Mark Rutherford
Copyright ©1988 by the Ohio State University Press. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Harland, Catherine R.

Mark Rutherford: the mind and art of William Hale White.

Bibliography: p.
Includes index.


1. Title.
PR5795.W7Z65 1987 823'.8 87-11286
# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix

Prologue 1

CHAPTER ONE
Conversion and Heresy 5

CHAPTER TWO
The Ancient Enemy: Melancholia 61

CHAPTER THREE
This Body of Death 91

CHAPTER FOUR
The Leaden Order of Things: Marriage and Work 133

CHAPTER FIVE
Toward a Personal Creed 179

CHAPTER SIX
Spinoza and the Stars 207

CHAPTER SEVEN
Freedom: Love and the Indwelling Christ 231

Notes 279

Works Cited 305

Index 313
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My first debt is to Jerome H. Buckley, who introduced me to Mark Rutherford and Victorian autobiography. He, W. Jackson Bate, and Brooke Hopkins read and commented on an earlier version of this study. Much of my research and writing was completed while I was on leave from Queen's University, with the aid of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Leave Fellowship. I am grateful to both the Council and the University for their support. Nick Wilde of the Bedford County Library aided my research with his comprehensive knowledge of, and his enthusiasm for, Mark Rutherford. Joan Selby, Curator of the Colbeck Collection at the Main Library, University of British Columbia, also provided gracious and efficient help. Simon Nowell-Smith discussed various aspects of Rutherford's life with me.

A critical biography builds on the work of previous students of its subject, and I have benefited especially from the work of Catherine Macdonald Maclean, Wilfred H. Stone, Irwin Stock, Basil Willey, Valentine Cunningham, and John Lucas.

Many friends and relatives have given me support and encouragement while I was engaged in this study. I am pleased to thank, at last, Sharron Kusiar, Vivien Hart, Reta and Ian McKay, Paul and Grant Harland, Kerry McSweeney, and especially my parents, Ruth and Gordon Harland, to whom this book is affectionately dedicated.

David Barnard read the manuscript and made many useful suggestions; as Director of Computing and Information Services at Queen's University he also provided me with expert assistance in formatting it. Several members of his staff, especially Michael Smith, solved a number of technical problems.
My greatest debt is to George M. Logan, who read and commented on various drafts of the manuscript. His incisive criticism significantly improved both the substance and the form of my work. I am grateful for his untiring help and encouragement.
PROLOGUE

In the last years of his life, William Hale White wrote in a notebook: "I have a strange fancy—that there is one word which I was sent into the world to say. At times I can dimly make it out but I cannot speak it. Nevertheless it serves to make all other speech seem beside the mark and futile." In spite of an overwhelming sense of his own limitations, Hale White tried until the end to discover the word that would express the meaning of his life. His writing is thus essentially autobiographical, his fiction a reworking of the struggle of his own spiritual and emotional life. The world of his novels and short stories provided a way to give meaning to human suffering and to create in imagination the solutions that eluded him in actual life. His critical writing similarly is an attempt to answer the question "Wherein can it help me?" In his critical investigations, White sought to uncover the truth about a person, a book, an incident in history, and to hold up to the light whatever might be valuable to us in the struggle of life: "It is by admiration and not by criticism that we live, and the main purpose of criticism should be to point out something to admire." His writing is bleak, sincere, honest, and often astonishingly beautiful.

The areas that White constantly explored issued from memory and were interpreted in hope. He imaginatively reentered his own experience of spiritual exile and uncovered the possibilities for reconciliation and freedom. His exploration is sometimes characterized by ambivalence, even contradiction, for he found no simple answers to the questions that tormented him. Although White never found the ultimately liberating word, he is attractive to us in part because he did not delude himself into thinking that he had. Perhaps only by studying the relationship between his life and his work can the "word,"
and the meaning of his long quest, be understood. I have therefore tried to look at major episodes—both external and internal—in White's life with the purpose of seeing how these events, along with his interpretation of them, engendered the creative process and the concerns of his writing. The series of episodes that seem to have been most significant began with the experience of his youthful "conversion" in Bedford's Bunyan Meeting and his expulsion from New College a few years later. The latter event differs from the typical Victorian crisis of faith in that White discovered that he really had no genuine faith to lose. When, at college, he tried to discover the origins of his ancestral faith by reaching "through to that original necessity" and learning how faith had once been experienced, he found that it was "precisely this reaching after a meaning which constituted heresy." Shortly after his expulsion, White had his first attack of "melancholia," a traumatic event that was to mark him for the rest of his life. His first marriage and several depressing years of clerkship followed. The writing of The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, his first work of fiction, was the crucial event of his middle age. At fifty, White began to feel a sense of urgency, an increased need both to justify and to escape from a life which he felt had been "consumed in mean, miserable, squalid cares," and commenced his life as a novelist. Retirement, the death of his first wife, and his acquaintance with Dorothy Horace Smith complete the series of important events. With most of them, White seems to have emerged into fuller or more acute consciousness.

White's quest was for the word that would engender genuine freedom of being, a reconciliation with himself and with the world in which he felt so often alien. He found several avenues of potential freedom: through philosophy, especially that of Spinoza, whom he translated and edited; through a conscious and willed relationship with the natural world, especially the heavens; and, most important, through a
reinterpretation of his Calvinist heritage, a reinterpretation that goes to the vital center of Christianity. Penetrating to the "original necessity" of Protestantism, White emphasized the daily, experiential meaning of the Atonement.

White regarded much of his life as a mistake: "The long apprenticeship has ended in little or nothing. What I was fifty years ago I am now; certainly no better, with no greater self-control, with no greater magnanimity. How much I might have gained if I had taken life as an art I cannot say" (MP, 258). He attributed that mistake to the historical accident of his having been born in the nineteenth century. In the character of Mark Rutherford, White wrote his friend Holyoake, he had tried to draw "a victim of the century." Rutherford speaks for his creator when at a particularly difficult moment in his history he laments: "If I had been born a hundred years earlier, I should have transferred this burning longing to the unseen God and become a devotee. But I was a hundred years too late, and I felt that it was mere cheating of myself and a mockery to think about love for the only God whom I knew, the forces which maintained the universe" (A, 110). White felt this "if only" strongly: others of his characters voice the same protest. Zachariah Coleman, Catharine Furze, "Aunt Eleanor" all feel that if only they had been born at an earlier time, their spiritual yearning and emotional energy might have "found expression in the faith of [their] ancestors, large enough for any intellect or any heart at that time." Nineteenth-century people, however, had to "grop[e] their way unassisted" along the path to a genuine religious faith.

It is true that White's profound sense of displacement was partly owing to cultural circumstances; but it is also true that his "burning longing" for identity, value, and relationship might have been felt in any age. We are drawn to him because he confronted both the perversity of history and the deep sadness of his own nature with constant courage: "Oh courage,
courage!—it is the foundation of all peace and all virtue. Virtue really is courage. How much of it can we get? how much can we command our constitutional terrors and so march bravely on! That is the problem for us all."
Conversion and Heresy

A child-like faith in the old creed is no longer possible, but it is equally impossible to surrender it.

—Pages From a Journal

I

The central events of William Hale White’s youth were his admission to the congregation of Bunyan Meeting in Bedford and his expulsion from New College, London, a few years later for heresy. In his factual autobiography, The Early Life of Mark Rutherford (1913), he characterizes these linked episodes as “the great event and the great blunder of my life, the mistake which well-nigh ruined it altogether.” But in order to understand how far this remark is valid, and how powerful these events were in shaping White’s subsequent life and thought, it is necessary to supplement the account in The Early Life with the fictionalized The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford (1881) and Mark Rutherford’s Deliverance (1885). Here we find the truer history of White’s mental and spiritual life. “Johnson,” White wrote in his last years, “is not the only man who finds it easier to confess himself in a book” (LP, 76); for White, the fullest confession required the liberating mask of fiction.
To be sure, the Mark Rutherford of the *Autobiography* and *Deliverance* is not to be completely identified with his creator. White makes a point of providing some discrepancies between Rutherford's history and his own. Rutherford, for example, completes his theological training and becomes a Dissenting minister, whereas White was expelled and preached only occasionally from Unitarian pulpits. Nor did White, like Rutherford, suffer through a long, eventually broken engagement. There does not appear to have been a real-life counterpart of Edward Mardon, Mark Rutherford's atheist friend; instead, Mardon is White's alter ego, one of the voices of his divided self in the *Autobiography*. Names and places are changed, and, of course, at the end of the *Deliverance* Rutherford dies, whereas White continued to live and write. Finally, as the relation between White and Mardon suggests, Rutherford is a more limited personality than White, a concentrated, focused version of the brooding, anguished side of his creator.

Nonetheless, the evidence that the *Autobiography* and *Deliverance* contains White's own deepest experience is compelling. *The Early Life of Mark Rutherford*, written in White's final years, follows the *Autobiography* closely, even using similar descriptions and expressions. In introducing *The Early Life*, White tells us that "a good deal of it has been told before under a semi-transparent disguise, with much added which is entirely fictitious. What I now set down is fact" (EL, 5). Insofar as it is possible for any man to write honestly in retrospect about his deepest thoughts and feelings, the *Autobiography* is true. Speaking of *The Early Life*, White exclaims in a letter to his friend Miss Partridge that he is recording, for the benefit of his children, all that he can remember of his life from childhood to his marriage; but "How much is *wahrheit* and how much is *dichtung*? The afternoon and evening in and on the peacefulllest of rivers, the (to me) sacred Ouse! *Wahrheit*
CONVERSION AND HERESY

or dichtung? Both." Further confirming the authenticity of the Autobiography, his second wife, Dorothy Vernon White, writes that one day Hale told her about part of his life—his experience of "the horrors" at Stoke Newington. She adds that she had heard it all before, in The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford. White had much in common with his character "the authoress of 'Judith Crowhurst,'" who describes how she creates: the plot is "manufactured," but her own feelings are transferred to the heroine. "The only parts not worthless" in her novel, she believes, "were those which were autobiographical" (MP, 140).

The alternating images of confinement and liberation that characterize the Autobiography as a whole are set in motion in its first chapter. As he reenters memory and struggles to give it meaningful shape, Mark Rutherford begins a litany of the "perfect poetic pleasures" of childhood:

I remember whole afternoons in June, July, and August, passed half-naked or altogether naked in the solitary meadows and in the water; I remember the tumbling weir with the deep pool at the bottom in which we dived; I remember, too, the place where we used to swim across the river with our clothes on our heads, because there was no bridge near, and the frequent disaster of a slip of the braces in the middle of the water, so that shirt, jacket, and trousers were soaked, and we had to lie on the grass in the broiling sun without a rag on us till everything was dry again. (A, 4)

In winter he skated "over long reaches," played football, or got up "a steeplechase on foot." Weekdays, and especially the two half-holidays a week from school, are associated with images of freedom: water, nakedness, motion, timelessness.

Yet on Sunday, "the compensation came" (A, 5). The spacious, edenic memories suddenly contract, and images of enclosure and restraint take their place. Time is now important: "After family prayer and breakfast the business of the day began with the Sunday-school at nine o'clock. We were taught our
Catechism and Bible there till a quarter past ten. We were then marched across the road into the chapel” (A, 5). Whereas Carlyle recalled “sacred lambencies, tongues of authentic flame from heaven” kindling the chapel of his childhood, White’s memory divides childhood into two distinct portions, “week-day and Sunday”; the latter “a season of unmixed gloom” (A, 3, 5). White evocatively re-creates the child’s perceptions of physical and mental restriction. He is not only inside the chapel but is enclosed within a pew. Although he knows it is sinful to sleep under the gospel, the foul, dense atmosphere of the chapel—on hot nights women were carried out fainting—makes it impossible to sustain attention, or even to stay awake. The sermon provides no incentive to alertness: “The minister invariably began with the fall of man; propounded the scheme of redemption, and ended by depicting in the morning the blessedness of the saints, and in the evening the doom of the lost” (A, 7). The child finds himself envying the pew-opener and the old man who snuffs the candles, both of whom are able to move about freely and thus avoid “that terrible drowsiness.” Such descriptions abundantly suggest why White hated Sundays all his life. Three tedious services, lengthy prayer meetings, the reading of the Bible without explanation or comment, and the profound boredom of the “long prayer” are remembered with nightmarish intensity. He describes the prayer as a “horrible hypocrisy, and it was a sore tax on the preacher to get through it”: “It generally began with a confession that we were all sinners, but no individual sins were ever confessed, and then ensued a kind of dialogue with God, very much resembling the speeches which in later years I have heard in the House of Commons from the movers and seconders of addresses to the Crown at the opening of Parliament” (A, 6). The rest of the day was as wearisome as the chapel services. No secular reading was tolerated, and Sunday dinner was cold and unappetizing: “The meat was cooked beforehand . . .; the only thing hot which was permitted was a
boiled suet pudding, which cooked itself while we were at chapel, and some potatoes which were prepared after we came home” (A, 5). Letters remained unread unless they clearly contained news of illness or other disaster.

White’s account of his childhood in *The Early Life* is more restrained and less imagistically pointed than the one in the *Autobiography*, but it sustains the division between Sunday and the rest of life. White was born in Bedford in 1831; his first memory was the coronation of Queen Victoria and a town’s dinner in Bedford’s St. Paul’s Square (EL, 40). The river in which he bathed flows under a stone bridge just a few yards from the White home on the High Street. It is difficult to find any cause or foreshadowing of White’s later melancholia in his weekday life. He enjoyed visiting relatives and recalls his Colchester aunt’s gingerbread and kisses, which did him “more good, moral good . . . than sermons or punishment” (EL, 12). Amusements such as roasting potatoes over open fires, going “bat-fowling” with lanterns in the dark, buying twenty apples for a penny, eating gooseberries from a neighbour’s garden together create a picture of a perfect childhood. He especially recalls the delight of a holiday visit to his nurse, Jane, at Oakley. Significantly, White emphasizes the naturalness and ease to be found in her one-room “Homeric house.” No special entertainment was provided; “there was just the escape to a freer life” (EL, 41).

As in the *Autobiography*, though, “Sunday . . . was not happy” (EL, 45). Here he adds the information that he was made to stand up in the pew as a spectacle to other children when he had fallen asleep, and that among the books deemed appropriate to his years was one about a boy who drowned and went to hell for wickedly going swimming on a Sunday (EL, 46).6

White was certainly not alone in judging the Victorian Sunday to be a day of tedium and gloom, of cold dinners, tight clothing, boring sermons, and edifying books. The accounts of two other well-known Nonconformist childhoods concur with
his memory. Edmund Gosse, in childhood a Plymouth Brother, described Sunday as a time of "unbroken servitude." "The absence of every species of recreation on the Lord's Day grew to be a burden which might scarcely be borne." John Ruskin also found Sunday insufferable: "The horror of Sunday used even to cast its prescient gloom as far back in the week as Friday—and all the glory of Monday, with church seven days removed again, was no equivalent for it." Considering Rutherford's attitude toward the Lord's Day, it is disturbing to find that the oscillation between freedom and constraint comes to poise at the conclusion of chapter 1 of the Autobiography with the account of his conversion. This admission to Bunyan Meeting was a necessary step to his becoming a Dissenting minister. At the time, White seems to have seen nothing strange or inconsistent in his decision to join the ranks of those devoted to glorification of the Sabbath. Before examining this event and its consequences, however, it will be useful to pause for a moment to consider the context of nineteenth-century Independency in which it occurred.

When his biography of Bunyan was published in 1905, White wrote to his friend Philip Webb that he had enjoyed writing the book because "Elstow and the Ouse and in a measure the temper of the man are in my blood" (L, 328). Bedfordshire had long been a stronghold of Independency; it was Bunyan's home, and Bunyan Meeting his church. The Old Meeting had been built on the site of the barn of Bunyan's ministry, which was licensed in 1672 "for the use of such as doe not conforme to the Church of England who are of the Perswasion commonly called Congregational to meet and assemble in." On the Roll of Church Books of the Meeting, Hale White is listed as number 1936 of "those admitted"; Bunyan himself is number 27. White liked to think of himself as inheritor not only of Bunyan's temper but of Cromwell's. When his second wife asked whether he was descended from Cromwell's Major White, he replied that his
ancestors were nothing more than farmers "who may have been, and indeed very likely were officers in Oliver's army" (GD, 196). His mother, Mary Ann Chignell, came from Colchester, where her family had been members of the Lion Walk Congregational Church since the mid-eighteenth century. His father, William White, was a trustee and deacon of Bunyan Meeting, active in lay preaching and for a number of years superintendent of the Sunday school. Bunyan Meeting held about seven hundred people and was filled every Sunday, although in White's estimation this faithful attendance was owing not to the gifts of the minister but to "the simple loyalty which prevents a soldier or a sailor from mutinying, although the commanding officer may deserve no respect" (EL, 16). The "commanding officer" in this case was the Reverend John Jukes, who was minister during most of White's childhood. The White family much preferred Jukes's predecessor, the Reverend Samuel Hillyard, who had befriended William White when he was a young man. Hillyard, who was fourth in the line of succession from Bunyan, was a universally beloved pastor in Bedford for nearly fifty years. He died in 1839, and was, from the point of view of the White family, the last of the real Puritans to occupy that pulpit.

The gospel under which young Hale White frequently drowsed was "Moderate Calvinism," or "the New System." One of the far-reaching consequences of the Evangelical Revival was the gradual erosion of Calvinist doctrine among Independents. "Moderate Calvinism" was really midway between traditional Calvinist doctrine and the Arminian universalist emphasis of Congregationalism in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1876, R. W. Dale, the great nineteenth-century Congregationalist preacher and theologian, remarked that "among the present aspects of our theological thought, perhaps none is more obvious than the general disappearance of Calvinism." In his History of English Congregationalism, Dale argued that the "characteristic genius of the Revival was silently working against the
Calvinist creed" throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century, despite the fact that the great Calvinist doctrines of original sin, election, and the final perseverance of the saints were still maintained by Independent theologians. Calvinist doctrine was undermined, however inadvertently, in the pulpit: the preachers who had caught the true spirit of the Revival "might be assured that, according to the eternal counsels of God, Christ died only for the elect; but they preached as if they thought that He died for every man in the congregation." Eventually, preachers tried to bring their theology into closer harmony with their sermons: "They thought that while preserving the strong foundations of the Calvinist theology and its method, they could modify some of the Calvinist doctrines, which in their rigid form had become incredible to them. But they were attempting an impossible task, and doing injustice to the constructive genius of their great master. They had not learnt that theologians who begin with Calvin must end with Calvin. 'Moderate Calvinism' was Calvinism in decay." 

Some renowned Congregationalists of the nineteenth century illustrate Dale's thesis. Thomas Binney, twice chairman of the Congregational Union, was never a Calvinist. He rejected the belief in eternal torment and maintained instead "the universality of the Divine Father's love." In 1859, James Baldwin Brown, eminent Congregational minister and theologian, challenged the forensic framework of the traditional doctrine of the Atonement in his book The Divine Life in Man. This work, which insisted on the fatherhood of God, aroused considerable controversy at the time, but by the 1880s many of the leading Congregational clergy embraced the "Larger Hope"—the idea of Universalism—and believed in the eventual salvation of all people. Similarly, William Jay, one of the most distinguished Congregational preachers of the age, "never called himself a Calvinist." Like Robert Elsmere's evangelical friend Newcome, Independents were increasingly unable to conceive of God as the "arch-
plotter against his own creation." R. Tudur Jones writes that in the second half of the nineteenth century, Congregationalists "desired to hear more of life than of death; more about God's goodness than about his justice." He concludes that "moderate Calvinism had been the theology of the new humanitarianism and now that humanitarianism felt that moderate Calvinism was not moderate enough."  

While the nineteenth-century reevaluation of Calvinism may ultimately have had beneficial consequences, Hale White believed that the apparent divorce of dogma and faith inevitably engendered dishonesty. "Moderate Calvinism," he writes, was for him a term "not easy to understand": "If it had any meaning, it was that predestination, election, and reprobation, were unquestionably true, but they were dogmas about which it was not prudent to say much, for some of the congregation were a little Arminian, and St. James could not be totally neglected" (EL, 17). Moderate Calvinism seemed to White a pernicious compromise, since it encouraged both minister and congregation to use words and phrases that had once had a vital spiritual significance as a kind of empty shorthand, devoid of meaning and associative power. One was perforce involved in hypocrisy when doctrine was declared to be true but was totally removed from ordinary experience—a fact he knew with painful clarity because his own "conversion" had involved him in this kind of lying. 

White did not experience a call to the ministry in any way. In fact, he rather wanted to be an artist but was overruled by his mother. His father appears to have been reticent in the whole matter. His mother, whom White describes as being "a little weak in her preference for people who did not stand behind counters" (EL, 55–56), had grown up among the "prosperous commercial middle class of Lion Walk" and was ambitious for her son. White's friend and cousin, William Chignell, was being trained as an Independent minister, and in White's words, his mother "desired equality with her sister-in-law" (EL, 56; cf. GD, 33).
With retrospective justice, he adds: "Besides, I can honestly declare that to her an Evangelical ministry was a sacred calling, and the thought that I might be the means of saving souls made her happy." Such exculpatory second thoughts about his mother are few, however, and in general White's treatment of her contrasts sharply with the love and admiration he shows toward his father. On the whole, Mrs. White is conspicuous by her absence from her son's memoirs and letters; when White mentions her at all it is usually in a detached and critical manner. He speaks of her "little affectations," her "slight weakness in favour of rank," and her pride in being on visiting terms with people who "lived in a 'park'" (EL, 42). This kind of woman, Dissenting but not democratic, class-conscious and ambitious, appears frequently in White's fiction. For her part, Mrs. White was obviously proud of her son and carefully noted in her diary the occasions when "dear Hale" preached, married, or did anything remarkable.²⁴

It was determined, then, that Hale should enter the Countess of Huntingdon's College at Cheshunt in Hertfordshire. He was, of course, unable to consider Oxford or Cambridge because of the Test Acts.²⁵ Before he could enter a college, he had to be officially "admitted" to the congregation of Bunyan Meeting.

This event took place in February 1848, when White was seventeen years old. Traditionally, those who desired to be admitted to church fellowship had to satisfy the pastor and two deacons that "they understood the central truths of the Evangelical faith, and trusted in Christ for eternal salvation, and were resolved to keep His commandments."²⁶ After the pastor and deacons gave their testimony to the church, members voted on whether the candidate should be admitted. A personal profession of faith before the church meeting was also required.

In the Autobiography, Rutherford explains that "conversion, amongst the Independents and other Puritan sects, is supposed to be a kind of miracle wrought in the heart by the
influence of the Holy Spirit, by which the man becomes something altogether different to what he was previously” (A, 9). The candidate was expected to feel that he was guilty both of original sin and of sins he had actually committed, for which he deserved eternal punishment. Christ had become his substitute and “His death . . . the payment for my transgression. I had to feel that His life and death were appropriated by me[,] . . . that I, personally, was in God's mind, and was included in the atonement” (EL, 58).

Conversion, then, was central to Puritan experience. In Puritanism in Old and New England, Alan Simpson remarks that “The essence of Puritanism—what Cromwell called the “root of the matter” when he surveyed the whole unruly flock—is an experience of conversion which separates the Puritan from the mass of mankind and endows him with the privileges and duties of the elect. The root of the matter is always a new birth, which brings with it a conviction of salvation and a dedication to warfare against sin.”

Certainly White regarded his own conversion as the first great event of his life: “Nothing particular happened to me till I was about fourteen,” says Mark Rutherford, “when I was told it was time I became converted” (A, 9). Then, “I remember with perfect distinctness the day on which I was admitted” (A, 11). The memory was indeed powerful: White wrote of it in both autobiographies; he spoke to Dorothy about it (“He told me about his . . . ‘profession’ of Christ. . . . He remembers the scene vividly” [GD, 71]); he commented on it in his notebooks; and he made the experience of conversion, of “turning around,” a central theme of his fiction.

