. 20, p.46.
7. Ibid., p.49.
8. Ibid., p.49.
9. Ibid., p.52.
10. Ibid., p.55.
11. Ibid., p.57, footnote.
12. Ibid., pp.57-8, footnote.
13. Ibid., p.60.
14. Ibid., p.58, as are the next two quotations.
15. Ibid., p.60.
16. Ibid., p.63.
17. Ibid., p.64.
18. Ibid., p.62.
19. Ibid., p.65.
20. Ibid., p.66.

CHAPTER 15

21. Ibid., p.67.
22. Ibid., p.67.
23. Birch, Myths, p.139, Unpublished letter Bodl. MS Acland d69 fo95 (16 Jan. 1870).
24. Ibid., p.139.
25. Ruskin was on friendly terms with Darwin, although he was not averse to criticizing his theories.
26. Works, Vol. 20. p.221.
27. Not a good one, for he was more interested in describing this young girl.
28. Works, Vol. 20, p.220.
29. Ibid., p.223.
30. Ibid., p.227.
31. Ibid., p.228.
32. Ibid., p.232.
33. Ibid., p.233.
34. Ibid., p.233.
35. Ibid., p.234.
36. Ibid., p.234.
37. Ibid., p.234.
38. Ibid., p.236. Ruskin loathed the Crystal Palace and all it stood for commercially and artistically.
39. This was published in Loudon's Magazine of Natural History (London, Longman's & Co.), Vol.vii, No 41, pp.438-9, in 1834.
40. Works, Vol.22, p.147.
41. Ibid., p.143.

CHAPTER 15

42. Ibid., p.143, Job 38.31.
43. Ibid., p.143.
44. Ibid., p.129.
45. Ibid., p.136. Proverbs 3.15, 4.13.
46. Ibid., p.169,70.
47. Ibid., p.171.
48. His close friend, Henry Acland, thought likewise. When he founded the medical school, Acland wanted to encourage his students to pursue other, non-medical branches of knowledge.



CHAPTER 16

1. Works, Vol.27, pp.27,8.
2. Ibid., p.90. "Admiration, hope and love came from Wordsworth, Excursion, Book 4, line 763.
3. Ibid., pp.94,5. Matthew 5.43.
4. Ibid., p.158. If Ruskin reported this sermon correctly, the clergyman probably meant that they should be pleased to go to Heaven so that they are away from sinful trade - and that the sermon's hearers would go to Heaven just because they were Church-goers.
5. Works, Vol.28, p.154, Genesis 3, John 13.26.
6. Ibid., p.154.
7. Matthew 25.14 ff.
8. Also, as the son of a man in trade, Ruskin had class reasons to dislike the landed gentry.
9. The nearest this came to fruition was the settlement near Bewdley, Worcestershire.
10. Works, Vol.27, p.95. Matthew 5.43.
11. Ibid., p.95.
12. Works, Vol.28, p.174.
13. Ibid., p.173.
14. Ibid., p.51.
15. Ibid., p.174.
16. Works, Vol.27, p.304 ff.
17. Ibid., p.311.
18. Ibid., p.311.
19. Ibid., p.312.
20. Ibid., p.335.
21. Ibid., p.337.

CHAPTER 16

22. Ibid., p.490.
23. Ibid., p.15.
24. Ibid., p.67.
25. Ibid., p.77.
26. Ibid., p.77.
27. Ibid., p.185,6.
28. Ibid., p.650.
29. John 21.9.
30. Works, Vol.28, p.36.
31. This is a combination of 2 Samuel 10.12 and 2 Chronicles 19.11. The Chronicles' youth was the holy king, Jehosaphat.
32. Works, Vol.28, pp.70,1.
33. Frederick William I (1688-1740). He was better known as the founder of a large Prussian army and as an administrator.
34. Works, Vol.28, p.68.
35. Gotthelf was the nom de plume for Albert Bitzius (1797-1854), a Swiss pastor and writer
36. Works, Vol.27, p.545.
37. Ibid., pp.545,6.
38. Works., Vol.28, pp.101,2.
39. John 14.2.
40. Works, Vol.27, p.489.
41. Ibid., pp.415,6.
42. Ibid., p.673.
43. Ibid., p.673.
44. Romans Chs. 6 & 7, Galatians Ch. 5.
45. Works, Vol.27, p.674.

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46. Ibid., p.674.
47. Ibid., p.675.
48. Ibid., p.676.
49. Ibid., pp.200,1.
50. Luke 2. 13,14.
51. Works, Vol.27, p.206.
52. Without, as Ruskin pointed out, any adoration or gifts.
53. Works, Vol.27, p.210.
54. Ibid., p.219.
55. Ibid., p.217.
56. Ibid., p.83.
57. Norton, p.178.
58. Works, Vol.27, p.133. Ruskin later said that he was referring to the Franco-Prussian War.
59. Ibid., p.389.
60. Ibid., p.507 ff.
61. John 16.32.
62. Works, Vol.27, p.507.
63. Presumably Hell, see Luke 22.22. Biblical criticism does not usually link John 16.32 with the ultimate destination of Judas.
64. Works, Vol.27, p.489.
65. Ibid., p.493.
66. Ibid., p.493.

CHAPTER 17

1. Wider Sea, p.341.
2. Diary, p.711. Matthew 24.15.
3. Norton, p.226.
4. Rose, p.123.
5. Ibid., p.126.
6. Diary, p.732.
7. Dr. John Brown (1810-82) was an Edinburgh physician and author with whom Ruskin had a lengthy correspondence.
8. Quoted in Rose, p.128. The letter is in Acc 6289, box 3, National Library of Scotland.
9. Norton p.270.
10. Ibid., pp.271,2.
11. Diary, p.720.
12. Ibid., p.721.
13. Ibid., p.721.
14. Ibid., p.738.
15. Ibid., p.763.
16. Ibid., p.770.
17. Ibid., p.773.
18. Ibid., p.773.
19. Ibid., p.776.
20. Ibid., p.778.
21. Ibid., p.777.
22. Ibid., p 789.
23. Ibid., p.796.

CHAPTER 17

24. Isaiah 24. 3,4.
25. Diary, p.795.
26. Ibid., p p.796.
27. Ibid., p.796.
28. Ibid., p.796.
29. Ibid., p.783.
30. Norton, p.312.
31. Carlyle, p.185.
32. Diary, p.785.
33. Cimabue (1240-1302), an early naturalist style painter, predating but not so famous as Giotto.
34. Norton, p.318.
35. Carlyle, p.197.
36. Diary, p.797.
37. Ibid p.799.
38. Wider Sea. p.351.
39. Diary, p.802.

CHAPTER 18

1. Rose, p.129, in a letter to Joan Severn which was to be passed on to Maria La Touche.
2. Works, Vol. 29, p.86.
3. Works, Vol.28, p.512.
4. Ibid., p.514.
5. Olive Wilson, Ed., My Dearest Dora (England; Frank Peters, Kendal), p.93.
6. Works, Vol.28, p.238.
7. Ibid., p.364.
8. Works, Vol.37, p.171.
9. Ibid., p.171.
10. Works, Vol. 28, pp.515,6.
11. Ibid., p.518.
12. Ibid., p.667.
13. Ibid., p.652.
14. Exodus 18.
15. Works, Vol.28, p.513, Exodus 18.21.
16. Ibid., p.513.
17. Works, Vol.29, p.86.
18. Ibid., p.91.
19. Ruskin's old-fashioned name for Tintoretto.
20. Works, Vol.29, p.89.
21. Ibid., p.89
22. Ibid., p.89.
23. Ibid., p.91.