What White remembered with “perfect distinctness,” however, was his own unconscious hypocrisy. As an adult, he sardonically remarked that the spiritual experience described by converts was “very often inaccurately picturesque, and . . . framed after the model of the journey to Damascus” (EL, 57).
His own experience was “not . . . eventful”:

I can see myself now—I was no more than seventeen—stepping out of our pew, standing in the aisle at the pew-door, and protesting to their content before the minister of the church, father and mother protesting also to my own complete content, that the witness of God in me to my own salvation was as clear as noonday. Poor little mortal, a twelvemonth out of round jackets, I did not in the least know who God was, or what was salvation. (EL, 59)

Much later White remarked to Dorothy that he remembered “standing up there alone and beginning, ‘I was born of pious parents.’ ” He thought that his profession was written out rather than spoken extempore, and recollected “one sentence, that having been brought up in a religious household he had not needed ‘like Saul of Tarsus’ any great or sudden conversion” (GD, 71). The description of Mark Rutherford’s conversion is White’s memory expanded and enriched:

I was obliged to declare myself convinced of sin; convinced of the efficacy of the atonement; convinced that I was forgiven; convinced that the Holy Ghost was shed abroad in my heart; and convinced of a great many other things which were the merest phrases. . . . It was the custom to demand of each candidate a statement of his or her experience. I had no experience to give; and I was excused on the grounds that I had been the child of pious parents, and consequently had not undergone that convulsion which those, not favoured like myself, necessarily underwent when they were called. (A, 10–11)

The phrase “born of pious parents” lingered tenaciously and accusingly in White’s memory. His self-hatred for his youthful hypocrisy (“I was satisfied I understood what I did not in the least understand. This is very near lying” [EL, 59]) surfaces in his characterization of Thomas Broad of *The Revolution in
**Tanner’s Lane.** The minister’s son is the most hypocritical and morally repugnant of all White’s characters; the description of him is familiar and bitter: “being the child of pious parents, and of many prayers, [he] had never been exposed to those assaults of the enemy of souls which beset ordinary young men, and consequently had not undergone a sudden conversion.”

The doctrines that White penetrated and reinterpreted later in life were at this time empty phrases for him. Within the Puritan tradition of personal faith, individual responsibility, and relationship to God, the remark “I had no experience to give” is a damning statement. He himself had experienced neither the conviction of sin nor the grace of God: “I was pretty much the same after conversion as before” (LP, 88). The piety of his parents had served as his own counterfeit experience. What passed for conversion in nineteenth-century Independency was “altogether unmeaning.” He professed himself a child of God, but he was completely untouched and unchanged by the event, “save that I was perhaps a little more hypocritical” (A, 10).

Two aspects of White’s descriptions of his conversions are particularly striking. First, all his recollections somehow make him seem younger than he actually was. In the *Autobiography*, Rutherford is “about fourteen” (A, 9); White told Dorothy that he was “15 or 16 years old” (GD, 71). In *The Early Life*, although he admits to his real age—seventeen—he is only a “poor little mortal, a twelvemonth out of round jackets” (EL, 59). Even if we allow that the confusion of years is owing to the natural erosion of memory, it is intriguing that White diminishes his responsibility for the event by imagining a child who has barely reached the age of reason. Clearly he does not wish to accept that he was so easily fooled. We have to keep reminding ourselves that he was not too young to know what he was doing; he was initiated as a church member so that he could attend a college.

The second notable point is the curiously passive manner in which he describes his participation in the conversion and
subsequent matriculation at Cheshunt. In both The Early Life and the Autobiography, he depicts himself as an object acted upon by others, having no voice of his own in the proceedings. In the Autobiography, Mark Rutherford is "told it was time I became converted"; in his testimony he is "obliged to declare myself convinced of sin"; the conclusion of his examination is "that I was proposed for acceptance"; in the Meeting, "I had no experience to give; . . . I was excused. . . ." Similarly, in The Early Life, when he is voted down in his wish to be an artist, "I was handed over to a private tutor" to be prepared for college. The Rutherford of the Autobiography is even more emphatic: it was necessary "that an occupation should be found for me," and eventually "it was settled that I should 'go into the ministry.' " After a few months of preparation, "I was taken to a Dissenting College" (A, 9–12, EL, 56; my emphases). We might, of course, explain this language as the product of White's deliberate distancing of emotionally charged material; but only partly, I think. The persistent passive is also an accusation of those who had encouraged him to make what he felt in retrospect was the "great event and great blunder of my life."

At the same time, the irony and anger that pervade much of White's writing on religion suggest that, although he felt betrayed by a community and a religious tradition, he also knew that the chief traitor was his own unawakened heart. Looking back, Mark Rutherford observes, "It is wonderful to think how I could take so much for granted" (A, 16). The Early Life expresses similar incredulity: "It is almost incredible to me now, although I was hardly nineteen, that I should have accepted without question such a terrible invention" as the doctrine of election (EL, 60). I have suggested that later in his life White felt that in Bunyan Meeting he had unconsciously lied—had, in fact, blasphemed. We can find, I believe, an indirect retrospective judgment on his profession of faith in his remarks about Job: He "loathes his words, he repents in dust and ashes, because he had
spoken *hearsay* about God. If we understood this, what would become of our theologies and churches?” (LP, 118; my emphasis). Job, like White, had spoken things about God that he himself had not experienced.

The self-contempt engendered by his inadvertent false witness became habitual, but the event had an even more destructive result: here began the sense of perpetual exile that imbibes White’s life and much of his work. His feelings of alienation are complex. He may not truly have known “who God was, or what was salvation,” but he deeply felt their loss. His grief, moreover, was compounded by an amorphous sense of guilt. The Calvinist creed, he writes, “had as evil consequences that it concentrated my thoughts upon myself, and made me of great importance. God had been anxious about me from all eternity, and had been scheming to save me” (EL, 59). He lost the sense of being chosen and individually valued, but self-consciousness and anxiety remained. Furthermore, he no longer had the satisfaction, however contemptible, “of belonging to a society marked off from the great world” (A, 11). From now on, he lived on the boundary between the two. In 1891, White wrote to his friend Mrs. Colenutt that he disliked visiting Bedford, for “my father’s shade meets me at every corner” (L, 52). Surely White’s relationship to Bunyan Meeting also accounts for some part of his reluctance to return to his native town. Not only his father’s shade but his own past self—his folly and his failure—met him there.

II

In the fall of 1848, White matriculated at Cheshunt. The College, organized by George Whitefield in the eighteenth century under the patronage of the Countess of Huntingdon, was by the nineteenth century officially linked to the Congregational denomination. Independents in general tried to sustain a Puritan
tradition of intellectual rigor, and nineteenth-century Independence included in its ranks such well-known theologians as R. W. Dale, A. M. Fairbairn, Thomas Binney, and Baldwin Brown. Yet White's educational experience at Cheshunt appears to have been entirely profitless. He thought the instruction academically superficial and spiritually pernicious. Mark Rutherford's description is bitter and pointed: "During the first two years at college," he writes, "my life was entirely external. My heart was altogether untouched by anything I heard, read, or did, although I myself supposed that I took an interest in them" (A, 18). Classical instruction was "inefficient," and biblical study "a sham" (A, 13). The Bible, which in later years White valued above all other books, was at Cheshunt "a magazine of texts, and those portions of it which contributed nothing in the shape of texts, or formed no part of the scheme, were neglected" (A, 14). Although the future lives of the students were to be spent in the teaching of biblical truths, "there was no book less understood either by students or professors" (A, 13). Lectures on the teleological argument for God's existence were as "irrelevant as the chattering of sparrows": "When I did not even know who or what this God was, and could not bring my lips to use the word with any mental honesty, of what service was the 'watch argument' to me?" Systematic theology "was the great business" (A, 14) of the students' academic life. The author of the Calvinist manual, White remarks, "justified the election of a minority to heaven and a majority to hell on the ground that God owed us nothing, and being our Maker, might do with us what He pleased" (EL, 60; cf. A, 14). Moreover, "not a word was ever spoken to us telling us in what manner to strengthen the reason, to subdue the senses, or in what way to deal with all the varied diseases of that soul of man which we were to set ourselves to save" (A, 14). All human failings were labeled "sin," and for this "there was one quack remedy" (A, 14–15).
At this time White still did not actually doubt the theology he was taught; but “at no point did it come into contact with me” (A, 15). He was able to accept what he calls the “terrible invention” of Calvinist doctrine only because it was meaningless: “all this belonged to a world totally disconnected from my own, and . . . I never thought of making real to myself anything which this supernatural world contained” (EL, 60–61; my emphasis). The spiritual life of the students was “not very deep,” conversation was “trivial,” and instruction “irrelevant” (A, 17, 13). In these two years, nothing moved White, spiritually or emotionally. His memories may be distorted, but even so, it is difficult to reconcile this scathing description of life at Cheshunt with the image of the erudite Independent academies praised by historians. White’s concluding judgment is bleak: “I learnt nothing at Cheshunt, and did not make a single friend” (EL, 63).

In his final year at Cheshunt, however, this moribund existence was penetrated by a new influence. “As well as Paul must have remembered afterwards the day on which he went to Damascus,” White recalled the day he discovered a copy of the Lyrical Ballads (A, 18; cf. EL, 61, GD, 33). The poetry “conveyed . . . no new doctrine, and yet the change it wrought in me could only be compared with that which is said to have been wrought on Paul himself by the Divine apparition.” He could now reclaim the Pauline archetype of conversion and recognize its vitality, for here was genuine conversion, actual rebirth. His heart and spirit were now moved, and a process begun which altered the nature of his belief. Though he finds it difficult to express the precise significance of this feeling of renewal, it “excited a movement and a growth which went on till, by degrees, all the systems which enveloped me like a body gradually decayed from me and fell away into nothing” (A, 18–19). This dynamic language effectively communicates the process of the shattering of the old self, a stripping away of the
Calvinist trappings that shrouded the unawakened spirit. As the scales fell from Paul's eyes, so the "systems" fell from White's consciousness. Blindness gave way to light, as he finally apprehended what was real. Wordsworth's God, White says, "is not the God of the Church, but the God of the hills, the abstraction Nature, and to this my reverence was transferred." The tyrannical deity of the Calvinist manual, "altogether artificial, remote, never coming into genuine contact with me," was replaced by one "which I thought to be real, one in which literally I could live and move and have my being." Wordsworth did for him "what every religious reformer has done," and what White himself was later to do: "he re-created my Supreme Divinity; substituting a new and living spirit for the old deity, once alive, but gradually hardened into an idol" (A, 19).

Although the "God of Nature" remains a vague concept, the divine presence which White felt in reading Wordsworth's poetry was intensely real to him. In a short essay entitled "Belief, Unbelief, and Superstition," he attempted to clarify what he meant by spiritual reality: "Suppose that the light which struck down St. Paul on his journey to Damascus was due to his own imagination, the belief that it came from Jesus enthroned in the heavens was a sign of strength and not of weakness. . . . If Christ never rose from the dead, the women who waited at the sepulchre were nearer to reality than the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection" (P, 85). Similarly, in the Autobiography, Mark Rutherford remarks that Paul's hope of the second coming of Christ may have been a "baseless dream": but it is nevertheless the "hope and the prophecy of all noble hearts, a sign of their inability to concur in the present condition of things" (A, 204).

In his journals, White observes that "A mere dream, a vague hope may be more potent than certainty in a lesser matter. The faintest vision of God is more determinative of life than a gross earthly certainty" (MP, 220). Ironically, the Puritan heritage of intuitive knowledge of divine mystery—"the inner light"—was evoked
in White through Romantic poetry: the felt immanent presence of God, and a hopeful openness to the supernatural dimension came to him in "the God of Nature."

White's sense of renewal at this period is expressed in his general response to life around him. Wordsworth awoke in him a "new capacity" (EL, 61), and he now read other books with tearful emotion. In his own college White had made no friends, but now he found one or two in other institutions whose experience resembled his own (A, 20). The most striking aspect of his transformation was a growing interest in the origins of Puritanism. Here, too, Wordsworth led him indirectly back to his heritage through the now awakened springs of emotion. Even though for some time he "had no thought of heresy," the "seed was there" (EL, 63). He began to search for the living heart of his heritage:

The artificial, the merely miraculous, the event which had no inner meaning, no matter how large externally it might be, I did not care for. . . . Nearly every doctrine in the college creed had once had a natural origin in the necessities of human nature, and might therefore be so interpreted as to become a necessity again. . . . But it was precisely this reaching after a meaning which constituted heresy. The distinctive essence of our orthodoxy was not this or that dogma, but the acceptance of dogmas as communications from without, and not as born from within. (A, 21; my emphasis)

To find the original necessity that had inspired the dogma became a central inquiry. Eventually, White desired a more personal God than the "abstraction Nature," although his love of the natural world remained a source of deliverance throughout his life. His love of Wordsworth was also enduring. His devoted and careful Wordsworth scholarship reflects his affection and admiration for the poet. His second wife wrote that even in his last years he "spoke of the Coleridges and Wordsworths as of personal
friends, with all the intimacy, love, and reverence” (GD, 28). To Wordsworth he owed the spiritual awakening that began his “reaching after a meaning.” The “revolution” wrought by the poet, he believed, was deeper and more permanent than the work of biblical critics, and “it was Wordsworth and not German research which caused my expulsion from New College” (EL, 62–63).

White transferred to New College, St. John’s Wood, London, in October 1851. The college, formed by the amalgamation of Homerton, Highbury, and Coward colleges, had just opened. John Harris, who had been Professor of Theology at Cheshunt, was invited to be its first principal.

Dr. Harris’s lengthy inaugural lecture was on the timely subject of the inspiration of Scripture. Although Harris appears to have attempted to confront the complexities of the question and offer a new theory of inspiration, his final word was orthodox: “No theory can be accepted in contravention or limitation of the Biblical idea of inspiration, which does not rest on authority equal to that of the Bible itself.”

William White, Sr., saw the position as a reactionary one and sarcastically commented that Harris’s sixty-eight pages might have been condensed into one, its substance being: “First, there was an inspiration to prepare the minds of the sacred writers to receive the truth. Second, there was a revelation to be received. Third, there was an inspiration to enable the recipients to give out the truths received. And the last was ‘plenary and complete so as to preserve the writers or speakers from all error.’”

On February 3, 1852, the students were examined in class on Harris’s lecture. The purpose of the examination was to “elicit discussion on such points” as needed clarification in order to pursue thorough study of the subject at hand. Along with Frederic White and Robert Theobald, who had transferred with him from Cheshunt, Hale White asked some pointed questions relating to the meaning of inspiration, the formation of the
biblical canon, and the authenticity of the separate books.³⁴ A letter to his father in January suggests that White came to the examination prepared for a confrontation.³⁵ Dr. Harris refused to allow thorough discussion of the subject, stating emphatically that inspiration "is not an open question within these walls; there is a certain body of truth, received as orthodoxy by the great majority of Christians, the explanation of which is one thing, but the foundation must not be questioned."³⁶

Shortly after the examination, the three students were invited to explain their views before a special meeting of the College Council. They appear not to have been contacted or questioned prior to this invitation. In a subsequent letter to William White, Sr., expressing his regret for the whole affair, Dr. Harris explained that he had only done his duty in immediately informing the council of the students' views: "Of course, I have only moved in this affair ministerially—reporting what I knew I should be expected to report, (or be justly blamed for withholding)—& leaving the Council to act accordingly."³⁷ On February 13, the students were called in separately before the council and asked questions which, when they became known, aroused much indignation and some scorn. Among these were the following: "Can you explain the mode in which you conceive the sacred writers to have been influenced?" "Do you believe a statement because it is in the Bible, or merely because it is true?" "You are aware that there are two great parties on this question, one of which maintains that the inspiration of the Scriptures differs in kind from that of other books—the other, that it differs only in degree. To which of these parties do you attach yourself?" "Are you conscious of any divergence from the views expressed by the Principal in his introductory lecture?"³⁸ The interview appears to have been formidable. White reminds readers of The Early Life that he was then a twenty-year-old youth, being interrogated by a number of solemn and apparently hostile divines
"in white neckerchiefs" (EL, 65). In his ferocious pamphlet, *To Think or Not to Think?*, William White, Sr., replied indignantly to each of these questions, concluding with some reason that "it would have saved a world of trouble if the young men had been called in, and had been commanded to sign the inaugural lecture." 39

The students’ answers to these questions were unsatisfactory. Shortly after the interview, they were informed that the council, after "long and anxious deliberation," reluctantly resolved that the opinions expressed by them were "incompatible with the retention . . . of their position as students for the Christian ministry." 40 William White, Sr., had not waited to learn the results of this interview. Upon hearing that the students had been asked to appear again before the council, he went immediately to London. He sensed something insidious in the rapidity of the whole business, and requested permission from Dr. Harris to attend the next meeting of the council. He also wrote to Thomas Binney, who was chairman of the New College Council and personally known to White. Binney was the eminent minister of King’s Weigh House Chapel, a famous preacher and the first great advocate of disestablishment. He was well known as the active champion of Dissenters’ grievances. Furthermore, about thirty years earlier, Binney had been pastor of Bunyan Meeting for a twelvemonth and had left that pastorate amid rumors of his heterodoxy. 41 Advising Binney of his own application for admission to the council meeting, White wrote, "I have faith in your judgement and integrity of purpose." 42 Unfortunately, Binney was ill and could neither answer the letter nor attend the meeting. Two of the fathers—William White and the other Mr. White—went to the meeting, and after remonstrating against the entire proceeding, requested that the students’ moral character be placed above suspicion and that the opinions for which they were condemned be explicitly stated. They also asked for a copy of the creed by which the students were judged.
The council, "most anxious to remove even the possibility of a misapprehension" of the students' views, appointed a committee to discuss matters further with them. After more deliberation, the council requested the students to withdraw for three months and reconsider their opinions. The students felt that they could not comply, and again asked for an answer to their three previous requests. The resolution that succeeded the fifth meeting of the council, on March 17, stated that the opinions of the students "respecting the authority of the Sacred Scriptures" were considered to be "inconsistent with their position as students of New College." Because their offer of a three-month withdrawal had been refused, and considering that they had already sufficiently complied with the students' requests, the members of the council felt they had "no alternative but to declare its unanimous judgment, that the connexion of these students with New College must cease.''

On March 17, 1852, came the expulsion that William White angrily suggested was "intended from the first." While Hale White and his friends believed they had been expelled because, as William White put it, they would "not profess a belief in dry dead formulas," the New College Council saw the matter differently. The students were removed because they had "unhappily been led to reject the Supreme Authority of the Sacred Scriptures."

The grievances of the students and their supporters against the New College Council were both general and specific. The most significant general grievance concerned the implications of these proceedings for the changing attitudes of Nonconformity. That an Independent institution that supposedly had no head but Christ should speak, as it were, ex cathedra, was to William White an outrage: "But is not this Popery? it will be asked. . . . Of course it is—the very essence. Nay it is more. It is the Sanhedrim revived." He compared the proceedings to the Inquisition and demanded of the Dissenters of England
whether this is not a melancholy sight. . . . here is a Dissenting Doctor; and, moreover, an ‘Independent,’ one of that sect which arrogates to itself the special title of defender of liberty—freedom of conscience—right of private judgment, etc. . . . adopting an index expurgatorius, like a Pope of Rome." This parallel was also seized upon by William Maccall, editor of The People, in his article "The Bible and the Truth: The New College Heresy." Maccall emphasized the irony of the situation: descendants of the Puritans were creating a "quasi-prelatical institution." He sarcastically noted the growing propensity of Dissent to become respectable, and in the process to detach itself from the center of its heritage. Dismay at the expulsions, then, went beyond personal considerations. That an Independent college should act in this way was for many witnesses an ominous indication of the direction of English Nonconformity.

Second, the students and their friends were disturbed that a college should so eagerly dismiss them for the exercise of their minds. "Every student," William White argued, "goes to College, not with a belief rigidly formed, but that, by study and thought, and the attainment of knowledge, he may form his belief." His professors' duty should be to assist him "by counsel and argument, out of the mists and ravelments which encompass him into the broad daylight, and on to the firm ground of truth." Aside from the initial examination and the council interviews succeeding it, the students did not appear to have been approached for discussion of the disputed topic by any of their professors. Robert Theobald asserted in a letter to the Council and Subscribers of New College that prior to the conversation of February 3, which led to his expulsion, he had "never received any hint from any Professor . . . , that my opinions were regarded as dangerous or heretical." The students had received neither counsel nor argument. Inevitably, they felt that both the academic and the religious values of the institution had failed them. The real heresy had been the denial of their right to seek the truth.
In addition to these general grievances, the students and their supporters had more specific complaints. First, they felt that the proceedings had been altogether too hasty to allow justice to be done: "They became 'suspect' on the 3rd, and were tried and condemned on the 13th," and expelled a little more than a month later. Second, the kinds of questions they were asked in their interviews were either exceedingly difficult to answer briefly or were patently absurd. In his editorial, Maccall gave a scathing analysis: "'Do you believe a statement because it is in the Bible, or merely because it is true?' Did ever orthodoxy put so suicidal a question before? The framer of this question must have imagined either that the Bible contains all truth, or that it contains no truth, or else that the truth contained in the Bible is in eternal contradiction to the truth to be found out of it." Finally, there was the discourtesy that had characterized the entire procedure. William White was particularly exercised about the fact that neither Dr. Harris nor any of the other instructors had bothered to let him know that his son's opinions were changing in such a manner as to make his teachers uneasy. White felt he had a right to expect such a courtesy, since a couple of years prior to these events he had candidly asked Dr. Harris if Hale were suited to be a candidate for the ministry.

One of the students' requests concerned the protection of their moral reputations. They wanted it to be made clear that they had been expelled for their heterodox opinions only. Such a clarification was not forthcoming. Instead, the statement of the council in its annual report implied that the students' conduct was censured as well as their opinions: "Their case was not brought under the notice of the Council until it appeared, both from their statements and from their conduct, that there was no probability of their opinions being changed by any instruction which might be offered to them" (pp. 9–10). Robert Theobald was eloquent about this "insidious stab at our moral character" and noted that the statement had produced the effect the council
"whether this is not a melancholy sight. . . . here is a Dissenting Doctor; and, moreover, an 'Independent,,' one of that sect which arrogates to itself the special title of defender of liberty—freedom of conscience—right of private judgment, etc. . . . adopting an index expurgatorius, like a Pope of Rome." This parallel was also seized upon by William Maccall, editor of *The People*, in his article "The Bible and the Truth: The New College Heresy." Maccall emphasized the irony of the situation: descendants of the Puritans were creating a "quasi-prelatical institution." He sarcastically noted the growing propensity of Dissent to become respectable, and in the process to detach itself from the center of its heritage. Dismay at the expulsions, then, went beyond personal considerations. That an Independent college should act in this way was for many witnesses an ominous indication of the direction of English Nonconformity.

Second, the students and their friends were disturbed that a college should so eagerly dismiss them for the exercise of their minds. "Every student," William White argued, "goes to College, not with a belief rigidly formed, but that, by study and thought, and the attainment of knowledge, he may form his belief." His professors' duty should be to assist him "by counsel and argument, out of the mists and ravelments which encompass him into the broad daylight, and on to the firm ground of truth." Aside from the initial examination and the council interviews succeeding it, the students did not appear to have been approached for discussion of the disputed topic by any of their professors. Robert Theobald asserted in a letter to the Council and Subscribers of New College that prior to the conversation of February 3, which led to his expulsion, he had "never received any hint from any Professor . . . , that my opinions were regarded as dangerous or heretical." The students had received neither counsel nor argument. Inevitably, they felt that both the academic and the religious values of the institution had failed them. The real heresy had been the denial of their right to seek the truth.
In addition to these general grievances, the students and their supporters had more specific complaints. First, they felt that the proceedings had been altogether too hasty to allow justice to be done: "They became 'suspect' on the 3rd, and were tried and condemned on the 13th," and expelled a little more than a month later. Second, the kinds of questions they were asked in their interviews were either exceedingly difficult to answer briefly or were patently absurd. In his editorial, Maccall gave a scathing analysis: "'Do you believe a statement because it is in the Bible, or merely because it is true?' Did ever orthodoxy put so suicidal a question before? The framer of this question must have imagined either that the Bible contains all truth, or that it contains no truth, or else that the truth contained in the Bible is in eternal contradiction to the truth to be found out of it." Finally, there was the discourtesy that had characterized the entire procedure. William White was particularly exercised about the fact that neither Dr. Harris nor any of the other instructors had bothered to let him know that his son's opinions were changing in such a manner as to make his teachers uneasy. White felt he had a right to expect such a courtesy, since a couple of years prior to these events he had candidly asked Dr. Harris if Hale were suited to be a candidate for the ministry.