CHAPTER 18

24. Ibid., p.91.
25. Ibid., p.92, James 1.1.
26. Works, Vol.37, pp.240,1. Bible reference Luke 15.9.
27. Diary, p.843.
28. Ibid., p.835.
29. Ibid., p.879.
30. Ibid., p.880.
31. Works, Vol.37, pp.192,3. Susan Beever was an elderly friend and neighbour who lived at Thwaite with her sister. Ruskin's friendship with her aroused the jealousy of Joan Severn.
32. Ibid., pp. 196,7.
33. Spiritualists, p.20.
34. Ibid., p.24.
35. He tended to be a bit of a hypochondriac.
36. Diary, p.876.
37. Spiritualists, p.26. Unpublished letter from Ruskin to Joan Severn, ALS, L40 Bembridge.
38. Ibid., p.26.
39. Greville MacDonald, George MacDonald and his wife (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), p.472.
40. Norton, p.374.
41. Diary, p.885. Bible references; Luke 7.50 and 18.42
42. The following account is taken mostly from Rose. Van Akin Burd took as his source some unpublished letters which Ruskin wrote to Joan Severn. These letters are in Sharp Papers, Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York.
43. Carpaccio (c.1460-1523/6) was the earliest of the great Venetian painters. Ruskin brought to general notice this previously underestimated artist.

CHAPTER 18

44. Rose, p.137.
45. Lady Castletown (c.1810-1899) was the wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Queen's County, Ireland.
46. Rose, p.138.
47. Ibid., p.138.
48. Ibid., p.138.
49. Ibid., p.139.
50. Ibid., p.139.
51. Ibid., p.139.
52. Ibid., pp.139,40.
53. Ibid., p.140.
54. Diary, p.929.
55. Ibid., p.929.
56. Ibid., p.929.
57. Ibid., pp.932,3.
58. Ibid., pp.959,60.
59. Ibid., p.962.
60. This is according to Hunt in Wider Sea, p.368.
61. Works, Vol.37, p.227.
62. Works, Vol.22, p.534.
63. Ibid., pp.534,5.
64. Ibid., p.535.
65. Ibid., p.535.
66. Ibid., pp.535,6.
67. Ibid., p.536, from John 7.17.



CHAPTER 18

68. Ibid., p.536.

69. Ibid., p.536, John 8.24.

70. Ibid., p.533.

71. 2 Kings 1.10.

72. Norton, pp.412,3. St. Kate; probably St. Catherine of Bologna, a woman painter. Lachesis is one of the fates, not a Christian saint.

73. Ibid., p.413, Note 1.

74. Quoted in Wider Sea, p.371.

75. Ibid., p.371.

CHAPTER 19

1. Works, Vol.37, p.421.
2. Works, Vol.34, pp.198,9. The letters were to be read out and discussed at a clerical meeting.
3. Ibid., p.202.
4. Malachi 2.2.
5. Works, Vol.34, p.212.
6. Ibid., p.208.
7. F.A.Malleson, Ed., Letters to the Clergy (London: George Allen, 1896), p.168. Works do not include letters from several clergy which were added to this edition.
8. Ibid., p.168.
9. Ibid., p.155,6.
10. They were happier criticizing the minutiae rather than the main themes of Ruskin's letters.
11. Works, Vol.34, p.194.
12. Malleson, Letters, pp.204,5.
13. Works, Vol.34, p.197.
14. Ibid., p.218.
15. Works, Vol.33. p.78, Ephesians 4.26.
16. Ibid., p.78.
17. Ibid., p.44.
18. Ibid., p.274.
19. Ibid., p.275.
20. Dinah Birch, Ruskin's Myths (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.167
21. Works, Vol.33, pp.276,7.
22. Ibid., p.486.

CHAPTER 19

23. Ibid., p.478. Iffley is a village outside Oxford.
24. Ibid., p.502.
25. Works, Vol.34, pp.40,1. Joel 2.10.
26. Ibid., p.40.
27. Ibid., p.72.
28. Ibid., p.72.
29. Ibid., p.80.
30. Works, Vol.29, p.336.
31. Ibid., pp.335,6.
32. Ibid., p.371.
33. Diary, p.992.
34. Works, Vol.37. pp.334,5.
35. Ibid., p.334.
36. Diary, p.1108.
37. Works, Vol.34, p.634. This speech was recoded in the Ulverston Advertizer, 13 January, 1881. It is not clear how accurate the report is.
38. Norton, p.444.
39. Works, Vol.29, p.371.
40. Works, Vol.37, p.458.
41. Diary, p.1041.
42. Ibid., p.1110.
43. Works, Vol.37, p.605.
44. Diary, p.1150.

CHAPTER 20

1. Norton, p.396.
2. George Eliot, Middlemarch, Book 3, Chapter 27, at the beginning.