One of the students' requests concerned the protection of their moral reputations. They wanted it to be made clear that they had been expelled for their heterodox opinions only. Such a clarification was not forthcoming. Instead, the statement of the council in its annual report implied that the students' conduct was censured as well as their opinions: "Their case was not brought under the notice of the Council until it appeared, both from their statements and from their conduct, that there was no probability of their opinions being changed by any instruction which might be offered to them" (pp. 9–10). Robert Theobald was eloquent about this "insidious stab at our moral character" and noted that the statement had produced the effect the council
must have hoped it would: "It has been argued that it was impossible that the Council could have expelled three Students merely for holding views at variance with their own on the subject of the Inspiration and Scripture authority: that doubtless they had other and weightier reasons for the expulsion which, out of kindness to the young men, they would not avow, and so were benevolent enough to fasten on their heresies without exposing their immoralities. . . . all this is confirmed by the fact that they refused to grant to these young men a certificate of unblemished character." 57

Last, the students were offended by what they saw as the hypocrisy of their expulsion by these particular professors, especially Dr. Harris. Although Mark Rutherford characterizes the president of the college as a foolish provincial, ignorant of German biblical criticism ("he knew nothing of German literature; and indeed, the word 'German' was a term of reproach signifying something very awful, although nobody knew exactly what it was" [A, 14]), this description was far from true. Ironically, in some quarters Harris himself was suspected of holding unorthodox opinions. 58 He was one of the editors of The Biblical Review, which printed very liberal views on the subject of inspiration as well as other theological issues. One reader described the periodical as "taking an eminently broad and philosophical ground in discussing the nature of religion and the basis of Christian theology." 59 In his pamphlet, William White quoted from the Review several heretical passages by such thinkers as Coleridge, Schleiermacher, and Dr. Arnold. He then charged the professors of New College with hypocrisy, claiming that the expelled students might well have been led to entertain their "dangerous notions" by reading articles edited and approved by the very principal who now condemned them.

The experience of expulsion left a painful wound in Hale White. The entire episode of the "Dissenting College" in the Autobiography is characterized by anger and resentment, and
his tone when referring to Dr. Harris here and elsewhere is self-righteous, if not vindictive. Wilfred Stone has suggested that the wound was to White’s vanity, and that his response to Harris was that of an offended young romantic who felt his teacher had not perceived his extraordinary gifts: “this man had not seen in him the makings of a new Messiah.” This judgment may contain part of the truth, but certainly not all of it.

What were White’s feelings at this juncture? Harris had been his professor during the empty, isolated years at Cheshunt. Then had come the discovery of Wordsworth. One of the consequences of White’s awakening, as I have noted, was his growing need to “reach through to that original necessity” and reinterpret central Christian truths. Harris had gone before; he was well known for his “attachment to the best and most liberal of the German Theologians.” In White’s view, Harris should have been, ideally, a fellow-seeker—at the very least, a warm supporter. But in fact “the man who of all men ought to have welcomed me, had not a word of warmth or encouragement for me, nothing but the coldest indifference, and even repulse.” When Rutherford preaches a sermon reinterpreting the meaning of the Atonement, the president damps his ardor with a cold, conventional reprimand and advises him to stick to Scripture: “His words fell on me like the hand of a corpse,” says Rutherford, “and I went away much depressed” (A, 23). The simile is precise and forceful. He had just been “reborn,” and here was the new life being threatened with a return to the grave.

It is also noteworthy that immediately following the passage just quoted, Mark Rutherford’s narrative begins a digression that is evidently the result of an associative process. He begins “it occurs to me here to offer an explanation of a failing. . . .” This failing turns out to be his reserved, secretive personality, developed as protection against a frustrated desire for affection and sympathy. He really had “an excess of communicativeness, an eagerness to show what was most at my heart.” The following
paragraph continues the free association: "I am also reminded here of a dream which I had in these years of a perfect friendship" (A, 24; my emphases).

These sudden narrative transitions are provocative. White feels repulsed by the one man who should have "welcomed" him, and his strong need for affection and approval is thwarted. The wiser voice retrospectively judging his adolescent hunger ("Only when I got much older did I discern the duty of accepting life as God has made it" [A, 25]) cannot mask the anguish of the original yearning. When Harris failed to respond, White chose the role of his antagonist.

Further consideration of White's heresy in the light of his mental and emotional state in 1852 brings us inevitably back to the episode of his conversion. He had joined the ranks of the elect by speaking hearsay, by lying: now he voluntarily cast himself out of that community by telling the truth. His heresy was a kind of reversal, a way of undoing his hypocrisy, and transforming—if only momentarily—his self-hatred. This natural consequence of his spiritual awakening was his first conscious, self-assertive religious act. By casting himself as a rebel and martyr, White attempted to efface the shameful image of the "child of pious parents" from his memory. Now no one else's experience passed for his own; no other's words were allowed to stand for what he believed. The cumulative negative experience of his childhood lay behind his commitment to heresy: Sundays, church, conversion, Cheshunt, all the shams and vacuous experiences in which he had participated were, in one ferocious stroke, canceled.

Wordsworth had made White emotionally vulnerable and had also awakened his latent Puritan conscience. The two conflicting impulses, Puritan and Romantic, were in potent harmony here. For some time now White had felt an excess of spiritual ardor and emotional energy that had no focus. Instead of the "perfect friend" for whom he longed, he found a noble cause.
All the energy bombarding in a void might be channeled into standing fast and fighting for religious freedom, true Nonconformity, with the fearless commitment of his ancestors. Identity and self-respect were both recovered in the event.

The energy and excitement of White’s letters of this period oddly contrast with the mournful indignation of his later pronouncements on the episode:

Dearest Father

We were a very short time with the Committee yesterday. . . . “Retire for 3 months”—of course we refused. No surrender—no compromise—I said that if I could change my opinions in so short a time that I would abandon all thoughts of public speaking. . . . I shall pack up all my traps next week—& be off. I shall save money by so doing for I am not certain that I shall have to meet the Council any more . . . & even if I have to appear before them I can come up for the day. I shall I think come home till the Council meeting is over & the matter definitively settled & then off to Portsmouth.

The letter concludes with a paragraph that charmingly qualifies the heroic posture of the first part: “Will you send me those packages of canvass etc., etc. & also some money. Alas—I have been obliged to get a whole new suit of clothes. Could not help it—which is £5.1. Don’t be angry. . . . can you send those things directly—money & canvass I mean. . . . Best love to dearest Mother. . . . Your own H.”

The attraction to heroism persisted in White’s character. As late as 1904 he revealed his desire to devote himself to a great person or cause. Writing of Joan of Arc in a letter to Philip Webb, White exclaims, “Oh, that you or I could have been at Rouen with ten thousand soldiers and artillery, wherewith to blast into hell that damned bishop and his crew . . . who tried and burnt the saintly heroine! Oh, that I could have gone with her to execution, and have stood at her side in the flames!” (L, 325).
White is not posing here. He felt, as did many others, that such heroism had become impossible in his time. He agreed with George Eliot's claim that "the medium in which . . . ardent deeds took shape is forever gone." In 1852, the opportunity for heroic action and even martyrdom of sorts presented itself at New College. His treatment at the hands of Puritans confirmed White's fear that real Dissent was fast atrophying. In his own eyes, he had been thrown to the lions. The following—much later, solemn—account in *The Early Life* may be contrasted with the letter to his father quoted above: "The Holy Office was never more scandalously indifferent to any pretence of justice or legality in its proceedings. We were not told what was the charge against us, nor what were the terms of the trust deed of the college, if such a document existed; neither were we informed what was the meaning of the indictment, and yet the council must have been aware that nothing less than our ruin would probably be the result of our condemnation" (EL, 68–69). This is strong language. While it is true that in some circles White's reputation was considered tarnished, he was not "ruined." On the contrary, both within Nonconformity and the Established Church his heresy raised up several champions. William White's pamphlet was generally well received. It strongly impressed Charles Kingsley, F. D. Maurice, and James Martineau, all of whom wrote to William White expressing sympathy and encouragement. Various newspapers supported the students; John Hamilton, editor of *The Buckinghamham Advertiser*, offered to review White's pamphlet; and Mr. S. T. Porter of Glasgow promptly wrote to offer Hale White, sight unseen, a job as tutor to his own sons and those of his friends, with a view to turning the "private class into a day grammar school of distinction." Hale refused this handsome offer.

III

The combined experiences of conversion and heresy were to affect White profoundly. His character, his external life, and
his fiction all felt the reverberations of these events. One consequence was his later obsession with literal truth. White describes his father as "a perfectly honest man," and claims that "the only time he gave me a thrashing was for prevarication" (EL, 36). Given his father's values, the unwitting hypocrisy of White's conversion must have come to seem particularly hateful to him. His heresy—in which he demonstrated the extent of his commitment to truth—was the beginning of a lifelong reparation. In a letter to Mabel Marsh in September 1897, White becomes quite exercised about the question "what do people understand us to mean when we use certain words? . . . if a clergyman should tell his congregation that he has signed the 39 Articles, or if his congregation should know that he has signed them, would they consider that it was a mere form signifying nothing? . . . There is no theological dogma so important as the duty of veracity. . . . No religion is possible unless veracity lies at its base" (L, 159–61). The letter strongly suggests a connection between White's views on veracity and his youthful heresy. The experience itself clearly continued to live in his memory; and his perception of himself in that past action remained dramatic and positive:

More than forty years ago the whole course of my life was changed by my refusal to slur over a difference between myself and my teacher on the subject of the inspiration of the Bible. I might easily have told him "you and I mean really the same thing," or used some other current phrase contrived in order to stifle conscience. I might have succeeded in being content with a mush of lies and truth, a compound more poisonous than lies unmixed, but I was enabled to resist. I have never regretted the decision then taken. I can see now that if I had yielded I should have been lost for ever (L, 164).

White transfers the concern with veracity to his fiction as well. Not only is there a strong drive toward autobiographical
realism in all his work, but his characters often emphasize the value of strict truth. Mark Rutherford's friend M'Kay, for example, preaches to his wife "the duty of perfect exactitude in speech," and will not tolerate in his children the use of "a mere hackneyed, borrowed expression, but demanded exact portraiture"; he compels from them "point by point, a correspondence of the words with the fact external or internal" (A, 153–54).

Some sixty years after his expulsion, White wrote in his autobiography: "It would be a mistake to suppose that the creed in which I had been brought up was or could be for ever cast away like an old garment. The beliefs of childhood and youth cannot be thus dismissed. . . . At first, after the abandonment of orthodoxy, I naturally thought nothing in the old religion worth retaining, but this temper did not last long" (EL, 77–78).

It did not last long at all. The spiritual regeneration begun by the poetry of Wordsworth culminated in his awareness of what he had lost. His education at Cheshunt and the clamor surrounding his heresy only temporarily shrouded the richness of his Puritan heritage. It is part of White's tragedy, though, that as he awoke to the need for faith he was also compelled to recognize how profoundly he had alienated himself from the source of it. He was out of place in the "great world," as he called it, but he had now confirmed his exile from the religious world that was his natural home. This he realized only later, when it was impossible to return. Technically, he was self-exiled, but he naturally felt he had been forced into that position by the community to which he should belong. Thus he felt both bereft and betrayed. Although the desire for a spiritual center, a true community of the faithful, remained with him all his life, he never joined another religious group. Eventually he came to believe that he had been born too late to belong to the brotherhood he could imagine: "When life runs high and takes a common form men can walk together as the disciples walked on the road to Emmaus. Christian and Hopeful can pour out their hearts to one another
as they travel towards the Celestial City and are knit together in everlasting bonds by the same Christ and the same salvation. But when each man is left to shift for himself, to work out the answers to his own problems, the result is isolation." This kind of statement is as characteristic as it is sad. White remained haunted by the vision of the love, sustained by a shared faith, which caused Hopeful to keep his brother's head above the billows, so that he might "see the shining ones and the glory that is inexpressible" (CF, 191).

Thus a more complicated legacy of the events of 1849–52 was the deep ambivalence they generated in White about Calvinism as a creed and Nonconformity as a religious position. This ambivalence was far-reaching, and can be seen to permeate a great deal of his writing. In the course of this study it will, I hope, become apparent how radically White's concern with Puritanism informs his religious thought. For my present purpose, however, it is enough to point out some obvious areas of conflict.

White's investigation of the "original necessity" of Nonconformity had led him back to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritanism. In this search he was impelled by his deep need for a religion that was experientially true, that was intellectually powerful and unsentimental, and that took account of evil and human suffering. He found this in early Calvinism.

"What are the facts?" he asked in his journals: "Not those in Homer, Shakespeare, or even in the Bible. The facts for most of us are a dark street, crowds, hurry, commonplaceness, loneliness, and, worse than all, a terrible doubt which can hardly be named as to the meaning and purpose of the world" (LP, 289–90; my emphasis). White's perception of life was tragic. The majority of nineteenth-century religious substitutes and quasi faiths seemed to him facile, foolishly optimistic, unearned, and contrary to his own sense of life. In spite of its difficulties, he came to prefer the integrity of early Puritanism. The seventeenth-century Puritan Peter Bulkley, he writes, with his "firstly,
secondly, and thirdly, is a translator of the deepest experiences.” Bulkley’s Puritan beliefs “are not such as come to the surface in us when we are in literary society, or in a club smoking-room, or at an ‘at-home.’ They are laboriously mined in darkness, smelted in fire, and held as a precious possession” (“Peter Bulkley,” LP, 205, 207). He is just as emphatic in *The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane*, where he defends Zachariah Coleman and the “Calvinists of that day, or of any day” from the accusation of blindly trusting in the authority of Saint Paul: “Even if Calvinism had been carved on tables of stone and handed down from heaven by the Almighty Hand, it would not have lived if it had not been found to agree more or less with the facts, and it was because it was a deduction from what nobody can help seeing that it was so vital, the Epistle to the Romans serving as the inspired confirmation of an experience” (RTL, 11). The “facts” for White are that human beings suffer, often meaninglessly, that for every beauty there exists a corresponding brutality, that people are self-centered, weak, and unable to enact the good that they can often imagine, that self-transcendence is achieved only by hard and continual struggle. Thus, even though White sometimes agrees with the critics of Calvinism, and can understand how it may seem to be “a poor gospel,” nevertheless he affirms, “Poor!—yes; but it is genuine; and this at least must be said for Puritanism, that of all the theologies and philosophies it is the most honest in its recognition of the facts; the most real, if we penetrate to the heart of it, in the remedy which it offers” (RTL, 127).

“Genuine,” “honest,” “real,” the truth of dogma confirmed by experience: here was the great attraction of Puritanism for White. Moreover, Puritanism confronted the fact of suffering and evil. “Its roots,” he writes, “are deep in the nature of man.” In the final chapter of his biography of Bunyan (1905), White includes a last defense of Puritan theology. Here he stresses that “Heaven, hell and the Atonement were the results of the conception that there is a generic, eternal and profoundly important
distinction between right and wrong” (B, 239). White emphasizes again the relationship between good and evil and the facts of human experience in his wonderful short story “Michael Trevanion.” As part of his investigation of his character’s narrow, dogmatic Calvinism, White probes Michael’s consciousness as he contemplates the framing of a deliberate lie. This act will, he believes, end with his damnation: “He did not believe that he should be excused if he did evil that good might come. He knew that if he did evil, no matter what the result might be, the penalty to the uttermost farthing would be exacted.” White explores Michael’s belief in damnation for “a single lapse from the strait path,” and his understanding that “there is no finiteness in a crime which can be counterbalanced by finite expiation.” The narrator reflects with characteristic engagement: “Monstrous, we say; and yet it is difficult to find in the strictest Calvinism anything which is not an obvious dogmatic reflection of a natural fact. A crime is infinite in its penalties, and the account is never really balanced, as many of us know too well, the lash being laid on us day after day, even to death, for the failings of fifty years ago” (MS, 180).

Finally, White was drawn to early Calvinism because it was intellectually vigorous, because it “stood so distinctly upon the understanding” (RTL, 11). It is on this point especially that he becomes most defensive about Puritanism. He felt that “we cannot really understand a religion unless we have believed it” (MP, 240), and nothing irritated him more than the patronizing and inaccurate remarks of educated Anglicans about Nonconformity. He knew that much of this condescension was directly owing to class prejudice. He particularly disliked Matthew Arnold’s analysis of Puritanism in St. Paul and Protestantism and Culture and Anarchy, and is scathing in his dismissal of it in his biography of Bunyan: “There is not perhaps anywhere to be found such a failure to discern the meaning of history as that of Mr. Arnold in dealing with Puritanism and Protestantism
generally. It is to his *Culture and Anarchy* that we owe the celebrated inclusion of the whole of Luther in the phrase *a Philistine of genius*" (B, 239n.). White is especially critical of Arnold’s obliteration of historical distinctions, of his confounding nineteenth-century schismatic Dissent with the original faith and temper of Puritanism. His indignation is aroused by Arnold also as the representative of those who judged Nonconformity by glancing down from the ivory towers that Nonconformists could not themselves enter. He hurries to the defense of Bunyan, for example, claiming that many cultured readers scorn him because he was ignorant of the classics and because of his humble origin and occupation, seen to be necessarily "tainted with vulgarity": “Other great writers have been born low down and have known neither Greek nor Latin, but they are not condemned as vulgar. The real reason for the charge is that Bunyan was a Nonconformist” (B, 234–35). He also believes that this prejudice underlies many cool assessments of Milton: “Much of the criticism on Milton, if not hostile, is apologetic, and it is considered quite correct to say we ‘do not care’ for him. Partly this indifference is due to his Nonconformity” (P, 110). Such animated defenses of Puritan doctrine and Puritan writers are scattered throughout White’s work. Any attack on Nonconformity was sure to evoke a strong response from him. He even annotated his copy of James Fitzjames Stephen’s *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* with judicious remarks about John Stuart Mill’s inadequate understanding of Calvinism: “Mill is quite wrong as to Calvinism. It certainly does not crush out the faculties. The most vigorous races are calvinistic. . . . The truth is that Calvinism is the apotheosis of the intellectual faculty.”

This thoughtful praise and precise analysis might well have issued from a staunch and orthodox advocate of what White calls “the most distinct, energetic and salutary movement in our history.” But while in White’s judgment Puritanism had been surpassed by no other religion in “preaching the truths by which
men and nations must exist” (B, 249), after 1852 he himself was neither a believer in Calvinist doctrine nor a participant in the tradition he came to understand so well and value so deeply. He expresses unqualified admiration for Calvinism in its original purity, and for Milton, Bunyan or Bulkley, but as he approaches the later manifestations of Calvinism, especially in the nineteenth century, he grows more critical and hostile. White’s love-hate relationship with his heritage is most acute when he focuses on what he thinks of as the period of transition, when the gradual modification of Calvinism within Nonconformity finally led to its demise.

White often perceives this period as the 1840s, when he sat under the ministry of John Jukes in Bunyan Meeting and the teaching of Dr. Harris at Cheshunt; although sometimes it is viewed as occurring earlier. In my Prologue I noted that White saw himself as a “victim of the century,” who had been born “a hundred years too late” for total commitment to the faith of his ancestors. White’s novels are, among other things, attempts to comprehend these feelings of disconnectedness and loss. As he confronted his own past, he also began to interpret cultural history. It was natural for him to assume the role of the historian of Dissent, and to come to regard his own spiritual deprivation as an accident of history.

Thus Mark Rutherford in the 1840s complains that the Calvinistic scheme “was never of the slightest service to me in repressing one solitary evil inclination; at no point did it come into contact with me. . . . when the stress of temptation was upon me, it never occurred to me, nor when I became a minister did I find it sufficiently powerful to mend the most trifling fault” (A, 15). The same devastating accusation is brought by George Allen, of The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane. He finds, in “those dark three months” following the death of his wife, that the “gospel according to Tanner’s Lane did nothing for him, and he was cast forth to wrestle with his sufferings alone.” At this
juncture, however, more prominent than Allen’s grief is the author’s: “Surely a real religion, handed down from century to century, ought to have accumulated a store of consolatory truths which will be of some help to us in time of need” (RTL, 362). The sadness and yearning here are unmistakable. Yet White is referring to the evolution of the “real religion” of Luther and Calvin, of Milton and Bunyan.

In these two fictional instances, the underlying implication is that the “Dissenting College” and “Tanner’s Lane” are somehow responsible for the uselessness and poverty of the doctrines they teach. In White’s two finest analyses of the Puritan temperament, however, the short story “Michael Trevanion” and the narrative of Zachariah Coleman in the first half of The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane, the transformation of Calvinism is not attributed to the fault of any individual or group but is perceived as the necessary consequence of the changing temper of the times.

White’s fundamental sympathy with Calvinism is evident in his brilliant characterization of Michael Trevanion. He examines the rigid, scrupulous texture of Michael’s mind with precision and ease, convincingly creating a man whose entire character has been shaped by the demands of his faith. Michael’s first great anguish is his unhappy marriage; his second is a fear that his son will repeat his error by marrying a young woman “who is not elect” and may “have children who will be the children of wrath” (MS, 178). These qualms offend his son, Robert, not only because he is passionately in love, but because “truths believed by Michael, and admitted by Robert, failed to impress Robert with that depth and sharpness of cut with which they were wrought into his father” (MS, 161). Although Robert had been brought up in his father’s faith, it was “the beginning of the latter half of the present century.” Michael was already considered “somewhat of a fossil,” and his son is perforce “inconsistent, as the old doctrine when it is decaying, or the new at its advent always is” (MS, 161).
The transition is conceived here as a cleavage between father and son, a rift between the generations. In *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, however, the transition is described as occurring in the heart and mind of Zachariah Coleman, as it had in his prototype, William White, Sr. Zachariah is a working man, a printer who in 1814 is about thirty years old. He is described as being "a Dissenter in religion, and a fierce Radical in politics." A Moderate Calvinist, he "held to Calvinism as his undoubted creed, but when it came to the push in actual practice he modified it" (RTL, 10). When the novel opens, Zachariah is able to resign himself to a loveless marriage, even though, "Calvinist as he was, he was tempted at times to question the justice of such a punishment" (RTL, 18). But he "had immortality before him," and "predestination was dear to him. God knew him as closely as He knew the angel next His throne, and had marked out his course with as much concern as that of the seraph. What God's purposes were he did not know. He took a sort of sullen pride in not knowing" (RTL, 19). But the coming year enlarges Zachariah's political horizons and involves him in the friendship of Jean Caillaud and his daughter, Pauline. In Puritan phrase, they are the unregenerate. Zachariah's marriage continues to be a source of great misery. Gradually, his commitment to Calvinist doctrine is undermined. Why, he wonders, has God condemned him to "a weary pilgrimage for thirty or forty years"? (RTL, 127). All his life he has assented easily "to the doctrine of God's absolute authority in the election and disposal of the creatures He had made," but he revolts when God touches him. Nevertheless, Zachariah worries guiltily because he has done nothing to try to enlighten his infidel friends; he knows that he must bear witness to his Master in season and out of season or be himself forgotten at Judgment. Moreover, his conscience protests against his own cowardice: "the awful figure of the Crucified seemed to rise before him and rebuke him" (RTL, 80). In a climactic and moving scene in the novel, he attempts to convert his friends
but fails completely. He uses the language of Saint Paul, which after years of "unquestioning repetition" and "childish association" seems abundantly clear to him. To his friends, he might as well have "spoken Hebrew" (RTL, 88–89). At the crucial moment, Zachariah balks. He is unable to tell his friends that they are "sold unto Satan, and in danger of hell-fire." He was "a century and a half too late," and "[h]e struggled, wrestled, self against self, and failed, not through want of courage, but because he wanted a deeper conviction. The system was still the same, even to its smallest details, but the application had become difficult. . . . Phrases had been invented or discovered which served to express modern hesitation to bring the accepted doctrine into actual, direct, week-day practice. It was in that way that it was gradually bled into impotence" (RTL, 90).

Zachariah is unable to reconcile Calvinist doctrine with his own affections, his own growing experience. His rejection of that doctrine begins when "the man rose up behind the Calvinist" (RTL, 92), and he affirms his unregenerate friends in a spontaneous embrace. White's analysis here is that Zachariah essentially awakens from a dream; the language of Calvinism is part of the texture of his mind, yet the effort to apply this language to ordinary life causes it to disintegrate. The divorce between dogma and experience signals the degeneracy of the faith, as religious terminology that had once been vital becomes, in Mark Rutherford's words, "the merest phrases" (A, 10).

White's anguished fascination with the changing temper of Calvinist Independency was not confined to doctrine. His mid-century involvement had sharpened his awareness of the nuances of Nonconformity as a whole. His novels generally include descriptions of the range of Nonconformity within a particular community; and both his analyses of different religious groups and the shrewd insight his characters manifest in relation to religious questions proceed, as Valentine Cunningham says, from White's thorough knowledge of the "theological and social
variety in the Dissenting spectrum." Cunningham observes; and he singles out for special praise the analysis of the different religious groups in the Cowfold of The Revolution in Tanner's Lane. Here, indeed, in chapter 16, White's confidence and authority are most in evidence: "There were three chapels; one the chapel, orthodox, Independent, holding about seven hundred persons, and more particularly to be described presently; the second Wesleyan, new, stuccoed, with grained doors and cast-iron railing; the third, strict Baptist, ultra-Calvinistic, Antinomian according to the other sects, dark, down an alley, mean, surrounded by a small long-grassed graveyard, and named ZOAR in large letters over the long window in front" (RTL, 234–35). The Wesleyan Chapel "had no roots in the town" and was disliked both by Anglicans and other Dissenters. Zoar is a "place apart" (RTL, 236). Its minister "was a big, large-jawed, heavy-eyed man," whose "ministrations were confined to about fifty sullen, half stupid, wholly ignorant people" (RTL, 237). He is ignored by both the Independent and the Wesleyan ministers, "and, of course, the rector." The reason for this coldness is not doctrinal but social: "He was a poor man and poor persons sat under him" (RTL, 236–37).

White is most satirical when observing the relationship between religious affiliation and social class. While he alludes in several places to the growing respectability of Nonconformity, he is especially conscious of this phenomenon in Catharine Furze. The novel is set in Eastthorpe, a town in the Midlands, again in the 1840s. Much of the action is dependent on Mrs. Furze's desire to rise in the world and enter the exalted social sphere inhabited by the brewer's wife, Mrs. Colson. Her plans include exchanging the family's current home in the ironmongery shop for a new one in "The Terrace" in the north end of town. The move would also, she believes, "be a good opportunity for us to exchange the chapel for the church." She argues
that the people who go to church are “vastly more genteel,” and the service “and everything about it—the vespers—the bells—somehow there is a respectability in it” (CF, 23). White recognized, as John Lucas has remarked in The Literature of Change, that the “decay of dissenting movements” was “intimately bound up with class considerations,” and felt that the desire for respectability must sound the death knell of genuine Dissent, “because it destroys the principles on which Dissent depends.”

The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane is a novel in two nearly discrete parts—a fact that has long been the source of much critical indignation. In his intriguing chapter on Hale White, Lucas, however, suggests that the “odd, jagged and abrupt” break between the two parts is not evidence of incompetence and “faulty construction,” but the product of conscious artistry. The abrupt transition, he argues, is “a proper means of dramatizing. . . . [White’s] own sense of a crumbling tradition: there are very few links or continuities between Zachariah’s kind of dissenting conscience and that of the community in Tanner’s Lane.” While I question whether White is so self-conscious a craftsman, it is possible that his deep sense of disconnectedness is, consciously or not, reflected in the novel’s structure. Lucas’s ingenious argument serves, at least, to redirect our attention to the main point: in the 1840s in the Midlands, Nonconformity no longer “attracts or moulds men of principle.” The Michael Trevanions and even the Zachariah Coleman are dying out. Spiritually degenerate, Nonconformists are now eaten up with zeal only for social climbing. In essence, this is how White presents the transformed temper and character of Dissent in the second part of his novel. Religious decadence is perceived to be ubiquitous, but in the novel White concentrates on the differences between the older, genuine Puritan ministers of the gospel and their contemporary Independent counterparts.

In spite of White’s disclaimer, it is obvious that his characterization of the clergy in The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane
draws upon his own memory of Bunyan Meeting. The Reverend John Broad, the minister of Tanner's Lane Chapel, is clearly a caricature of John Jukes, while his predecessor, the Reverend James Harden, is modeled upon Samuel Hillyard. White's dislike—repulsion—is evident in the characterization of Broad, who is physically, as well as morally, unattractive, "a big, gross-feeding, heavy person with heavy ox-face and large mouth"—the diametrical opposite, indeed, of the "lean and fervid" Harden, a "genuine soldier of the Cross." Whereas Harden is "bold and uncompromising," a "fiery, ardent, untamable soul," Broad is weak and ingenuous. Harden "wrestled even unto blood with the world, the flesh, and the devil in Cowfold for thirty years." Broad, in contrast, is "moderate in all of what he called his 'views'; neither ultra-Calvinist nor Arminian." White allows that Broad is not a conscious hypocrite. No doubt of the "truth of what he preached ever crossed his mind," but he cannot believe as Harden believed, partly because of his character and partly because the "fervid piety of Cowper's time and of the Evangelical revival was a thing almost of the past" (RTL, 252-53). Broad is upright and respectable, comfortable, worldly, and generally wanting in energy and direction. Most damning, in White's eyes, is his refusal to involve himself in politics. White deliberately contrasts Broad's political neutrality in an important election (he does not wish to offend his deacons) with the political activism and republican tendency of earlier pastors. The Reverend Bradshaw (the one surviving representative of the old Puritan pastor in the novel and White's tribute to Thomas Binney) concludes his sermon with pastoral advice on how the congregation should vote. His preaching would be trivial, he explains, "if it did not compel them into a protest against taxing the poor for the sake of the rich" (RTL, 328-29). Similarly, Harden "never scrupled to tell anybody what he thought, and would send an arrow sharp and swift through any iniquity, no matter where it might couch" (RTL, 253). The retreat from political commitment is to White a sure indication of a dying
creed. Broad urges his congregation to keep themselves uncontaminated by worldly influence, as the controversies of the world "are so unimportant compared with our eternal welfare" (RTL, 336). White is apparently drawing on his memory of Jukes's sermons, and the implications of his satire are clear. The dust and heat of the arena is a thing of the past; Broad exploits the inspiration and distorts the language of early Puritanism; in his attempt to justify apathy, he in effect sanctions injustice. George Allen speaks for the author when he exclaims: "I cannot understand . . . how a Dissenting minister can make up his mind not to vote against a party which has been answerable for all the oppression and all the wrongs in English history, . . . and actually persecuted his predecessors in this very meeting-house in which he now preaches" (RTL, 316–17).

Some of Broad's more odious qualities extend to his family. Mrs. Broad keeps her son at home because she objects to the "mixture" of the Cowfold day school. Her religious feeling consists of a profound consciousness of being the daughter of a prominent Dissenting minister who has a chapel "in a great town" (RTL, 256). In consequence, she gives herself airs, has worldly ambitions for her children, and keeps her husband up to the mark in the secular concerns of the parish. Young Thomas Broad is, at eighteen, the "almost ridiculously exact . . . counterpart of his father" (RTL, 256). He giggles, simpers, and smirks, and is generally contemptible. White characterizes him as a lecherous fool and a conscious hypocrite. He is destined for a Dissenting College and is given extra tuition by his father in his weakest area, systematic theology, "and more particularly in the doctrine of the Comforter" (RTL, 274). The daughter, Priscilla, is equally objectionable. She is portrayed as a vague, empty-headed, pretty girl, with "flat unilluminated eyes" (RTL, 267). The Broads feel that they are lowering themselves in allowing their daughter to marry the son of a tradesman: "As soon might a Princess of the Blood Royal unite herself with an ordinary
The reader finds it scarcely credible that the intelligent and attractive George Allen could be even remotely interested in her. Naturally, his marriage to her nearly destroys him. In both the *Autobiography* and *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, in fact, the really good, moral characters are the unbelievers. The atheist Mardon in the *Autobiography* and Jean and Pauline Caillaud of *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* are infinitely more decent, sincere, warm-hearted, and spiritual than the members of derelict Nonconformity. And Zachariah is drawn toward his infidel friends just as Rutherford is drawn to Mardon. Indeed, it is the atheist who points out to Rutherford the relationship between the despicable character of Mr. Snale, a deacon of the chapel, and the degeneracy of his religion: he “has heard sermons about all sorts of supernatural subjects for thirty years, and he has never once been warned against meanness, so of course he supposes that supernatural subjects are everything and meanness is nothing” (A, 46). Snale is a composite of the Broads junior and senior. Like Thomas Broad, he is outwardly respectable but really hypocritical, mean, and cowardly. He writes anonymous letters to the newspapers discrediting Rutherford, and he is also a secret sensualist: his “way of talking to women and about them was more odious than the way of a debauchee. He invariably called them ‘the ladies,’ or more exactly, ‘the leedies,’ and he hardly ever spoke to a ‘leedy’ without a smirk and some faint attempt at a joke” (A, 29).

Nowhere does White see evidence of the deterioration of the passionate temper of Dissent more clearly than in such furtive sensuality hidden by a cloak of gentility. At a Dorcas meeting, Snale objects to Rutherford’s choice of *The Vicar of Wakefield* to read to the assembled company because “the company is mixed; there are young leedies present, and perhaps, Mr. Rutherford, a book with a more requisite tone might be more suitable on such an occasion” (A, 31). George Fox’s *Journal* is also rejected because “he did not, you know, Mr. Rutherford, belong to us” (A, 32).
Snale also resembles John Broad in thinking that a clergyman should keep himself unspotted from the world and know "nothing save Christ crucified" (A, 43). He would doubtless have approved of John Broad's advising his son to avoid controversial topics: "I always myself doubted the wisdom, for example, of sermons against covetousness, or worldliness, or hypocrisy" (RTL, 345).

The condition of modern Nonconformity is further dramatized in *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* through the implicit contrasting of the sermons preached by the Reverend Bradshaw and those preached by the Broads. John Broad's sermons are rhetorically empty and theologically null ("'Unspotted from the world.' Think, my friends, of what this involves. Spots! The world spots and stains!" [RTL, 336]). Bradshaw, in contrast, taxes "the whole mental powers of his audience" (RTL, 95). His sermons are "utterly unlike the simple stuff which became fashionable with the Evangelistic movement" (RTL, 96). Bradshaw appears as a zealous, aging Independent minister of the old school. In addition to being "republican through and through" (RTL, 95), he is a classical scholar and a Calvinist, believing "in predestination and the final perseverance of the saints" (RTL, 94). Like Thomas Binney, Bradshaw's great gift as a preacher is his power of "getting into the interior of a Bible character" and making him come intensely, dramatically alive (RTL, 96).

One of Bradshaw's sermons—which White gives in detail—is about the real meaning of divine election. Bradshaw turns to the story of Jephthah (Judges 11) to reveal this doctrine. After powerfully recreating Jephthah's vow—that if God would grant him the victory over Ammon, he would sacrifice on his return whosoever came forth from his house—Bradshaw images Jephthah descrying his daughter coming out to meet him "with timbrels and with dances." And "she was his only child: beside her he had neither son nor daughter" (RTL, 98). White's description of the sermon is vivid and moving. Jephthah is "brought
very low” (RTL, 99). “To what did God elect Jephthah?” Bradshaw demands of the congregation: “He elected him to that tremendous oath and that tremendous penalty. He elected him to the agony he endured while she was away upon the hills! That is God’s election; an election to the cross. . . . Be sure, if God elects you, He elects you to suffering” (RTL, 100). Bradshaw argues that although the cost of discipleship is high, yet “if Christ calls, . . . take your choicest possession, take your own heart, your own blood, your very self, to the altar” (RTL, 101). In the novel, his sermon is given even greater resonance by our knowledge that his wife had died in childbirth, and that after a period of intense grief, “he came back an altered man to his people in Bedfordshire” (RTL, 95). The sermon and its context, its anguished illumination of human experience, is surely meant to be contrasted not only with Broad’s feeble evangelicalism but with the “election” of Thomas Broad, and implicitly, of Hale White/Mark Rutherford.

Whereas Bradshaw lives and preaches self-denial, young Thomas Broad is weak and self-indulgent in both life and doctrine. In his first sermon as a student supplying a rural village, he speaks for three-quarters of an hour from the text, “the carnal mind is at enmity with God” (Romans 8:7). The laborers who form the congregation “listened as oxen might listen” to this fatuous performance (RTL, 284). After his ridiculous attempt to seduce Zachariah’s daughter, Pauline, who cuts his hand with a knife for his presumption, he simplifies his sermon on the carnal mind: “He had struck out the metaphysics and had put in a new head—‘Neither indeed can be.’ ‘The apostle did not merely state a fact that the carnal mind was not subject to the law of God; he said, ‘Neither indeed can be.’ ” Mark, my brethren, the force of the neither can’ ” (RTL, 292). Thus Thomas Broad acknowledges the relation between dogma and experience. White’s contempt resounds in every word.

These examples should make it clear that White’s presentation of Nonconformity in the mid-nineteenth century is both
bitter and dolorous. Valentine Cunningham, indeed, argues that White deliberately misrepresented Nonconformity in the period, and that his fictional recreations, in *The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane*, of the pastoral succession of Bunyan Meeting are distorted by personal animus. While I think the charge of conscious malice is unfounded, Cunningham’s remarks do call attention to the resentment and anger that are a significant feature of White’s transformation of autobiographical material.

Earlier I noted the autobiographical character of much of White’s fiction. “Hale tells me now,” wrote Dorothy White, “that he never created a character in his life, never sat down to write without having somebody before his mind’s eye” (GD, 66n.). This does not, of course, mean that all his characters are feature-by-feature portraits of real people, but that the memory of individuals was the foundation of his characterization. He extends, transforms, adds to that foundation as he imagines his characters in action. Certainly there is adequate evidence that the fictional clergy, especially, have their originals in fact. John Jukes’s predecessor, Samuel Hillyard, the inspiration for James Harden in the novel, was an extraordinary pastor for nearly forty years: he was active in his support of the missionary cause; began the Sunday school in Bunyan Meeting; was a trustee of the Bedford Harpur Charity, a member of the committee of the Bedford General Library, and a Whig who spoke publicly in favor of Lord John Russell in the election of 1830. He established the Bedfordshire Union of Christians (Union of the Baptist and Congregational churches), and encouraged interdenominational worship generally. Three to four thousand people crowded to his funeral. John Brown, the minister who succeeded Jukes, states that during Hillyard’s ministry the congregation grew in “numbers and influence.” He remarks upon Hillyard’s “genial and kindly” disposition, and his warm-hearted attachment to every good cause: “Passionately attached to the great principles of civil and religious freedom,” he nevertheless “held his own
position with firmness and yet with such perfect good-temper and gentlemanly feeling, that he seems never to have made an enemy or lost a friend." Jukes himself, in his *A Brief History of Bunyan's Church*, writes of Hillyard's "amiable disposition, conciliatory manners, evangelical, earnest and pathetic preaching."

People writing about Jukes give the impression of trying to do him strict justice. John Brown notes that he was "in many respects a contrast to his predecessor," but still "a man of weight and worth, who did good service of a steady solid sort." Brown further describes him as being "defective in the quality of humour and in power of imagination," but states that his preaching was instructive and useful and his conduct in public life firm and kindly, "if erring on the side of caution."

Thus it is clear that White's perception of the two pastors was to some extent shared by others. He generalizes from his own experience and suggests that this trend was typical of the deterioration of Independency as a whole. But what can be said for White's dualistic characterization of his fictional clergy? Why the complete separation of good and evil, past nobility and present corruption? Why is his attitude toward the Broads so incensed, so nearly vicious? We cannot, I think, attribute this characterization to spiteful vengeance or intentional malice: White simply did not have a petty mind. The explanation of this polarization of past and present lies, rather, in White's intense ambivalence toward his religious heritage.

"Born a hundred years too late." Bradshaw and Harden are a measure of what White felt he had lost, and in some ways the Broads point to what he nearly became. In the portraits of the Broads we can see an impulse that is characteristic of White's creative method. His fiction—concrete events, dramatic situations, or character—becomes a means of psychologically focusing, defining, rendering concrete, conflicting or uncontainable and threatening emotions. Jukes and the period of his ministry
are inextricably bound up with White's complex feelings concerning both conversion and heresy. His characterizations reveal how radically he was affected by these events, and how deeply the feelings they evoked smoldered in his mind. Jukes is no longer a distinct, external being; White had assimilated him. In *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* he surfaces in two parts, as it were—the original man split into father and son.

It is revealing that the detestable young Thomas Broad's life resembles White's in a number of ways. I alluded earlier to their similar experiences of conversion. Both were teachers in the Sunday school, both were students for the ministry; and, interestingly, Mark Rutherford's reprimand from the president over his sermons resembles the advice Thomas Broad receives concerning his. The first sermons preached by both characters concern the Atonement. Broad is advised by an older student to avoid "what may be called the metaphysics of Redemption," which might be appropriate for a London congregation, but "in the villages we cannot be too plain" (RTL, 284). Rutherford is told that his sermon "might perhaps have possessed some interest for cultivated people," but that he should recall where his duty would lie: "amongst humble hearers, perhaps in an agricultural village or a small town"; and people would not understand him if he insisted on talking over their heads (A, 22, 23). While these similarities may argue a lack of inventiveness on White's part, they are surely also immensely suggestive. I do not know if they are conscious. Thomas Broad may be seen as a walking summary of individuals White knew in Nonconformist circles, but he is also the repository of White's fears, the dramatic expression of his loathing for his earlier self. The Broads together are the concentrated sum of what Jukes, as individual and representative, had come to symbolize for White; namely, all that was false both in Independency and in his own character. He had been influenced by this falseness, had once welcomed it, and had almost become part of it.
The Whites were dismayed and resentful that John Jukes refused to support Hale in the New College heresy question after the Report of the Council had appeared. William White clearly thought that this was an occasion upon which their pastor ought to stand up and be counted. From the pulpit he might vindicate the character, if not the judgment, of one of his own congregation. William White had been a valuable member of the church and the community. He was forced to conclude that Jukes’s failure to help them proceeded not from cowardice but from dislike. White learned from a friend of a conversation at Jukes’s supper table, in which Jukes had apparently misrepresented Hale’s case to Dr. Binney, who had been preaching in Bedford. In response to an inquiry from William White, Jukes alludes to these quarrels and complains in an injured tone that he has “during the last few days, been too often and too cruelly misrepresented.”

In *The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane*, Jukes’s attitude toward the heresy issue is fictionally transformed into Broad’s refusal to side with the Allens and vote for the Whigs. The narrative includes an episode in which Broad misunderstands George Allen’s actions. When, after the close victory of the Tories an intoxicated mob attacks Broad’s home, Allen intervenes and tries to protect the house, in which his wife and child are temporarily lodged. Broad assumes that he is the leader of the mob and refuses to admit him. Shortly after this event, Priscilla falls fatally ill. Three months after her death, the Allens announce that their pew is vacant, although (like the Whites), they remain on the church books. A church meeting is held to consider the Allens’ position: they have “absented themselves from the means of grace” but have joined no other Christian community; they have associated with infidels (Zachariah and his daughter); they have abetted an unruly mob (RTL, 376).

The episode embodies a complex transformation of some events that involved the White family. Hale White’s grandfather
CONVERSION AND HERESY

had been "Radical, and almost Republican" (EL, 21). He had his windows smashed by an angry Tory mob during the Napoleonic Wars because he refused to illuminate for British victories over the French; and William White also had his windows destroyed because he was a member of Lord John Russell’s Committee at the borough election in 1832. Hale’s cradle had to be carried to the back bedroom to avoid being hit by stones that came through the windows (EL, 39; GD, 196). In 1850, at the culmination of a period of growing dissatisfaction with Bunyan Meeting, William White resigned the office of superintendent of the Sunday school and gradually ceased to attend services. He was struck off the Roll of Church members on May 4, 1854. A statement in his pamphlet on the expulsion from New College undoubtedly has a personal application. He writes of the many thoughtful men who attend no place of worship and hear no religious teachers “simply because there are none within their reach whom they can hear. They used to go to chapel or church, but tired out at length with the old organ grinding, . . . have silently dropped away.”

The episode of the falling out of the Allens and the Broads thus draws on events in White’s background and fuses his father’s feelings with his own feelings of rejection and injustice. Similarly, the fictional episode of the church meeting gives White a means of focusing—and disguising—his personal anger. Broad’s speech, a tangle of religious platitudes and biblical tags, is an example of White’s satirical power at its finest. Interestingly, the prayer that precedes it is at least as applicable to the question of heresy as it is to the fictional situation. Broad prays that his congregation might all be wise as serpents and harmless as doves! Might they for ever cleave to the faith once delivered to the saints! Might they never be led astray to doubt the efficacy of the Blood of the Atonement once offered by the Son of God!” (RTL, 375).

The climax—the unjust reprimand and censure of the Allens before the church—is resolved triumphantly for the accused.
They are vindicated; the Broads are made to appear weak, ineffectual, and foolish. John Jukes the man has disappeared, but John Broad is more than his surrogate. He is the imaginative vehicle through which White's strongest emotions are encountered and transmuted. This creative metamorphosis may be a form of wish fulfillment. It is, at any rate, White's way of coming to terms with passionate and even violent feelings.

White doubtless knew that during the nineteenth century Nonconformity expanded in numbers and became a formidable political power. His novels are not concerned with the disappearance of Nonconformity, but with what, in his own experience, were the insidious effects of the diffusion of its energy. His indignation and anger merge with genuine grief. If his experience were typical of mid-century Nonconformity, if it exemplified a general decline, "reaching after a meaning" might ultimately be regarded not as heretical but as simply trivial.

Indeed, White's views were not unparalleled. In the 1840s and 1850s, some Nonconformist leaders were lamenting the degenerating spiritual condition of Congregationalism. In 1849, Edward Miall, editor of The Nonconformist, attacked the churches for their "aristocratic spirit" and "snobbish class-distinctions," for their "professional spirit which exalted the ministry into a caste of religious experts," and for the "trade spirit" which indirectly condoned dishonesty and materialism. At the end of the 1850s, John Angell James echoed these criticisms with more gravity. In his series of articles on "What is the Spiritual State of our Churches?" (1859) he argued that the churches were being "poisoned by worldliness," that real self-sacrifice was fast disappearing, that a "self-indulgent and effeminate spirit prevented Christian people from discharging their duties in the nation's social and political life," that ministers were "regarded for their talents rather than for their spiritual accomplishments," and that personal godliness was generally in decay. And, as we saw earlier, historians of Nonconformity
since R. W. Dale have detailed the decay of the Calvinistic spirit in the nineteenth century. Dale also corroborates White's perception of the effects of this transformation on individual character. "The Revival," he argues, "helped to suppress the original type of Independent character," qualities which included "reserve, a firm self-restraint, . . . patient, resolute industry, punctuality in the discharge of all obligations, . . . a keen interest in theology, and a keen interest in politics, a delight in books and in intellectual pursuits of the severer kind." These characteristics had given way to the influence of the Revival:

Congregationalists ceased to be keen theologians, and they ceased to be keen politicians. During the first twenty or thirty years of this century, the best and noblest men in the Congregational churches were all aglow with the zeal of the Revival. These men touched the imagination of their contemporaries, and exerted over them the most powerful moral and religious influence; and they created for their successors a new ideal of the Christian life. In the next generation, the ideal Christian man was one who avoided "worldly" amusements, and freely spent all his time and strength in religious work; and among all religious work, evangelistic work had the highest place.⁹⁵

Similarly, R. Tudur Jones suggests that while during the years 1815 to 1850 Congregationalism had much in it to admire—courage, enthusiasm, a sense of widening horizons, a desire to reform society—there were also attendant weaknesses: "a tendency to moral smugness, a decline in vital piety, a lack of intellectual discipline and power, a disrespect for the dignity of public worship and for the great principles of the Congregational way."⁹⁶

It is true, however, that White perceived only the negative part of this complex. In spite of at least some evidence to the contrary, he persisted in regarding genuine religion as having been unequivocally on the downhill slide since the 1840s.
Although Thomas Binney preached in King’s Weigh House Chapel until 1873, and Caleb Morris, popular preacher of Fetter’s Lane Chapel and White’s personal friend, was in London until 1856, White tends to write as though the former belonged to a past era and the latter were completely uncharacteristic of his time. Especially after Morris left England, White’s intimate connection with Independency faded and his religious life grew progressively more isolated. The emphasis in his fiction on the destructive, negative aspects of nineteenth-century Nonconformity is in some way a necessary, if unconscious, justification for his continuing isolation—more than justification, for in writing about these ghosts of his Bedfordshire past, he attempted to exorcise their continuing presence and power.

One final reason for White’s ambivalence toward nineteenth-century Nonconformity must be mentioned: he found Dissenting circles cold and joyless. Mark Rutherford is constantly distressed when his sermons elicit no response and bring about no personal communion between minister and congregation. Sunday after Sunday he has a sense of isolation and failure: “It was amazing to me that I could pour out myself as I did, poor although I knew that self to be, and yet make so little impression” (A, 46). The image is revealing: not just his opinions, but his most intimate self is worthless. His assessment is not confined to Congregationalism. After he left New College, White “supplied” the Unitarian chapel in Ditchling, Sussex, for a year, and in the 1850s preached occasionally at Friar Street Unitarian Chapel. In that decade he also preached at Little Portland Street Unitarian Chapel in London. Even here, in the home of the disaffected, White encountered narrowness and rigidity. Mark Rutherford finds the doctrinal differences between Independents and Unitarians trivial in comparison with the common frigidity of their atmosphere: “the difference of a little less belief was nothing. . . . here, as amongst the Independents, there was the same lack of personal affection, or even of a
capability of it” (A, 109). In spite of their liberal doctrine, “I do not think that I ever had anything to do with a more petrified set. . . . Their method was as strict as that of the most rigid Calvinist. . . . Socially they were cold, and the entertainment at their houses was pale and penurious” (A, 100).

With such groups, Rutherford tries to share the best part of himself—his spiritual dimension—and create relationships based on that gift. But “not a soul kindled at any word of mine, no matter with what earnestness it might be charged” (A, 46). 98 Thus another grievance against Nonconformist circles was that their cold and moribund atmosphere denied the expression of his essential self and thwarted his real vocation. The “word” that he intuitively felt he was “sent into the world to say” could not be uttered, and “all other speech seemed beside the mark and futile.”

White’s experience of mid-century Nonconformity, then, was that it was external and unreal, loveless and cold; it provided no guide for actual living nor any help for pain. The drama of his heresy soon faded. He was to search, after freeing himself from orthodoxy, for a “real religion,” one that would answer his frequent and most important query, “wherein can it help me?” He had left “Moderate Calvinism” behind him, but his liberation cost him dearly. The road to the Celestial City was long and difficult, and the valley of the shadow had yet to be traversed. Inherited dogma had at least protected him from self-knowledge. When the old clothes fell away, he was left with only the naked self. White says that, when he testified to election before the congregation of Bunyan Meeting, he answered questions which “did but disclose ‘the dark unbottom’d infinite Abyss.’” 99 Before he could discover genuine freedom, he had to confront that abyss within his own psyche.
T H E A N C I E N T E N E M Y: 
M e l a n c h o l i a

The pain of loss was great, but the main curse of my existence has not been pain or loss, but gloom; blind wandering in a world of black fog, haunted by apparitions.

—The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford

O W A R D T H E E N D of his life, White exclaimed to his wife Dorothy, "I wish sometimes I could write, as a warning, a real history of my . . . inner life, but it would be too dangerous" (GD, 78). The danger would have been for himself as well as for the public. As we shall see, White's personal history was remarkably full of pain. He suffered from working at a job he disliked; he felt acutely the social evils of his age; he endured constant distress because of his wife's degenerative illness; he himself was often in poor health. Finally and most important, his daily life was disrupted by periods of severe depression that he labels variously "melancholia," "hypochondria," his "personal devil," the "ancient enemy." White's self-conscious and introspective temperament—which I have mentioned before and will return to in a later chapter—was, of course, inextricably linked to this melancholia. We must, however, make a distinction between a nervous and self-involved constitution and the particular
mental state that White describes as "the nameless terror." The first incidence of this depression occurred shortly after his expulsion from New College, and the condition appears to have become chronic from then on. These periods of melancholia, a history of which White believed would be "too dangerous" for expression, are crucial to our understanding of his religious thought, his imaginative work, and his quest for religious freedom: for the personal faith that White forged from within the darkness profoundly involves his response to melancholy.

The origins of his malady are not entirely clear. Catherine Maclean suggests that White inherited his nervous temperament from his mother, and that the episodes of melancholy are manifestations of this temperament, exacerbated by his distressingly difficult domestic situation.¹ We do not, however, really know much about Mrs. White's nerves. Indeed, there is little evidence of any kind to suggest that White's melancholy was hereditary. We know from several accounts that his father was unusually energetic, emotionally stable, and healthyminded. (White does, though, describe his artistic younger brother, who died in his early twenties, as "passionate, and at times beyond control" [EL, 5].) Basil Willey, one of White's most perceptive readers, argues that his character was "of the manic-depressive type," and that, while some of his depression was owing to the "petrifaction of Cowfold Dissent," it would still "be misleading to ascribe his moods of 'black, moveless gloom' to his religious doubts."² White's sons, however, while they acknowledged their father's propensity for melancholy, insisted that he suffered from no mental disorder. The eldest son, who became the renowned physician Sir William Hale-White, explained that his father suffered continually from dyspepsia and insomnia, and that these physical ailments precipitated the periods of melancholy.³ Both children alluded to their mother's illness as the central anguish in their home, although the second son, Jack, also suggested that the "disconsolate moods" that were
frequent with his father stemmed in part from his acute awareness of the problems of the times, in "the decay of religious faith; the ugliness of industrial development; the terrible contrast of poverty and riches." Alluding to Carlyle and Ruskin, he concluded that his father's melancholy, "the cross he carried with him through life," was "a symptom of the age."

All these explanations contain some truth, no doubt. But while White's later melancholia may have been intensified and prolonged by his physical ailments, his domestic situation, and his pained awareness of the evils of his age, I believe we must look to Bunyan Meeting for the principal cause of the malady. The "dark, unbottom'd, infinite Abyss" was first glimpsed during his public testimony. Here his impulse toward introspection and his divided existence began. His own analysis of "the only enemy I really dread" (L, 266) implies that the sources of his anguish were, in the largest sense, religious: "This unaccountable fainting despair, when the pit opens under me and Doubt declares itself—not the common scepticism—is awful. It is a disease with me, but it is a disease due more than ordinary diseases to spiritual causes" (GD, 58). His doubt is not doctrinal scepticism but religious fear. Melancholia has a spiritual or religious source and dimension in that it involves the confrontation with ultimate questions. As we shall see, "Doubt declares itself," and the abyss opens, when White confronts, unprepared, questions about purpose, identity, and personal worth.

What this melancholia was and how it occurred will become more apparent if we look closely at White's initial experience of it. He describes this episode, which happened in the year after his expulsion, in both the Autobiography and The Early Life. Soon after White left New College, he went for some months to Portsmouth, where both his cousin William Chignell and his friend Frederic White lived. Hale had a pleasant vacation, meeting Richard Colenutt, a merchant of Ryde, and his wife, who became his lifelong friends. He read, visited, bathed in the sea,
and enjoyed the glow of martyrdom. He was still riding high on the drama of his expulsion. But this heady excitement could not last long. White had been deprived of his vocation by his actions and those of the New College Council; he had now to think of something else to do. Six months after he had been the central figure in a vigorous national debate, he found himself "adrift, knowing no craft, belonging to no religious body, and without social or political interest" (EL, 79). The temperature of existence suddenly dropped, and life became monotonous and mundane.

At length, he decided to try earning his living as a schoolmaster, and was able to obtain a post at a private establishment in Stoke Newington. In *The Early Life*, White narrates this experience with considerable detachment, giving the facts in an apparently disinterested tone. He concludes the story of his first evening in Stoke Newington with the single comment, "then there fell upon me what was the beginning of a trouble which has lasted all my life" (EL, 80). We can, I believe, attribute this reticence to the nonfictional mode of the narrative, as well as to a consciousness of his audience: the book was written at the request of his children.

The account of the same events in the *Autobiography* is both more extensive and more intensive. Whereas *The Early Life* merely mentions the event in passing, containing within detached fact the chaos that White felt, the *Autobiography* imaginatively realizes and extends the anguish of the sufferer. In Rutherford's history, indeed, the single event is relived and reconceived twice, in a pair of similar episodes.

The first of these, set in a nameless small town in the eastern counties, begins with Rutherford in a fragile and desolate state of mind because his impassioned sermon on the "antecedent necessity" of Christianity, in which he has offered his best, most genuine thoughts, has made no impression whatever on the unfeeling congregation. The palpable quality of his isolation is evoked by a few bleak details: after the sermon, nobody came
near him but the chapel-keeper, "who said it was raining," and "immediately went away to put out the lights and shut up the building" (A, 36). Rutherford has no umbrella and must walk home alone in the November rain. Once home, his supper is found to consist of "bread and cheese with a pint of beer." The fire is unlit. The impact of these details lies in their cumulative effect; together, they communicate a scene of overwhelming solitude. As the next day dawned, Rutherford writes: "all support had vanished, and I seemed to be sinking into a bottomless abyss. I became gradually worse week by week, and my melancholy took a fixed form. I got a notion into my head that my brain was failing, and this was my first acquaintance with that most awful malady hypochondria." The "fixed form," the idée fixe that lay upon him for months, "like some poisonous reptile with its fangs driven into my very marrow," was a "dreadful conviction of coming idiocy or insanity." The death which Rutherford prays for to deliver him from this horror does not come. Slowly, gradually, without apparent reason, his melancholia fades; one day, months later on the top of a hill in Devonshire, he feels "a kind of flush in the brain" (A, 37) and the tremulous beginnings of hope.

This incident is, in the Autobiography, only a prelude to the major attack a couple of years later in Stoke Newington. The context is similar, although the circumstances that preceded the first episode are intensified. Rutherford has been preaching for more than two years, first in Independent and then in Unitarian chapels; increasingly, "the desire for something like sympathy and love absolutely devoured" him (A, 109); he decides that he can no longer bear to continue his existence among lifeless congregations. He takes the job in Stoke Newington in a mood of weary resignation, feeling "fit for nothing" (A, 111). On a cold and raw January day, he comes up to London. The description of the onset of melancholia that follows is, simply, one of the most convincing and haunting pictures in English prose.
Rutherford arrives in the schoolroom ready to begin his teaching duties. In its factual content, this part of the account is almost identical to the corresponding passage of *The Early Life*. The schoolroom is dark, “save for one candle, and was warmed by a stove”:

> The walls were partly covered with maps, and at one end of the room hung a diagram representing a globe, on which an immense amount of wasted ingenuity had been spent to produce the illusion of solidity. The master, I was told, was out, and in this room with one candle I remained till nine o'clock. At that time a servant brought me some bread and cheese on a small tray, with half-a-pint of beer. I asked for water, which was given me, and she then retired. The tray was set down on the master's raised desk, and sitting there I ate my supper in silence, looking down upon the dimly-lighted forms, and forward into the almost absolute gloom. (A, 112)

Rutherford is then invited to his bedroom, which is in an attic, reached by means of “a ladder standing against a trap-door.” He ascends and pulls the ladder up behind him, thus shutting himself up alone in a room which is “tolerably clean and decent.” He goes to the window and looks out: “There were scattered lights here and there marking roads, but as they crossed one another, and now and then stopped where building had ceased, the effect they produced was that of bewilderment with no clue to it. Further off was the great light of London, like some unnatural dawn, or the illumination from a fire which could not itself be seen” (A, 112–13).

The deliberately controlled survey of the environment produces a feeling of precariousness, of contained hysteria. Here, too, as in the previous evocation of the melancholic event, the precise color and tone of the speaker's mental state are rendered by the careful focusing of concrete details. The narrating consciousness regards external phenomena with acute concentration. Objects are perceived with an unnatural intensity but
remain isolated, fragments that do not merge to form an integrated impression of place in the mind of the perceiver. Concentrated attention to these separate fragments of the outer environment prevents the observer from confronting the inner landscape he fears; they function almost as a film covering the psychic chaos below the surface; they are what White calls the "‘painted vapour,’" the "‘thin floor’" that "‘separates us from the bottomless abyss.’" Thus the highlighted details serve as more than an objective correlative of the agonized emotional condition of the narrator; they recreate the disordered, disconnected perceptual process that is a central feature of that condition. "‘One candle’ lights the darkness; a globe, which would usually connote universal perceptible order, produces only the "‘illusion of solidity’" and is the product of "‘wasted ingenuity.’" Rutherford is given "‘bread and cheese’" and a "‘half-a-pint of beer’" on a "‘small’" tray. These details suggest not only the unnatural precision of his attention under the pressure of internal distress but, indirectly, the diminution of his being. He is surrounded by "‘dimly-lighted forms’"—in effect, another illusion of solidity—and beyond his vision is "‘absolute gloom’"—that is, impenetrable and meaningless darkness.

Rutherford’s ascent to his bedchamber is the literal acting out of an intensifying psychological isolation: he climbs up, and the ladder seals him off. The attic room is the culminating symbol of his estrangement. He is imprisoned, ironically aloft, while his spirit descends gradually into the abyss. The view out the window, which in Victorian literature so frequently heralds heightened or transformed perception, here becomes only the constricting frame of Rutherford’s distorted vision of the outer world. His perception of the landscape again reflects the disorder of his mind. The lights are "‘scattered,’" that is, random, haphazard; roads, paths that should lead somewhere either cross one another or simply stop. There is "‘no clue’" in the maze of paths; the universe reflects his own lack of focus and direction.
The light of London is possibly also an illusion; it is "unnatural," a kind of "darkness visible." The origin of the light cannot be discovered, just as the source of enlightenment is hidden from him—and may not exist at all.

This moment—embodies his knowledge of exile and the image that came to symbolize that knowledge—remained tenacious in Rutherford's memory: "It is many years ago since that evening, but while I write I am at the window still, and the yellow flare of the city is still in my eyes" (A, 113). For the reader, too, this is the most persistent image of White’s "most dreadful sense of loneliness"—a solitary figure at an attic window, looking out at the cruel lights of the Unreal City, suspended, alien to any world.

The next morning, Rutherford's continuing disorientation is indicated in the description of his early walk. He wanders aimlessly "about the dreary intermingled chaos of fields with damaged hedges, and new roads divided into building plots" (A, 114). Before, he had seen this same scene as random, purposeless. The deepening of his depression is subtly suggested in the new emphasis. The changes in the landscape occasioned by building are now regarded as destructive—the hedges are "damaged," in a "chaos" of fields. In the afternoon, his despair increases as the winter light fades. The wind becomes "south-easterly, cold and raw," and the smoke from the river now "shrouded all the building plots in fog."

Rutherford also attempts to relate some part of his anguish in more denotative terms. The movement from a concrete, connotative description of the external world to a more abstract confirmation of what has been perceived and experienced is characteristic. Rutherford says that he cannot rationally account for his despair, but that night in Stoke Newington:

I was beside myself with a kind of terror, which I cannot further explain. It is possible for another person to understand grief for
the death of a friend, bodily suffering, or any emotion which has a distinct cause, but how shall he understand the worst of all calamities, the nameless dread, the efflux of all vitality, the ghostly haunting horror which is so nearly akin to madness? . . . I remember the thought of all the happy homes which lay around me, in which dwelt men who had found a position, an occupation, and, above all things, affection. I know the causelessness of a good deal of all those panic fears, and all that suffering, but I tremble to think how thin is the floor on which we stand which separates us from the bottomless abyss. (A, 113)

The "Everlasting No" has been endured by any number of writers, and resounded with particular intensity in the nineteenth century. Certainly White's melancholia has some features in common with the "vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of Death" that Carlyle's Teuflesdröckh knew, his "grim Desert" filled with the "howling of wild-beasts," where no Pillar of Cloud by day or Pillar of Fire by night "any longer guides the Pilgrim." It is reminiscent also of John Stuart Mill's mental crisis and of some of the lyrics of *In Memoriam*; and similar to Dorothea Brooke's night of anguish in chapter 80 of *Middlemarch* and to the "cliffs of fall, / Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed" in Hopkins's desolation sonnets. But White's experience of the void has its own special quality, which is largely owing to its origin in a particular religious experience.

Of various modern interpreters of the experience of religious dread, Richard R. Niebuhr, in his *Experiential Religion*, comes closest to a description of the anguish felt by Hale White. After examining the testimony of such individuals as John Donne and Jean-Paul Sartre, Niebuhr concludes that the classic features of the dreading state of mind are "the experience of diminution," in which self-understanding offers no alleviation of the feeling, and a "sense of powerlessness," in which the external world is experienced chaotically. The sufferer is overwhelmed by the sense of "lying foundered or idle in a world of chaotic power of
The dreading individual "suffers in a world . . . of alien purposes and agencies where he is weak, a world of solid bodies where he has no substance of his own, a world of persons who direct themselves and one another while he lacks the capacity to direct himself. . . . [He] is expressing his awareness that he has no innate, inalienable share in that which is most real to him, his own life-course." This is strikingly similar to White's account of sinking under "nameless dread." Others have found "position," "occupation," "affection"—what Niebuhr calls "direction." They have found a place; he alone is unequipped and worthless. He has neither capacity to choose, nor ability to share in that which is "most real to him"—that is, vocation, a spiritual home, a living community. His emotional being is denied expression or fulfillment. Niebuhr argues further that "dreading is a revelation of infinite energy and of environing, shaping power that approaches us on alien terms. It is a revelation of what Coleridge called 'the sacred horror' of existence." White says he glimpsed the "abyss" in Bunyan Meeting at the time of his adolescent conversion. At Stoke Newington, he fell through the thin partition and encountered for the first time, but certainly not the last, the infinite, alien energy that humankind can so little bear. Once in the abyss, the reality above it seems an illusion, a painted veil, a colored globe which gives the "illusion of solidity" but has no substance. This glimpse of daimonic energy can lead to madness—the fear of which obsessed White during his periods of melancholia. Niebuhr suggests, though, as do Carlyle, Tennyson, T. S. Eliot, and others, what White himself came gradually to realize: the experience of Dread, if survived, may ultimately be positive and creative. And it is common enough that "those to whom it is unknown lack 'the great initiation.'" Bunyan writes that though the Valley of the Shadow is "a wilderness, a land of deserts, and of pits, a land of drought, and of the shadow
of death," yet "Christian must needs go through it because the way to the Celestial City lay through the midst of it."\textsuperscript{14}

In his efforts to identify a cause for his melancholia, White sometimes believed that his "phantom foes" were the result of physical weakness and dispersed with the return of health and energy. Certainly Zachariah Coleman's melancholy disappears with returning health, and is "evaded and forgotten" if not slain: "Health, sweet blood, unimpeded action of the heart, are the divine narcotics which put to sleep these enemies to our peace and enable us to pass happily through life. Without these blessings a man need not stir three steps without finding a foe able to give him his death-stroke" (RTL, 214–15). In White's own case, however, physical illness may have intensified mental distress, but while returning health often shifted his attention, it did not cure his chronic melancholia. We cannot conclude, therefore, that because a change of scene or renewed physical vigor alleviated despair, melancholia was the result of ill-health. Rather, White's physical ailments are often not the cause but the symptoms of spiritual anguish.

In general, White's analyses of his spiritual disease must be approached with caution, especially when he is writing for a public. Because one of his reasons for writing is to "heal" others, he is naturally inclined to discover reasons and cures for the fearful condition. He despised the "melancholy" literature he felt his own age excelled at producing, and he did not wish to be among those writers who could only describe the malady but stopped short of prescribing a cure. Moreover, White desperately wanted his attacks to have a physical cause. He could confront and challenge such a cause, but "objectless fearing" was paralyzing. Just as in his fiction he creates a focus for uncontainable and destructive emotions, so in his analysis of spiritual anguish he controls anxiety by giving it a definite cause and shape. He is thus able to objectify and detach himself from the threat to sanity and
identity, and in the intellectual exertion of the will he reminds himself that he is not yet overcome. The cure for melancholia, which White frequently ascribes to returning physical health, is thus related to the conscious desire for health, to a determined will: fresh air, a good sleep, a happy hour will make me better.

White says of Wordsworth's "hypochondriacal misery" that it was removed not by rational conquest of its supposed mental cause, but by "better health, by the society of his beloved sister, and finally by the friendship with Coleridge." This analysis is probably correct in the case of Wordsworth; it is clear that White wished it to be true in his own. When he argues that "certain beliefs, at any rate with men of Wordsworth's stamp, are sickness, and . . . with the restoration of vitality and the influx of joy they disappear," he is trying to convince himself that what cured Wordsworth will also cure Hale White. His real confusion about this question can be demonstrated by juxtaposing these hopeful assertions with the following remark from his essay "Talking About Our Troubles": "Fright is often prior to an object; that is to say, the fright comes first and something is invented or discovered to account for it" (P, 69; my emphasis). In his own search for wholeness and spiritual health, perhaps invention played as large a part as discovery.

The essays just discussed exemplify White's self-conscious effort to investigate the significance of his malady. Inevitably, the experience of dread is also a central fact in the lives of his fictional characters. The "great initiation" is required of them before self-understanding, change, or regeneration is possible. I suggested in the preceding chapter how White's imaginative energies work toward focusing, clarifying, or containing complex personal emotions. In his fictional exploration of dread, we discover that similar features of the experience recur and also see emerging a distinctive pattern of events associated with such episodes.
The pattern is as follows: first, dread seems to follow the rejection of the protagonist by a person or group, when a particular event places him or her in a position of severe isolation. Before the actual episode of melancholia, the sufferers feel dissatisfied with themselves and insignificant. Second, once it commences, dread is experienced as a fatal threat to identity. During the fall into the abyss, the sufferer feels diminished to the point of nothingness. Finally, dread includes the presence of a fixed idea, which appears to have nothing to do with the experience itself, but which haunts the sufferer to the point of madness. White continually attempts definition of this particular anxiety: "Hypochondriacal misery is apt to take an intellectual shape. The most hopeless metaphysics or theology which we happen to encounter fastens on us, and we mistake for an unbiased conviction the form which the disease assumes" (MP, 210).

This final characteristic, monomania, is central to the experience as a whole. It cannot be willed away. White wished to believe that he was not responsible for the images and ideas that engulfed him and plunged him deeper into panic: "The tyranny of the imagination is perhaps that which is most to be dreaded. By strength of will we can prevent an act, but no strength of will is able to prevent the invasion of self-created pictures" (MP, 227). The kind of idea or image that has such fatal power is significant, for it is usually one that symbolizes or indirectly comments upon the feelings of worthlessness involved in any attack of melancholic dread. A more detailed discussion of White’s major fictional descriptions of melancholia will clarify these points.

The most striking accounts of melancholia, in addition to those of Mark Rutherford, are found in the portrayals of Zachariah, protagonist of The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane, and the titular heroines of Miriam’s Schooling and Catharine Furze. Zachariah Coleman, although in many ways a tribute to White’s
father, also resembles his creator. Zachariah has two major attacks of melancholia, and both are religious in origin. In the first instance, he has quarreled with his wife and feels unloved and unblessed. He begins to question the foundations of his Calvinist faith and the justice of his lot. Feeling rejected by both God and wife, he seeks work in a strange town. Again he is rejected; potential employers "treated him as if he were not a person, an individual soul, but as an atom of a mass to be swept out anywhere, into the gutter—into the river" (RTL, 135-36). This triple failure, which leaves Zachariah without divine relationship, human affection or vocation, renders him psychologically vulnerable. He then gradually becomes haunted by a "vague, shapeless fear": "It was a coward enemy, for it seized him when he was most tired and most depressed. What is that nameless terror? It is a momentary revelation of the infinite abyss which surrounds us; from the sight of which we are mercifully protected by a painted vapour, by an illusion; that unspeakable darkness which we all of us know to exist, but which we hypocritically deny, and determine never to confess to one another" (RTL, 136-37). This description is by now familiar from our examination of Rutherford's experience of dread in the Autobiography. The questions Zachariah asks prior to his descent into the abyss are also questions of worth, purpose, and identity. "Does God really know anything about me?" he queries, and "Is not humanity the commonest and cheapest thing in the world?" (RTL, 136). This momentary glimpse of the "infinite abyss" below the illusory "painted vapour," this confrontation with "the sacred horror" of existence, desperately threatens the "very I." Like Bunyan's Pilgrim, Zachariah stands before the morass that has no bottom. At this point Zachariah recalls, as White himself did, others who had undergone similar perils and yet survived. Such memories give him courage: he could "connect his trouble with the trouble of others" (RTL, 137) and endure. In common suffering, through this communion of
the faithful, he finds comfort. The narrator here reminds us that Christian was not alone in the valley of the Shadow, and “by-and-by the day broke, and Christian cried, ‘He hath turned the Shadow of Death into the morning.’”

Zachariah’s second experience of melancholia occurs after his sojourn in a workhouse hospital. He is weak and depressed, without direction for his life. In this frame of mind he encounters Ferguson’s Astronomy, and there reads that one day the earth will fall into the sun. This single piece of information evolves into a fixed idea. The concept itself is not a random one, for it implies a threat to individual selfhood: the narrator remarks here that although Zachariah knows intellectually that the earth is not the center of the universe, his religious training had nevertheless “centred all his thoughts upon the earth as the theatre of the history of the universe” (RTL, 212). The individual soul is irrelevant if the whole world can easily and meaninglessly perish: “He dwelt upon these facts . . . till the ground seemed to disappear under his feet, and he fell into that strange condition in which people in earthquake countries are said to be when their houses begin to tremble” (RTL, 212–13). Here again White associates the experience of dread with the disorientation and impotence experienced in the face of a larger chaos. Zachariah’s being is diminished, and his faith is insufficient to calm his fear. His disorientation in the face of cosmic chaos is total: God appears to be indifferent, nonexistent, or malevolent. Ferguson’s Astronomy is the final blow to a frame already weak and uncertain. Renewed health causes Zachariah’s terrors to fade for the present, but the potential remains for another single fear to cast him into outer darkness.

There is reason to believe that the concept of eventual cosmic disaster annihilating the earth—and thus the theater of human history, and implicitly, God’s presence in history—was at this period a genuine horror for White himself. Six years after the publication of The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane, he wrote a
short story for *The Bookman*, entitled "Two Martyrs." The first martyr is Saint Agatha, whose prayer for strength in the hour of trial is answered by the coming of an angel, who remains with her as wild beasts attack her and is revealed to her at the moment of death. The second martyr is a twenty-eight-year-old schoolteacher, who sits alone in her room on her birthday, unloved and unknown. She is impelled to commit suicide shortly after she reads about the "shrinkage of the solar mass": "Of one thing, however, there can be no doubt—that all work means expenditure of energy, and that consequently a day must arrive when the sun will be cold and life on the earth will be at an end. Apart from geology, Helmholtz's hypothesis is entirely satisfactory." The narrator makes it clear that her deliverance (she "stands thinking for some minutes" and then puts down the bottle containing a sleeping potion) has a divine origin. As in Tennyson's "The Two Voices," the voice that arrests her hand "has to be taken absolutely on trust; it has nothing to say to the tremendous argument on the other side" (p. 154). As the heroine replaces the bottle, the fog over Hampstead Road begins to lift. In both this story and *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, the religious dimension of the *idée fixe* is obvious: it points to the comparative insignificance of human life and undermines the possibility of a relationship between human beings and God. In the short story, though, White is more emphatic in his affirmation of the reality of that relationship than he is in the novel.

Miriam, the eager heroine of *Miriam's Schooling*, is also catapulted into the abyss by the power of a single threatening idea. One day she begins to read old books she has found in an upstairs cupboard. One of the authors is Swift. "For years, even to the day of her death, the poison of one sentence in the Tale of a Tub remained with her—those memorable words that 'happiness is a perpetual possession of being well-deceived'" (MS, 128). The sentence affects her so powerfully because Miriam, like
Zachariah, is in a condition of psychological vulnerability. Denied a relationship with the man she fervently desires, and married to one she cannot care for, she is feeling bereft and miserable. Like Zachariah and Mark Rutherford, she wonders if she will ever love and be loved in return. Standing before the Thames, she considers throwing herself into it. The narrator comments: "this was her first acquaintance with an experience not rare, alas! but below it humanity cannot go, when all life ebbs from us, when we stretch out our arms in vain, when there is no God—nothing but a brazen Moloch, worse than the Satan of theology ten thousand times, because it is dead. A Satan we might conquer, or at least we should feel the delight of combat in resisting him; but what can we do against this leaden 'order of things' which makes our nerves ministers of madness?" (MS, 112–13). Again we glimpse one reason why melancholia is so difficult to deal with: there is no definable object, no sin for which to atone. There is no palpable Satan to confront, only the ubiquitous "leaden order of things." All White's melancholic sufferers, including Miriam, are surrounded and overwhelmed by "phantom foes." Miriam does not kill herself; she "held back and passed on." The narrator's apparently gratuitous comment on her extremity is Hardyesque: "the friendly hand which at the nick of time intervenes in romances did not rescue her." 18

The situation of Catharine Furze differs in detail but not in substance from that of Miriam. Catharine has not been, like the other characters discussed, rejected by a beloved, but the man she cares for is nevertheless unattainable. Her melancholia is precipitated by the sudden realization that her life will be passed without the fulfillment of mutual love, without commitment to something larger than herself. In this condition of mind, feeling depressed and worthless, she finds that time ceases to have ordinary meaning: "The interval between the present moment and death appeared annihilated; life was a mere span." She is overpowered by her new awareness of death, which sinks the
difference between right and wrong. Morality loses meaning and power; she feels paralyzed and unable to exercise choice: "Terrors vague and misty possessed her, all the worse because they were not substantial. She could not put into words what ailed her, and she wrestled with shapeless, clinging forms which she could hardly discern, and could not disentangle from her, much less overthrow" (CF, 299). These are presumably the hallucinatory images, the palpable imaginative form that a fixed idea took. In all the instances of dread under discussion here, the most frequent metaphor pertaining to these hallucinations is that of battle. The metaphor is a natural one, considering the incessant feeling of struggle experienced by the victim. Zachariah’s illness is not destroyed by "some heaven-directed arrow" but evaded; Miriam is unable to feel "the delight of combat" that she might experience against a tangible enemy; Catharine "wrestles" with clinging forms which change shape and direction. The self is described as a besieged "citadel" (CF, 300). White comments that if we slay soldiers on a battlefield, that is the end of them; but there is no doing battle with ghostly enemies, "for they rise into life after we think they are buried, and often with greater strength than ever" (CF, 299). The experience is truly a waking nightmare. Eventually the unceasing struggle with phantoms weakens Catharine’s physical health. Here, White allows that melancholia can be the cause of physical disease, not the opposite. Again, in Catharine’s situation no conquest is possible by the reason, and the will is impotent. "Life is a conflict to the last," White writes in his biography of Bunyan. "When we get up in the morning we must say to ourselves that today will be as yesterday; the old tormenting thoughts and images will beset us till we are at peace in death" (B, 145).

These imaginative investigations of melancholia help to clarify the existential and religious dimensions of the experience of dread. They all concern questions of ultimate worth, purpose, identity, and direction. If sufferers experience momentary
freedom, they are soon again overwhelmed by the surrounding universe of chaotic power. The attacks of ghostly foes enchain them anew, and the only weapon is a hidden desire for health. Dread is seen to disorient the fearing individual in a variety of ways. Bunyan writes that in the Valley of the Shadow, Christian "was so confounded that he did not know his own voice" and could not tell if the blasphemies resounding about him issued from his own mouth. White, too, felt that in melancholia he was somehow alienated from his "very self." The internal division was so shattering that he could not always be sure who he was or who was suffering. In the period leading up to an attack, and during it, he was gradually stripped of every defense and illusion, until in the abyss he confronted the naked self. He now perceived the "I" in all its original darkness and depravity: the self was felt as nothingness. Dorothy White records in *The Groombridge Diary* how White's attacks were seen by an outside observer, one who loved him deeply: "That is the only way in which I can express these strange, nervous, hypochondriacal moods; he goes away from me; the body remains, but inhabited by a new and not very good or happy spirit; then suddenly the spirit goes, and he comes back. What a reunion it is!" (GD, 422). Her description of the soul lost in chaos, with its suggestion of demonic possession as the closest analogy, illuminates White's own terminology for his illness: he calls it his "personal Devil," or the "ancient Enemy." So he experienced it. In one of his wonderful reinterpretations of Bible stories, White explains the delusion of Saul in the same terms: "Now Saul was brave, the bravest of the brave, but he greatly feared at times what he called his Terror. . . . He was not mad as others are mad, for his senses never left him. . . . But something had caught him of which he could not rid himself. . . . all I heard was a strange word or two about a Face which haunted him and would not leave him." Saul begins to confound the "evil spirit from the Lord" (I Samuel 16:14)—the Terror—with the image of David,
and soon believes that if he could remove David, the "Terror would depart." In White's imaginative exploration of the problem, the mental process again involves what sanity necessitates: the location of a source or the creation of a tangible enemy seen to be invading the soul from without.

These fictional representations of individual attacks of melancholia directly reflect White's personal encounters with the disorder. More elusive of definition, yet more subtly pervasive in White's imaginative work, are his characters' general feelings of displacement and estrangement, and the situations that express them. Not only does Mark Rutherford feel, as John Lucas characterizes it, an "aloof distaste for the various [religious] communities he is supposed to serve," he feels alienated from his later journalistic work and distanced from the different secular communities with which he is connected. He is out of touch with his inner self and frequently feels that he lives, in Yeat's phrase, "where motley is worn." As a reporter, he has no sense of his audience ("I wrote for an abstraction; and spoke to empty space" [A, 152]); later, at the publishing house, he discovers that the work is antagonistic to his temperament. Zachariah Coleman is estranged from his wife after a few months of marriage, and from his religion somewhat later. When the march of the Blanketeers fails, he is exiled from London, and the momentary sense of communal belonging that the friendship of Caillaud, Major Maitland, and the Friends of the People had provided is shattered. He has to start all over again in Manchester. Here he discovers "how foreign, hard, repellent, are the streets in which he is a stranger, alone amidst a crowd of people all intent upon their own occupation, whilst he has none!" (RTL, 133). Miriam, too, is out of place in Cowfold, and Catharine Furze is described as being temporally displaced: "Had Catharine been born two hundred years earlier, life would have been easy" (CF, 189). In Clara Hopgood, The Hopgood sisters, having lived in Weimar, are out of place in Fenmarket and are "almost entirely
isolated, for the tradesfolk felt themselves uncomfortable and inferior . . . in their presence, and they were ineligible for rectory and brewery society" (CH, 25). In London, Clara goes to work in a bookstore and is befriended by her employer: thus the "sense of exile and loneliness" (CH, 169) which the narrator says she shares with many of the city's immigrants is momentarily relieved. All these characters live on the boundary, peripheral to any community.

Lucas explains the "growing sense of separation from . . . [their] community" felt by characters in White's fiction as a standard late-nineteenth-century phenomenon, a function of the "mode of consciousness" that became "so crucial a feature of much Edwardian fiction." This may be so, but although White was writing in the 1880s and 1890s, the personal experience that is the foundation of his fiction occurred in the early 1850s. His characters move from the country to the city because he moved from the country to the city; they have attacks of melancholia because he did; they are alienated from both religious and secular communities because of White's conversion, heresy, and the permanent sense of exile that these events created in him. His fictional explorations of the phenomenon of communal displacement is a psychological necessity inflicted by his own experience. "I belong to the Tennyson-Carlyle-Ruskin-epoch," he wrote in 1897 (L, 170). Doubtless as he became older and grew with the aging century, his feelings of alienation and his sense that life was a constant struggle intensified. But the images of exile harvested in his novels were planted in Bunyan Meeting and the schoolroom at Stoke Newington.

Depression and "the horrors" were evils that beset White intermittently all his life. The onslaughts of melancholia appear to have lessened somewhat in the 1860s and 1870s, but recurred with great intensity in the 1880s. His letters in this decade contain several allusions to the dreaded visitations. In May 1884, he wrote to his son Jack that he had been ill for the last two months,
though "what is the matter I cannot say; excepting that I suffer greatly from unendurable depression, partly the result of physical causes, and partly due perhaps to Mama’s growing weakness and weariness which I cannot relieve." Although he is aware that the day is sunny and fine as he writes, he cannot enjoy it: "I have not felt any stir from the summer; one of the few living creatures on this planet, I should think, whose blood has not been quickened by this generating weather. But I must wait and be still." In 1885, he wrote to Mrs. Colenutt, "I have been almost prostrated with my old complaints, inability to eat, drink, or sleep, and depression of the darkest shade" (L, 29). In 1886, in another letter to Jack, White explained his apparent neglect by referring to his melancholia: "For years I have not suffered from such continued gloom. I have hardly been able to open my lips except at the office, and at times I have scarcely known what I have been doing." Interestingly, here he can assign no cause to his disorder: "What is the cause of it all, I cannot conjecture." A year later, in 1887, he wrote to Mrs. Colenutt that "I have had eleven months of terrible depression and complete nervous exhaustion, taking the form of all kinds of distressing forebodings and delusions. . . . It is wonderful how much misery can be got out of a human being" (L, 38–39). In the last months of the decade, he wrote Jack, "as we get older we find that endurance is the exact synonym for life." References to his melancholia also increase for a while during the period following 1907, after White became acquainted with Dorothy Horace Smith. In 1908, White wrote to Miss Partridge: "When you were here an enemy was approaching whom I had not seen for years, and I hoped he had left me for ever. He is the only enemy I really dread. Since you left he has gripped me. There is nothing to be done but to wait and be silent" (L, 266). At first it may seem strange that melancholia was connected to his love for Dorothy. Yet this is really the most comprehensible and explicable of all his experiences of anguish, for these
attacks do have a definite cause. Initially, Dorothay visited Hale for part of the week. Each time she left, he felt greatly depressed. This particular anxiety disappeared when they were married. Further, White himself believed that his depression was so great because he loved Dorothy so deeply, and "intense light always makes black shadow" (GD, 40). The complexity of White's emotional response to Dorothy will be discussed in detail in a later chapter. Here I shall discuss only the obvious connection with his melancholia. White feared that Dorothy's love would turn to pity, that a vital young woman could not possibly love a man so much older and often ill. In the presence of her love he often felt worthless, and he inevitably oscillated between gratitude for the gift and angry resentment that this long-wished-for gift should have been granted so late. White tried to reassure Dorothy that she was not exactly the cause of his melancholy: "But the worst symptoms are depression and fear, and, as I live for nothing but you, you will understand how they are entirely now connected with you; an almost unbearable longing to have you always with me, a feeling that I ought to have had you long ago, the irreversible doom of age" (GD, 79). And in Dorothy White's manuscript Diary, she includes a letter White wrote in this period: "If I seem to you morbid and I may say wickedly miserable you must recollect it is always present to me that if I had been given you when I was young, my life might have been a blessed life. Now, I seem to be shown what it might have been."26

White feared that Dorothy's charity would require her to remain with him to the end, even if her feelings recoiled: "Do you know what is my trouble now, mental trouble I mean?" he asks: "that you should feel yourself bound to be loyal to me when I am a mere wreck" (GD, 114). He describes the "half-mad thoughts" (GD, 253) that possess him in her absence, and how even in the midst of extraordinary joy he is aware of the hidden threat of chaos: "with my happiness, there always intrudes a
Fear, a sinking of the heart because of my utter unworthiness. I know" (GD, 175).

During a lifetime of struggle with episodes of melancholiac dread, White naturally valued and turned to writers who were themselves acquainted with depression. He found that, among others, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and especially Carlyle were great resources. White venerated and cherished Carlyle, and preserved a letter from him among his greatest treasures. In this letter, Carlyle advises the young Hale to practice turning beliefs into facts: "It is idle work otherwise to write books or to read them" (P, 3). White and his father had paid Carlyle a visit in March of 1868, and the conversation cheered and sustained White, and lived in memory all his life. He declares in his essay on Carlyle ("A Visit to Carlyle in 1868") that he "like all great men, . . . is infinitely tender" (P. 9).

Interestingly, White displayed a like attraction to the figure of Galileo. In his essay "How Can We Tell?" White discusses Galileo’s experience before the council anxious to condemn him for heresy. White’s characteristic critical approach to great writers or thinkers—presenting the "other side" of a contentious issue or event—is strikingly in evidence here. Galileo’s recantation, he argues, should be viewed in context and judged compassionately. The context is Galileo’s illness, his temperament, his daily situation: "the whole of his life he was the prey of miserable, sordid cares" (LP, 175). White concludes from his study of the man that Galileo, like Saul, was a melancholiac. Naturally, in White’s estimation, this fact explains and excuses a great deal: "He was afflicted with hypochondria, and at times doubted the truth of what he himself had seen. When Saturn’s ring became invisible in consequence of its being turned edgeways to the earth and he did not understand why it had vanished, he was in despair" (LP, 174–75; my emphasis). White’s sympathy is as sincere as his empathy is strong. He can enter into Galileo’s fear of being mistaken, into his general mental and physical debilitation at the
time. His recantation was the result of despairing confusion. "Who can tell," White asks, "what he thought, felt, and feared? Who can put himself in the place of this solitary old man, broken down with misfortune and disease, and perhaps self-distrusting?" (LP, 181). In Galileo's letter to his daughter following the recantation, White heard the echo of his own despair in the face of indecision: "My name is erased from the book of the living" (LP, 179).

White is clearly drawn to those writers who are familiar with these disconsolate moods, and even more to those who offer a path of deliverance from them. He greatly esteemed Milton, not only for the sublimity of his poetry, but also because he seemed personally to comprehend the feelings of Christ, tempted, alone in the wilderness. But it was Spenser, White felt, who understood the psychological complexities of the human struggle with evil more thoroughly than any other writer. Spenser celebrates the "untiring championship of the good" in *The Faerie Queene*, but "most attractive ... is the constant desperateness of the struggle. Paynim, giant, and dragon are not overcome till the knight has made his last effort, and defeat, if it be not ultimate, is acknowledged" (LP, 17). Here victory over evil comes disguised and is not everywhere complete. The psychological realism of Milton and Spenser spoke resoundingly to White—they both comprehended "the facts." White believed with Spenser that the struggle with melancholia, temptation, terror, is always "desperate": the "ancient enemy" in its many forms may be evaded or momentarily vanquished, but in the self as in the world its total annihilation is impossible.

White also greatly valued Samuel Johnson, and especially because Johnson pointed the way to courage. "We all of us take to those who answer our questions," White exclaims about Johnson (L, 376). It pleased White also to discover that his heroes had similar qualities or characteristics. Johnson is significantly joined with Bunyan in White's mind by their common understanding of melancholia: "It is strange, by the way, that Johnson
resembled Bunyan. His spectres haunted Johnson, and the *History of my Melancholy*, which he once thought of writing but never dared to write, would undoubtedly have reminded us of another history by the author of the *Pilgrim’s Progress* which he loved so well’’ (B, 30).

Hale White himself resembled Johnson, of course. Dorothy White noted the extensive similarities between the two. They shared “truthfulness, tenderness, humility (not surface but real)—piety I will put by itself—deliberation, care, pointedness” (GD, 9). I would add that both men also knew the terrors of dejection, and that the anxiety of both frequently had a religious source. While Johnson, however, often felt that he had not fulfilled “the conditions” for salvation, White feared that the covenant itself might be only a dream. White believed that Johnson had a history like his own, “too dangerous” for expression. Both men were painfully conscious of the truth of the statement in *Rambler* 14, that “it is the condition of our present state to see more than we can attain.” Johnson as well as White felt that though he may have done something toward “filling the time” properly, he had not, as Johnson puts it, done “what I required of myself.” In his diaries, Johnson writes of “vain terrors,” of “disorders of mind,” and of his ever-present “scrapes.” Again, both Johnson and White are able to analyze their own fears and record them with exacting fidelity; they contend with “terrors” and the fear of madness, yet are equipped with intellects capable of penetrating the most oblique of human defenses. Finally, the guilty fear that we have already seen in White, that with greater effort he might triumph, was also shared by Johnson. Like White, Johnson believed that despair was “criminal,” and for this reason constantly struggled for sanity and clarity. But, as Imlac remarks in *Rasselas*, “no disease of the imagination . . . is so difficult of cure, as that which is complicated with the dread of guilt.”

White’s own struggle is apparent throughout his adult life. In *The Autobiography*, the butterfly collector whom Rutherford
encounters exists in the novel primarily as an exemplum. He relates his personal history of adversity to Rutherford and tells how he one day determined to collect butterflies as a means of forcing his mind outward, away from introspection and despair. "Men should not be too curious," explains the collector, "in analysing and condemning any means which nature devises to save them from themselves, whether it be coins, old books, curiosities, butterflies, or fossils" (A. 107). This statement recalls Johnson's advice to Boswell on the same topic. Johnson approves any decent means that helps prevent the mind from preying upon itself, when reason and will are helpless. When Boswell asks if a man should, for example, take a course of chemistry to help himself, Johnson replies: "Let him take a course of chymistry or a course of rope-dancing, or a course of any thing to which he is inclined at the time. Let him contrive to have as many retreats for his mind as he can."32

White constantly attempted to follow the butterfly collector's advice and do anything positive and active rather than sitting disconsolate in his study, pondering the meaning of life. "He told me," writes Dorothy White, "that again and again he has only saved his mind by forcing himself to apply to some study, no matter how useless" (GD, 113). Eventually he came to believe that happiness should be carefully cultivated, even looked upon as a solemn duty. His diversions and evasions and general movements in the direction of emotional health were not always successful. In the grip of dread, mental paralysis, and self-absorption, White often could do nothing but endure his anguish in silence. I have suggested that his fondness for Bunyan and Spenser was based in part on their understanding of the process of suffering and deliverance. Grace and deliverance do not arrive until the eleventh hour. White's own experience confirmed this perception. He found that when he was in extremis, powerless to help himself, relief seemed to come from a merciful source outside himself. His favorite psalm, to which he frequently
alludes in his work, is the twenty-second. Zachariah Coleman speaks for the author when, in the midst of despair, he calls it to mind. Both the psalm itself and the narrator’s commentary help to illuminate White’s feelings:

“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? . . . Our fathers trusted in Thee; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. . . . Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. . . . Be Thou not far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste Thee to help me. . . . Save me from the lion’s mouth: and from the horns of the wild oxen Thou hast answered me.”

“From the horns of the wild oxen”—that correction had often been precious to Zachariah. When at the point of being pinned to the ground—so he understood it—help had arisen; risen up from the earth, and might again arise. (RTL, 104-05)

White emphasizes the main point again, in the journals: “The inwardness of a few of the Psalms is profound. ‘Yea, from the horns of the wild-oxen thou hast answered me.’ . . . From between their very horns!” (LP, 118).33 He is obviously attracted by the visual strength of this image. Through the suffering itself, between the horns of the enemy, deliverance comes. He endures because help has arrived in the past. White remarks that Christian is able to survive in Doubting Castle because he remembers his previous victories (B, 140); with each conquest over evil and suffering, hope suffuses his terror. Mr. Bradshaw, in The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane, reminds Zachariah that the Red Sea did not part until “the enemy was upon them.” Only then did the waters divide, “the very waters . . . which before were their terror” (RTL, 129-30). As he recognizes that salvation occurs through the suffering itself, White affirms what we have seen suggested earlier—that the “great initiation” contains the seeds of positive fruit.

White’s sense of the meaning implicit in “the horns of the wild oxen” also illuminates the frequent and seemingly gratu-
itous allusions in his work to the sudden terror of drowning. In *The Early Life*, he describes his own experience of this terror.
One day, while swimming, he was "suddenly overtaken by a mad conviction that I should never get home." Although he was physically strong, he says: "my heart began to beat furiously, the shore became dim, and I gave myself up for lost. 'This then is dying,' I said to myself, but I also said—I remember how vividly—'There shall be a struggle before I go down—one desperate effort'—and I strove, in a way I cannot describe, to bring my will to bear directly on my terror. In an instant the horrible excitement was at an end, and *there was a great calm*" (EL, 53). The episode, which seems to prefigure so much of White's later experience, is, of course, not only one of physical endurance but of spiritual deliverance. In the short story "Michael Trevanion," the spiritual dimensions of the event are made more explicit. Robert Trevanion swims out to sea to save Susan, the young woman he loves. Although a good swimmer, "he was suddenly seized with a kind of fainting and a mist passed over his eyes. . . . He was on the point of sinking, when he bethought himself that if he was to die, he might just as well die after having put forth all his strength; and in an instant, as if touched by some divine spell, the agitation ceased, and he was himself again" (MS, 160). The pattern is now clear: one cannot will salvation, but courageous endurance may evoke divine response. Drowning is yet another image of the spiritual abyss. White transforms the literal life event into a symbol of his deepest fear: sinking into the darkness and helplessly drowning there alone in a watery world of "chaotic power." The sea, like the "abyss," lies beneath the conscious intellect. The swimmer may at any time be seized with sudden terror and begin to fall or sink into nothingness. After he has put forth all his strength in endurance, the "divine spell" causes agitation to cease, and there is "a great calm."

When White mentions his melancholia in private letters he almost invariably concludes with a comment such as: "I must
be patient and wait."

The decision to endure is, at such times, an expression of enormous courage. In more than one place White describes courage as the "root of all virtue" (B, 125), as that which "dares and evermore dares in the very last extremity" (RTL, 25). During his long life, he often endured in feeble hope that the burden would be "loosed from off his shoulders."

White's son Jack records a moving vignette of his father's waiting for release: "One morning—I cannot remember the date, but I believe it was about the same time [1887]—I arrived home at six o'clock on a visit. I found my father sitting at the writing table in his study, beside the window, at Park Hill. In response to my enquiries, he complained of ill-health and depression, but added 'I feel at times as if a word would dispel it all.'"

In her biography of White, Catherine Maclean suggests that in his moments of greatest despair White waits on God. When White is in the clutch of this unspeakable angst, he endures, waiting for some revelation, however fragmentary, that will confer meaning on his suffering. "A word would dispel it all": surely he waits for the Logos, which he terms the "indwelling Christ"; that is, for the experience of grace that will break down the gates of his psychological prison, shatter the isolated egocentric self, and free it into relationship—with others, with God, with its own central being. In silent endurance he awaits the Power that will free him from the Enemy—for God, who had before and might once again turn the Shadow of Death into morning.
THREE

This Body of Death

I should like to die not entirely. I should like that part of me to live that rejoices in these clouds, this field of barley, these surrounding trees. But there is another part which I so heartily wish were dead that in order to annihilate it I would joyfully sacrifice the first.

—Last Pages From a Journal

I

SAINT PAUL... IS HARD, and I never read him without feeling that I have to stretch myself mightily in order to accommodate myself to him” (L, 124), White wrote to a friend. Yet it is clear from his work that he had a special feeling for the teachings of Paul. This is natural, for the Epistle to the Romans is the foundation of Calvinism, to which White eventually returned and which he reinterpreted. Because he needed a religion that was the fruit of individual experience, both Paul’s conversion and his love of Christ, as well as his understanding of fallen human nature, spoke resoundingly to White. Some of White’s characters also have occasion to confront Saint Paul and come to terms with him. Catharine Furze, for example, hesitantly offers her interpretation of the Reverend Cardew’s sermon on Paul’s query “who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24). She suggests that Paul is attempting to characterize the opposition of “the two natures in him by the strongest words
at his command—death and life.' He prays to be delivered, she argues, not from the death of the body but from "death-in-life" (CF, 119–20). Later in the novel, these words recur to her, now vibrant with personal meaning. At this point in the story, Catharine, overwhelmed by her love for Cardew, feels the approach of despair. She has just left the deathbed of Phoebe Crowhurst and has come to realize that her intellectual superiority to her servant and friend means nothing. The patient, selfless life that Phoebe crowns with a hopeful death are beyond Catharine's capacity. She begins to comprehend the extent of her own self-absorption: "in all her purposes, and in all her activity, she seemed to have had self for a centre, and she felt that she would gladly give up every single advantage she possessed if she could but depose that self and enthrone some other divinity in its place. Oh the bliss of waking up in the morning with the thoughts turned outwards instead of inwards! Her misery which so weighed upon her might perhaps depart if she could achieve that conquest. She remembered one of Mr. Cardew's first sermons, . . . and she cried to herself, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!'" (CF, 327).

"The body of this death," then, is death-in-life, self-consciousness, self-concern, egocentric despair. Here as elsewhere, White transfers the emotion he understands so well to his heroine. I have already suggested that some part of White's introspective tendency may be attributed to the ambivalent heritage of Calvinism. The creed that "concentrated my thoughts upon myself" may have disappeared, but the habit of self-examination remained, and brought with it a demoralizing sense of worthlessness. White's encounter with melancholic dread in Stoke Newington further complicated this propensity. Whether the attack of melancholia engendered the temperament that I shall be referring to as "self-consciousness," or whether that temperament helped to precipitate melancholic attacks, is difficult to determine. I suspect that the predisposition toward
self-absorption existed prior to White's expulsion, and was activated, as it were, by the right combination of circumstances. In any case, once in existence, this self-consciousness became habitual. The problem was complicated by White's integrity. He clearly recognized the egotism of a *patior ergo sum* attitude, and often feared that his anguish was mere self-indulgence that might be conquered with a greater effort. Thus guilt accompanied excessive self-concern. He certainly did not believe that great personal distress made him in any way superior to less sensitive and more carefree spirits. "I would barter my books and shoals of 'ideas,' " he cried to Dorothy, "for the ability to laugh as those girls are laughing, shop-girls in their Sunday clothes" (GD, 104).

"With . . . [his] natural tendency to believe the worst" (A, 115), White had no expectation of discovering someone who would take his place in Stoke Newington, but he was in fact quickly able to find a replacement, and thus managed to escape "the horrors" for a while. Having closed the door both on the ministry and on teaching, he decided to try publishing. Several London publishers turned him away, but at length he was offered a job as assistant to John Chapman. The ironic conclusion of his ministerial training was to become a vendor of "theologically heretical" books (EL, 82). White's career to this point in fact encapsulates the major trends of nineteenth-century biblical criticism: he was expelled from university for questioning the divine inspiration of Scripture and hired by Chapman for disbelief in miracles. "As the New College council had tested my orthodoxy," he remarks sardonically, "so Chapman tested my heresy and found that I was fit for the propagandist work in No. 142 and for its society." His answer to a question concerning his belief in miracles was "allowed to pass," but "my scepticism would have been more satisfactory and more useful if it had been a little more thorough" (EL, 83). There is a similar comment in the *Autobiography*, where Chapman appears as the publisher Wollaston: "his mind so constantly revolved in one circle, and
existed so completely by hostility to the prevailing orthodoxy, that belief or disbelief in it was the standard by which he judged men’’ (A, 119).

White both worked and lived at 142 Strand between 1852 and 1854. It is clear from the Autobiography that he found his work during that period entirely uncongenial—irritating intellectually and antagonistic to his temperament. “Particularly loathsome,” writes Rutherford, “was that part of it which brought me into contact with the trade” (A, 121-22). He found “subscribing” Chapman’s publications, “that is to say, to call on booksellers and ask how many copies they would take,” to be “most disagreeable” (EL, 83). He also found it difficult to perform his clerical duties with the expected speed and accuracy, and came to feel more and more inadequate, frustrated, and incompetent in his work. Fearing that he might not be able to please his employer or the other members of the Chapman household, he soon became incapable of effort. Rutherford analyses the feelings provoked by making a trivial clerical error:

I thought that if I was incapable of getting to the bottom of such a very shallow complication as this, of what value were any of my thinkings on more difficult subjects, and I fell a prey to self-contempt and scepticism. Contempt from those about us is hard to bear, but God help the poor wretch who contemns himself. How well I recollect the early walk on the following morning in Kensington Gardens, the feeling of my own utter worthlessness, and the longing for death as the cancellation of the blunder of my existence! (A, 130)

Both this kind of statement and the downward spiral to despair it describes are characteristic of White’s response to self-conscious anxiety. He was sensitive to the mildest reproof or criticism, and he also judged himself harshly. The pattern is one that recurs in his mental history. Here, because of a trivial mistake, his self-confidence vanishes. He concludes that he is useless
in this aspect of his work. If he is worthless in small things, he
must be worthless in large ones; ergo he is totally without value
and may as well die. This distorted logic, which catapults him
into the abyss, is recognizably the process of a depressed mind.

The great compensation for his abhorred work at Chap-
man's, however, was the society and friendship of George Eliot,
still Marian Evans, who was then assistant editor of the West-
minster Review. She appears in the Autobiography as Theresa,
Wollaston's niece. Mark Rutherford describes her as brilliant,
original, and compassionate. In the novel, after yet another error
in his work, Rutherford breaks down in Theresa's presence and
finally confesses his loneliness, his fears, his feelings of useless-
ness and failure. Theresa responds at once with kindness and
affection, corrects his error, and assures him of her friendship
and concern. Marian Evans's compassionate response at this
moment of crisis lived in White's memory all his life. "Blessed
are they," cries Mark Rutherford, "who heal us of self-despisings.
Of all services which can be done to man, I know of none more
precious" (A, 132). George Eliot proved herself in this instance
to be as generous as her own "large-souled" Maggie Tulliver,
and as noble-hearted as Dorothea Brooke. The narrator's descrip-
tion of Lydgate's confession to Dorothea in Middlemarch resem-
bles White's own response to George Eliot at this time: "The
presence of a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its
charity, changes the lights for us: we begin to see things again
in their larger, quieter masses, and to believe that we too can
be seen and judged in the wholeness of our character." It is not
surprising that immediately after his hysterical confession, Mark
Rutherford finds himself "entirely overcome with unhesitating
absorbing love" for Theresa (A, 132).

White's intimate understanding of the destructiveness of
self-contempt is acutely revealed in his fiction. His disturbing
"Confessions of a Self-Tormentor" best illuminates his feelings
about George Eliot at this time and explores how his self-hatred
extended outward, poisoning all he touched. Many of White's stories are written in self-judgment as well as in self-exploration, and this one is no exception. "No sorrow of genius," exclaims the narrator, "is greater than the daily misery of the man with no gifts, who is not properly equipped, and has desires out of all proportion to his capacity" (MP, 114). White continually longed for some talent or ability that would distinguish him in the eyes of the world and give him value in his own. In both his fiction and his journal entries, he describes the secret envy and misery he felt in the presence of those who had proved themselves masters of a field, however humble. In "Confessions of a Self-Tormentor," he presents a character who has "an extraordinary passion" for botany. The botanist is deaf and dumb, but to the narrator these afflictions appear trivial in comparison with his talents: "the one thing I saw was his mastership over a single subject. Gradually my incompleteness came to weigh on me like a nightmare. I imagined that if I had learned any craft which required skill, I should have been content. I was depressed when I looked at the watchmaker examining my watch. I should have walked the streets erect if there had been one thing which I could do better than anybody I met. There was nothing: no purpose was intended by God through me" (MP, 112). Thus the self-tormentor destroys himself. Vocation, divine intention and purpose, individual value—all are lost. The mental process of depression illustrated in this passage has already been observed in Mark Rutherford: in his periods of self-loathing, the rest of the world—beauty, genius, goodness, skill—seems by its very existence to connive at reducing him.

It is in this frame of mind that the protagonist meets Mrs. A, who is clearly another fictional portrait of George Eliot. The treatment of their relationship is as painful to the reader as it is bitter to the author. Mrs. A takes notice of the unhappy young man, as Theresa had befriended Mark Rutherford. She talks to him and attempts by her friendly interest to overcome his
self-deprecation. One evening she invites him to accompany her to see Rachel, the great actress. The protagonist petulantly refuses, claiming falsely that he knows no French. In his distress, he believes that her kindness proceeds from pity and a sense of duty rather than from a genuine liking for him. At length he stops seeing her. The story implies that the disinterested friendship offered by George Eliot was not enough for White. Like Mark Rutherford and the young self-tormentor, he was haunted by the vision of an ideal relationship, characterized, in Rutherford’s terms, by “devotion” and “sacrifice.” In this story, the narrator’s pride and jealousy thwart his real desire, and he perversely rejects Mrs. A’s generous affection simply because it is not total. By his cold and obstinate behavior he proves to himself that he is unlovable, and thus destroys the possibility of the very relation he desires. Although “it was actually painful to me to neglect her,” he writes, “I forced myself to it, or to put it more correctly, the Demon of pure Malignity . . . drove me to it” (MP, 121). The narrator’s belated regret for his self-destructive attitude is intense: “Oh! when I look back now over my life and call to mind what I might have had simply for taking and did not take, my heart is like to break. The curse for me has not been plucking forbidden fruit, but the refusal of divine fruit offered me by heavenly angels” (MP, 119–20). This period of his life and the incident concerning Rachel’s performance are also related in The Early Life. Here White is much more restrained and elusive, but the yearning is still present. “It is a lasting sorrow to me,” he concludes, “that I allowed my friendship with her to drop, and that after I left Chapman I never called on her” (EL, 83).

Readers of Hale White’s fiction have naturally been intrigued by this relationship and have attempted to discover to what extent White’s affection for George Eliot was romantic. While it is impossible to speak with certainty on this matter, it seems more than likely that Marian Evans’s compassionate kindness briefly transformed Hale’s admiration into love. His fictional
tributes imply some ambiguity of feeling: Mark Rutherford “worshipped Theresa” and was “entirely overcome with unhesitating absorbing love for her” (A, 132), but the narrator of “Confessions of a Self-Tormentor” remarks that although he found Mrs. A “attractive as a woman” and was drawn by her “delightful manners, subtle intellect, expressive grey eyes,” he “did not fall in love with her” (MP, 117). Perhaps the twenty-one-year-old Hale did not himself know the precise nature of his attachment to this extraordinary and brilliant woman some twelve years his senior. His feelings may well have been complex, and it is possible that he recoiled from Marian Evans’s liaison with George Henry Lewes when he learned of it. Certainly the extent of White’s later detachment from her indicates jealousy, or at least humiliation and dismay. It is also probable that this unworldly, innocent young man was shocked by the easy morality of the Chapman ménage. Interestingly, in the Autobiography George Eliot, as Theresa, is transformed into Wollaston’s niece, and there is no mention of any other members of the household. Mark Rutherford never gets the opportunity to reveal his passion for Theresa. Shortly after his nervous collapse, she departs for the country, from which she probably “would not return for some time” (A, 132). This evasion, as Claire Tomalin’s account implies, may have been White’s method of coping with Marian Evans’s departure for the Continent with Lewes in July of 1854.

Some years later White attempted to renew the lapsed friendship by writing to George Eliot, asking if she could help find work for William Maccall (former editor of The People and White’s friend), whom they both had known in the early years. Although George Eliot did help Maccall, she had Lewes answer White’s letters. She died on December 22, 1880—White’s birthday, a fact that he records with sorrow in his journal—one year before the publication of the Autobiography, in which her genius is celebrated. At her funeral, White’s distress was extreme. Like the remorseful self-tormentor at Mrs. A’s funeral, White lamented
his neglect (and, I suspect, his youthful self-righteous judgment) of Marian Evans.

White admired and championed George Eliot for the rest of his life. In 1898, he wrote to Miss Partridge that rereading George Eliot's novels had revived his "old passion" for her. "I am glad to find," he exclaims, "that my feeling towards her has lost none of its intensity, and that, as a whole, what I thought of her five-and-thirty years ago is what I think of her now" (L, 180). In his essay "George Eliot As I Knew Her," he remarks that she was personally attractive ("Her hair was particularly beautiful, and in her grey eyes there was a curiously shifting light, generally soft and tender, but convertible into the keenest flash"); and expresses his conviction that "if there was any sincerity . . . in the person with whom she came into contact, she strove to elicit his best" (LP, 132). Even his *Athenaeum* essay on John Chapman (1894) is made an occasion for praise of George Eliot. He speaks, typically, of the "tenderness and defiance which were really so characteristic of her."  

White was infrequently healed by the magnanimity of others. He wanted to love and be loved, to be considered unique, yet at the same time he feared failure and the veiled judgment that he was without value. Amorphous guilt, self-hatred, and perverse coldness complicated his search for freedom and inhibited the realization of his spiritual potential. Mark Rutherford's description of the feeling of worthlessness that succeeds his rejection by a former friend is characteristic of White on this subject: "I . . . dwelt upon the conviction which had long possessed me that I was insignificant, that there was nothing much in me, and it was this which destroyed my peace. We may reconcile ourselves to poverty and suffering, but few of us can endure the conviction that there is nothing in us, and that consequently we cannot expect anybody to gravitate towards us with any forceful impulse. It is a bitter experience" (A, 192). This passage reveals that identity, in the deepest sense, is threatened in such
moments of anguished self-consciousness. I have already suggested that White's self-hatred was complicated by an elusive sense of guilt. He often felt that he had nothing particular to offer life. Thus he felt irrelevant in the universal scheme, and his sense of cosmic isolation often stunned him into silence. The guilt he experienced was rarely for what he had done but for who he was. In his short story "The Fire at Milldeep Manor," White explores the feelings of a young man who has rejected his fiancée because he is jealous of her attachment to her family. When he realizes his selfishness, he is appalled at his action and confesses: "I have never been able to feel myself a sinner in the common acceptation of the word. I have not habitually broken the commandments. But, as my head lay upon Margaret's knees, I thought that for me there could be no forgiveness. My guilt was not so much something I had done as something which I was. Repentance seemed a stupid word" (LP, 86).

In the two previous chapters, I have suggested that White found in the creative process ways of channeling and transforming emotions that threatened to engulf him. Similarly, he managed to give vague guilt a concrete focus through the patterns of his fiction. In many of his stories White creates a dramatic situation in which a particular sinful action—and therefore clearly focused, understandable guilt—provides the opportunity for repentance and expiation. Solutions to the problem of "who I was" were rarely offered in life, but in his art the wished-for forgiveness is felt immediately by the characters and vicariously by the author. Various short stories—"Atonement," "The Sweetness of a Man's Friend," "The Fire at Milldeep Manor," "James Forbes," "Confessions of a Self-Tormentor," "A Letter to the Rambler," "A Dream of Two Dimensions"—chart a movement from the conviction of sin through repentance, forgiveness, and atonement. In all of them, the author's nebulous guilt is concretely realized.
The narrator of "Confessions of a Self-Tormentor" repents his selfish perversity at Mrs. A's grave and then expiates his sin by renewing a relationship with his neglected aunt. He shows that he has now learned to accept love where it is offered. In "A Letter to the Rambler," the narrator rejects his fiancée because he thinks she is too lowborn for the people he wishes to impress. He, too, sees his error, repents, and publicly confesses his love. He then embarks on a supremely happy marriage. The protagonist of this story exclaims at one point that he now understands experientially both how Peter came to deny Christ, and Peter's subsequent repentance (MP, 124–36). Similarly, James Forbes abandons his beloved because she believes in "the creeds," while he is a fierce agnostic. In another marriage he is utterly unhappy, but lives to see his beloved on his deathbed. He repents his past egotism and has a few hours of peace in her company before he dies (P, 170–73). "The Fire at Milldeep Manor," "A Dream of Two Dimensions" and "The Sweetness of a Man's Friend" all concern young men who for various reasons reject the women who love them. Their sins are selfishness, the prodigal waste of human affection, and intellectual pride (A, 25). All the heroes eventually realize the value of the love they have squandered, repent and are forgiven, and become changed thereafter in feeling and conduct.9

Of all these stories, the best illustration of White's fictional struggle to create an object for amorphous guilt and realize imaginatively a means of expiation is the extraordinary and unsettling "Atonement." Here White powerfully explores the protagonist's feelings of selfishness and cruelty. Feeling himself misunderstood by his family, the narrator storms out of the house one evening, brutally kicking and cursing the family dog who has risen to accompany him. The animal howls with pain but nevertheless follows the master who has injured him. During the narrator's angry walk, the dog falls down and dies. A strange dread fills the heart of the narrator. All night he has an image of the dead animal
in his mind's eye and feels "the terror which accompanies a great crime": "I had repaid all his devotion with horrible cruelty. I had repented, but he would never know it. It was not the dog only which I had slain; I had slain Divine faithfulness and love. That God damn you sounded perpetually in my ears. The Almighty had registered and executed the curse, but it had fallen upon the murderer and not on the victim" (P, 176–77). Shortly after this event, the narrator begins to feel a strange, dull pressure in his foot. He is haunted by his evil deed: "I got it into my head . . . that only by some expiation I should be restored to health and peace." Yet he does not know how: "Unhappy is the wretch who longs to atone for a sin and no atonement is prescribed to him" (P, 177). In life, White found no specific deed to repent and no means of atonement. In this story, the sin is unequivocal, and the road to repentance becomes suddenly clear. A fire breaks out in a neighboring house, and upon hearing that a dog is trapped in the blaze, the protagonist rushes into the flames. In rescuing the animal, he falls on the painful foot and breaks his ankle. The injured foot refuses to heal and at length must be amputated. The narrator gratefully accepts the dog from his owner, who doesn't want him, and takes the creature home and cherishes him. The pattern is straightforward: sin, remorse, repentance, atonement, grace. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." Guilt for "who I was" is transformed in these fictions.

Lest this discussion of White's self-consciousness and its imaginative manifestations become oppressive, it is well to pause at this point and recall that he often exaggerated his limitations, that his contemporaries found him generous, kind, and affectionate, that his children wrote of him with more than ordinary love and respect, that his letters reveal an extraordinary gift for self-forgetful friendship. "He never talked about himself in the usual petty way most of us do," Dorothy White remarked, "his talk was always of a non-personal kind; I mean, it was not necessary that he should be the hero of every story" (GD, 461). Such
remarks are important, for they remind us that while we are concerned here to understand how a man perceives himself, and how a low assessment of his individual value affects his spiritual life, the autobiographical consciousness gives, perforce, a partial view of its subject.

A study of White's letters to his friends, or of Dorothy's remarks about his conversations, places his harsh self-portrait in perspective. Not only did he avoid talking about himself or his troubles unless greatly pressed, but both Dorothy and other acquaintances speak of his exceptional humility. Referring to White's dislike of being the center of attention, Dorothy writes: "It is not fear of blame, but an instinctive dread of notice, praise or blame. He always likes to be treated as if he doesn't exist" (GD, 303). (Of course this is what we would expect from a man who harbored such feelings of worthlessness.) Dorothy also shrewdly suggests that White's allusions to more or less external (and impersonal) ailments were a way of shielding his inner life from view. "'I am sorry I can't shake hands' (when his hand was a little gouty)," he might remark, or "'I'm blind in one eye' (when a small vessel burst); which merely meant, so I believe, 'Please look at my gouty hands and my blind eye, and not at my soul'" (GD, 466).

White's children have also told various attractive stories of their father in a self-forgetful mood. Even when we temper our assessment of these with an awareness of what might have been owing to filial duty, they are still striking in the context of White's self-deprecation. Jack White, for example, says that some of his happiest times were spent in his father's company on summer holidays, when White would read aloud from the Aeneid as he walked. At such times, Jack insists, "his talk became animated, discursive and inspiring as I have known no other man's to be."

Willie also comments on the energy and largeness of his father's conversation: "never have I known anyone with wider interests." In spite of his father's melancholia, Willie comments further that
"the most vivid impression of him in my mind is that of a man sitting by the fire enjoying the company and talk of his children and friends." This domestic idyll is tempered a little, however, by his daughter Molly's remark to Dorothy about her father's unfailing courtesy: "Papa never goes out of the room or down the stairs in front of me, however miserable he is" (GD, 27n.).

It is White's letters, however, more than anything else, that prompt us to reevaluate his character. Here we can truly understand what Dorothy White meant when she referred to the "nonpersonal" quality of his daily discourse. Lady Robert Cecil, White's friend of later years, speaks for many of his acquaintance in maintaining that while White had "an ingenious habit of self-depreciation," his friends "only saw an intensely critical interest in life at almost all points." This catholicity of interest, to which his children also testify and which Lady Robert documents, is most evident in his letters. White liberates his mind from the fetters of destructive, habitual self-concern by devoting himself to the subject most likely to engage the interest of his correspondent. His own mental range, and the extent of his informed understanding, is astonishing. Reading his correspondence is like opening door after door in the corridor of a palace: the reader begins to get a sense of the true dimensions of a large and complex intelligence. To the gentle Philip Webb, architect and friend of Ruskin, White writes primarily about art, architecture, aesthetic questions, nature; to George Jacob Holyoake, the radical political reformer, he writes mainly about political questions and public figures; to his friend Sophie Partridge, a schoolmistress, he writes about literature, often brilliantly; to the formidable Scottish philosopher J. Hutchison Stirling, whose daunting and candid intellect exposed all uninformed conclusions, White writes easily about philosophy and religion; to his oldest friend, Mrs. Colenutt, he writes about children, domestic concerns, daily life.
But though the records of these moments of self-forgetfulness qualify our understanding of White, it is clear that anxious self-consciousness was the habitual condition of his mind. I have suggested that a propensity to self-torture and amorphous guilt are among the manifestations of his anxiety. There were others: fear of death, indecisiveness, and a continual sense of social estrangement. These characteristics are reflected, in one form or another, in his fiction.

II

In 1908 Dorothy White wrote that she believed her husband’s only fears were “hypochondriacal fancies”: but “of death I know he has no fear” (GD, 96). I believe that she was right—then. Reuben Shapcott also affirms that Mark Rutherford “gradually relaxed his anxiety about death by loosening his anxiety for life without loosening his love of life” (A, 139). This attitude, however, was the hard-won (and, I think, occasional) fruit of his maturity. Terror of death and fear of future annihilation dominate the thinking of young Rutherford, absorbing him “even to the point of monomania” (A, 75). Hale White became less obsessed by the matter as he grew older, but somber speculations about mortality persist in his novels and stories. In these fictions, too, concern with death is often transformed into a preoccupation with parting and separation.

In the Autobiography, Rutherford’s discussion of death is characteristically Victorian: he cannot completely abandon the hope of individual immortality, but the exact “how” of the translation eludes him. The concept of bodily resurrection, he writes, was “more than I could ever swallow in my most orthodox days” (A, 76), and what the rationalist doctor in Catharine Furze sarcastically defines as “the soap-bubble theory”—that is, “that somewhere in us there is something like a bubble, which controls everything, and is everything, and escapes invisible and gaseous
to some other place after death” (CF, 305)—is equally unaccep-
table. Rutherford believes that body and soul are united and feels
that immortality without the survival of memory and intellect
would be worthless. Like Tennyson, Rutherford recognizes that
Nature preserves not the individual but the type, and fears that
possibly “all shall go.” Without the benefit of the philosophy
of Spinoza, which gave such hope to his creator, Rutherford
wonders at this point “why this ceaseless struggle, if in a few
short years I was to be asleep for ever?” (A, 76). Mardon’s role
in the novel is partly to strip Rutherford of the old consolations
of his faith. As I noted in chapter 1, Mardon is, like Reuben
Shapcott, the fictional expression of one of White’s own internal
voices. As a result of his tuition, Rutherford despairs: all the
longing for God, the love of His creatures, the struggle for self-
conquest, all to end in the grave? “The position of mortal man,”
he writes, “seemed to me infinitely tragic. He is born into the
world, beholds its grandeur and beauty, is filled with unquench-
able longings, and knows that in a few inevitable revolutions of
the earth he will cease.” This recognition is made more painful
if one has loved. At death we are told that the “heart and mind”
of the beloved “absolutely are not” (A, 76). At Mardon’s grave,
Rutherford tries to be content with the knowledge that his friend
will live “as every force in nature lives—for ever; transmuted
into a thousand different forms.” Consolation of this kind is
insufficient. It may be true, Rutherford thinks, but nevertheless
“I can only accept the fact of death in silence” (A, 136). This
response to death is in fact a good deal more typical of the mature
Hale White than is the detached perspective attributed to Ruther-
dford by Reuben Shapcott.

Several readers have commented on the astonishing facility
with which White kills off his characters. An extraordinarily large
number of his central figures die suddenly (and sometimes gra-
tuitously)—a fact that is owing in part simply to White’s limited
ability to construct plots. He recognized his difficulties in this
area all too clearly. Of the protagonists of his novels, Mark Rutherford, Catharine Furze, and Clara Hopgood all die. Where White excels, however, is in his exploration of the survivor’s remorse and the sufferer’s fear of being forgotten after death.

In *The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane*, Zachariah’s first wife, Jane, and second wife, Pauline, both die, though he lives on. But George Allen’s situation is the more excruciating. In the months following his young wife’s death he struggles alone with self-accusation, haunted by her image. He is obsessed with little things that he had not noticed at the time: “turns of her head, smiles, the fall of her hair—oh. that sweet sweet brown hair!” He feels both remorse—“Gone, for ever gone—gone before he had been able to make her understand how much he really loved her”—and the terror of vacancy—“was she not in heaven? Would he not see her again? He did not know.” His active imagination nearly destroys him: “He thought of her lying in her grave—she whom he had caressed—of what was going on down there, under the turf, and he feared he should go mad” (*RTL*, 361–62).

White is equally effective when describing his persistent fear of being forgotten. In his daily notebook he attempted to reason himself out of it, writing under the rubric “Wisdom for old age”: “Let not the thought sadden you that six weeks after you are in your grave those to whom you are now dear will be laughing and living just as if you had never existed. Why should they not? Are you of such consequence that they should for ever wear mourning for you?” (*MP*, 299–30). This particular anguish is brilliantly realized in *Catharine Furze*. In the death of the servant girl Phoebe, Catharine’s own death is anticipated. The narrator’s powerful vision of human transience delineates White’s fear. Here no allusion is made to a possible eternal life—the only immortality projected is continued existence in the memory of those who loved us, and that, too, is not of long duration:
She lies at the back of the meeting-house, amongst her kindred, and a little mound was raised over her. Her father borrowed the key of the gate every now and then, and, after his work was over, cut the grass where his child lay, and prevented the weeds from encroaching; but when he died, not long after, his wife had to go into the workhouse, and in one season the sorrel and dandelions took possession, and Phoebe’s grave became like all the others—a scarcely distinguishable undulation in the tall, rank herbage.

(CF, 325)

This stunning passage is a good example of White’s finest and most characteristic writing. With lyrical simplicity and restraint he creates both the conviction and the experience of the relentless passage of time: we feel the impossibility of halting the obliterating process of nature; we sense the agony implicit in the necessity of borrowing a key to the churchyard. The ephemerality of human existence is also syntactically realized in the long single sentence, as each phase of human love and memory is contracted to a clause, and the sentence itself moves inexorably on toward the finality of its concluding image—Phoebe’s individual being swallowed up in the only community White was always sure of. Although the central thought of the passage is identical to the notebook entry quoted above, the whole experience of the thought is transformed utterly by this act of imagination. The description is both pessimistic and dignified, again reminiscent perhaps more of Hardy than of any other nineteenth-century writer. White is trying out a possibility by visualizing and feeling the conclusions of his logic. Anticipating the worst is, typically, one of his “strategems of defence” (A, 250).

White’s fiction contains several moments like the description of Phoebe’s grave. Closely related to the fear of death, too, is his insistence on the anguish of parting from loved ones, even for a few days or weeks. Here again, the intense distress White felt in his own life because of parting or separation finds the appropriate image or situation in his fiction. His letters to his
children and later to Dorothy are painful reading when he describes what he feels when he leaves them. Jack White quotes a letter from his father, written in 1887, from likely, where White had gone for a day or two on sick-leave. His son joined him for a while. His father was “mostly silent” during their long walks. When Jack had left, White wrote: “As the train rolled off into the dark, stifling thoughts rose up in me, thoughts with which it is impossible to argue and the only thing to be done is to turn aside and think others if possible.”

The grief he felt at parting is recreated in a recurring image in his fiction. Zachariah takes leave of his imprisoned friend Caillaud in *The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane*, knowing that he will never see him again. The narrator here departs from the particular situation of Zachariah to explore the universal dimensions of ordinary human grief: “There is a pathos in parting which the mere loss through absence does not explain. We all of us feel it, even if there is to be a meeting again in a few months, and we are overcome by incomprehensible emotion when we turn back down the pier, unable any longer to discern the waving of the handkerchief, or when the railway train turns the curve in the cutting and leaves us standing on the platform. Infinitely pathetic, therefore, is the moment when we separate forever” (RTL, 228). White makes the same narrative transition from the particular to the general in *Catharine Furze*, where Tom Catchpole parts from Catharine, realizing that she will never love him and feeling that he will never see her again:

> What makes the peculiar pang of parting? The coach comes up; the friend mounts; there is the wave of a handkerchief. I follow him to the crest of the hill; he disappears, and I am left to walk down the dusty lane alone. . . . She whom I have loved for half a life lies dying. I kiss her and bid her good-bye. Is the bare loss the sole cause of my misery, my despair, breeding that mad longing that I myself might die? In all parting there is something infinite. We see in it a symbol of the order of the universe,
and it is because that death-bed farewell stands for so much that we break down. (CF, 288)

The passage charts a progressive alienation: White moves from the poignant image of friends parting to the death of one member of a married couple to cosmic isolation—"something infinite."

He is equally unhopeful in his short story "The Sweetness of a Man’s Friend" where the tale-within-a-tale seems to exist in order to review "all that is hidden in that word never." An engaged couple decide to separate when the man comes to feel that he has a call to the priesthood. This character’s letter to the narrator explores now familiar territory: "Is it possible to express by speech a white handkerchief waved from the window of the railway train, or the deserted platform where ten minutes before a certain woman stood, where her image still lingers? There is something in this which is not mere sorrow. It is rather the disclosure of that dread Abyss which underlies the life of man" (LP, 43).

We already know what the abyss represented for White: the void, nothingness, spiritual death. The Autobiography was published in 1881, The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane in 1887, Catharine Furze in 1893, and "The Sweetness of a Man’s Friend," published posthumously, was presumably written in the last years of his life.15 From these dates we can safely conclude, I think, that death and parting were persistent concerns of White’s maturity. The "symbol of the order of the universe" was realized for him in the haunting image of a solitary figure waving a handkerchief from a train as the beloved slowly disappears from view. The image, as we have seen in Jack’s reference to his father’s letter, had a biographical origin. Sadly, it again became a reality in his relationship with Dorothy. He suffered acute distress when she left him: "I watched you till the last glimmer of you vanished as the train went under the bridge. Ah! those powers of darkness! But it is wrong to put down on paper what
I go through." The image conveys the essential aloneness of human beings and tends to suggest that human mutuality, God’s presence in history, purposeful existence, are all illusions and dreams. The “facts” are “a dark street, crowds, hurry, commonplaceness, loneliness.”

The intense pessimism of White’s fictions cannot be ignored. A manifestation of his self-conscious personality, it was exacerbated by attacks of acute depression and intensified by his religious isolation. But, as I hope to prove in later chapters, this nihilism is not the whole story. Out of White’s continual struggle toward emotional and spiritual freedom came an equally powerful conviction of human worth and genuine hope for the possibility of reconciliation between human beings and God.

In addition to fear of death, another consequence of anxious self-consciousness was a tendency toward indecision. “Hale says,” writes Dorothy, “that he always sees the two sides to a question so clearly as to be unable to arrive at any positive conclusion” (GD, 21). Insight did not, alas, confer the power to decide and act. White continually judged this characteristic indecision as weakness. On the one hand, he thought it was better to reach a conclusion about a question and act upon it than to possess knowledge sufficient to incapacitate the mind and will. On the other, he was aware that some questions admit of no solutions, and that possibly the best course for a man like himself was to admit that “there are multitudes of burning questions which we must do our best to ignore, to forget their existence” (A, Preface, 2d ed., vii). This is the advice of the fictitious editor of the Autobiography, Reuben Shapcott. White admitted the good sense of Shapcott’s advice but was often unable to follow his own counsel. Shapcott remarks that “metaphysics, and theology, including all speculations on the why and wherefore, optimism, pessimism, freedom, necessity, causality, and so forth” are all ruinous; yet precisely these subjects drew Hale White like a magnet.
In his Shapcott moods, he nevertheless stringently judged this irresolute swaying back and forth. The narrator of the short story "The Love of Woman" declares: "I am and always have been a timid mortal, capable of brooding, of thinking, not incapable of ideas and of deep emotions, but with nothing of the hero in me, and, worse, with not even the beginning of one—that is to say, with no capacity for decision. I have suffered for it. I have endured the lashing of self-contempt" (LP, 99–100). We see again the vicious circle: introspection and self-concern breed impotence of the will, which generates even greater self-hatred. Thus we find White constantly remarking the difference between thinking and worrying. Certainly one reason why Spinoza appealed to him so greatly was the philosopher’s power of sustained and thorough exercise of thought. Byron’s poetry invigorated White for a related but different reason. Byron, he writes, "was a mass of living energy, and therefore he is sanative. Energy, power, is the one thing after which we pine in this sickly age. . . . Strength is what we need and what will heal us. Strength is true morality, and true beauty." There was no vacillation in Byron, as White perceived him: the poet is "perfectly unconscious, as unconscious as the wind" (P, 147). It is worth noting that this praise of Byron comes from White’s essay "Byron, Goethe, and Mr. Matthew Arnold" (1881), in which he criticizes and condemns Arnold’s judgment of Byron. Yet it is Arnold, of course, whom White resembles in many respects, not least in his acute awareness of the debilitating effects of self-consciousness and in his yearning for a more spontaneous and energetic character. He recognized, too, the dangers inherent in the melancholy literature of his time, and often felt, like Arnold’s Empedocles, that he was one of "Thought’s slaves, and dead to every natural joy" (II, 249).

Finally, White’s self-conscious temperament contributed to the social and personal isolation that he frequently lamented. Rutherford "wanted a friend who would sacrifice himself to me
utterly, and to whom I might offer a similar sacrifice.'" He found companions who cared for him, but "I was thirsting for deeper drafts of love than . . . they had to offer" (A, 24). He complains of his "chafing irritation at mere gossip" and his dislike of the trivial "chatter" of ordinary social discourse (A, 254). White, too, wanted to "pour" himself out to others with freedom and confidence, and encouraged his friends and children to write to him about what they "really hoped, feared or loved."18

In my second chapter, I indicated that White's characters often share their author's sense of exile and reflect his experience in their alienation from both religious and secular communities. The Autobiography, for instance, may be viewed as a study in the varieties of human loneliness. Not only Rutherford, but minor characters—Miss Arbour, Ellen Butts, Taylor—allude to their social isolation. Similarly, Zachariah Coleman finds it difficult to make friends; Catharine Furze becomes "impatient . . . of those bars which nowadays restrain people from coming close to one another" and wishes she could cry out to the person talking to her to "put away his circumlocutions, his forms and his trivialities, and to let her see and feel what he really was" (CF, 189). In the character of Baruch Cohen, who falls in love with Clara Hopgood, White explores his own temperament and predicament most thoroughly. He substitutes the situation of the nineteenth-century English Jew for his own social and religious alienation. Baruch had "often made advances; people had called on him and had appeared interested in him, but they had dropped away." Some part of his estrangement, White argues, is owing to race, but "partly also the cause was that those who care to speak about what is nearest to them are very rare, and most persons find conversation easy in proportion to the remoteness of its topics from them" (CH, 182). Like White, Rutherford, Catharine, and Zachariah, Cohen "generally kept himself to himself" (CH, 183) because he so desperately wanted the "key which unlocks the mystery of things" (CF, 189) to stand revealed
through ideal human communion. Cohen's feelings—he is a widower, his son is now gone from home, he is a Jew in Christian England, he is neither genial nor witty—are revealed with the sureness of long practice. In White's final novel, the experience of isolation, the longing for community and mutuality, the situation of the man who cannot dedicate himself to God and who finds ordinary social conversation insufficient, are examined with scrupulous care.

Neither White nor Cohen is at home with verbal irony. They can only speak the truth as they see it, and they feel uncomfortable with insincere, well-bred conversation. Both desire what White often calls "reconciliation." White wished to know of the other "how is it with thee?" He wanted what he refers to as an "Emmaus walk" with his friends. Significantly, he found it difficult to talk with any freedom to those for whom a spiritual life was inconsequential. Describing the visit of an acquaintance, Mrs. Dannreuther, to his friend Sophie Partridge, White suggests that he can form only a limited friendship with someone who cannot understand "the religious experiences of this country": "Now, although many of us may more or less widely have separated ourselves from the Christianity of the day, Christianity in a way is in our very blood and all our thoughts are coloured by it. We cannot, or at least I cannot, come very near to a person to whom the Bible is nothing whatever, and all the literature that has clustered around it mere ecclesiastical and professional jabber" (L, 146). In such remarks we can see the vacuum in his life created by the absence of a religious community. White's judgment of Henry Sidgewick's Memoir, for example, shows how completely alienated he was from a secular frame of mind, from "brilliant" people to whom "religion is not a necessity, a passion or an interpretation, but an intellectual exercise." The purely intellectual inquiry of many nineteenth-century thinkers seemed to him "a curious attitude—weighing his religion! Imagine these literary, clever people discussing over coffee or wine the value
of the mediatorial idea or what substitute can be provided for the supernatural as a sanction for law!” (L, 276; cf. LP, 316).

Religion was too important to be allowed to dwindle into raw material for social chat. White wished to share his soul but was often made to feel that such an article was not wanted. The loneliness occasioned by these barriers is tersely recorded in a late journal entry: “What a superstition it is which forbids people who really think to talk to one another on religious matters! Not a soul has said a word to me for years about God” (LP, 289). The same isolation is voiced by the narrator of his short story “A Letter from the Authoress of 'Judith Crowhurst’”: “Unfortunately it is not in management or morality that we crave companionship. It is in religion and in the deepest emotions that we thirst for it” (MP, 140).

It is within this context that we must interpret White’s strange remark to Dorothy that she was “the only person who does not mind my being so serious. I can’t help being serious” (GD, 125). He refers to more than Victorian moral earnestness here. *Serious* is the word he uses to allude to that added dimension—the spiritual life—alive and visible in some people. Dorothy’s freedom and magnanimity of spirit attracted White instantly; he saw that she truly moved and had her being in something larger than her individual self. This recognition afforded him security, as well as endowing Dorothy herself with a precious mystery. He trusts—like Lydgate with Dorothea Brooke—that such a person will perceive and judge him in the light of something great and noble. “Seriousness,” the felt awareness of another’s spiritual life, frees his imprisoned ego, and he is able to talk of things that are of ultimate concern to him without feeling embarrassed, pious, or foolish.

This communion was essential to a man of White’s temperament, and the need had been there from the beginning. In a moving letter to his father in 1853, he writes about the “cold negativism” that he encountered at Chapman’s. He was begin-
ning to see the "heartless emptiness" in men and books that was to hurt him throughout his life. Historical biblical criticism may after all be correct, but if the writer's soul is not in his work, White remarks, one feels only "vague dissatisfaction and disquiet." Feeling as if "a film were between you and the author which you could not pierce," and willing to give anything "to get really at the heart-felt thinkings of the man," White turned again to the Bible: "here I am heart to heart, hand to hand with a real human being. I embrace no clothed, disguised man but feel the blood beating and the touch of warm flesh." In 1908 White was to tell Dorothy that he had not altered much since the 1850s, that he felt most at home in a "religious world" (GD, 15). Only in a religious world were self-realization and reconciliation possible—yet he was largely shut out from one.

This chapter has to this point outlined some of the most obvious manifestations of White's anxious self-consciousness and noted how they are transmuted into the themes and images of his art. We are now in a position to understand to what extent these manifestations contributed to the autobiographical act that initiated his career as a novelist. I am therefore going to leap ahead some twenty-five years for the remainder of the chapter, to examine the climactic self-conscious moment of White's life.

III

White published The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, Dissenting Minister in 1881, when he was fifty years old. In the two preceding decades, he had been under enormous pressure in his daily life. His son Jack states that these years were difficult and strenuous ones for his father, who was not able to live on his salary at the Admiralty until 1879, when he was promoted to the position of Assistant Director of Navy Contracts. Before that date, he was obliged to supplement his income by writing for various newspapers, an occupation "which was always
distasteful to him." His wife, ill for many years, was now slowly and painfully dying of multiple sclerosis. Because of her illness, many household cares and tasks also fell to her husband's lot. After his regular work was done, White frequently went to the House of Commons in his capacity of reporter, rushed home for a hasty meal, and spent the evening preparing his articles. After a few hours of broken sleep, Jack writes, his father rose as early as four o'clock: "The fireplace in his study had a row of gas jets round the base to enable him to light the fire easily; after his bath he made himself a cup of cocoa in an aetna, and then, in those early morning hours, he read and wrote as his own spirit moved him. . . . Nevertheless, when he had an article to finish, even those hours were invaded, and he would rouse me up at 6 o'clock to meet the newspaper train on its arrival at the station, and bring him the morning's papers. Sometimes the article was finished in the waiting room at Victoria Station on his way to the Admiralty."²¹

At a time of life when other writers are at the peak of their creative powers and are engaged in the production of their major works, Hale White felt that he had accomplished nothing. A personal intrusion into his fine essay "Notes on the Book of Job" (1885) reveals the bitterness he felt as he saw his life being consumed by arduous, uncongenial work and the difficulties of his domestic situation:

Happy is the man . . . who sees some tolerable realisation of the design he has set before him in his youth or in his earlier manhood. Many there are who, through no fault of theirs, know nothing but mischance and defeat. Either sudden calamity over-turns in tumbling ruins all that they had painfully toiled to build, and success for ever afterwards is irrecoverable; or, what is most frequent, each day brings its own special hindrance, in the shape of ill-health, failure of power, or poverty, and a fatal net is woven over the limbs preventing all activity. The youth with his dreams wakes up some morning, and finds himself fifty years old with
not one solitary achievement, with nothing properly learned, with nothing properly done, with an existence consumed in mean, miserable, squalid cares, and his goal henceforth is the grave in which to hide himself ashamed.\textsuperscript{22}

In the 1870s, White raised his head from his desk and realized that time was passing swiftly, and his life was being devoured. Instead of making the grave his goal, however, he determined to break the "fatal net" that bound him. He wrote to preserve the sanity and identity of a self now threatened on all sides. His external life was limited and oppressive; the act of writing became an expression of personal freedom, an act of rebellion. Thus he extended the boundaries of his daily existence, and through this activity denied the definition of himself as office drudge and man of trivial affairs.

The thesis of Georges Gusdorf's essay "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" seems especially applicable to Hale White: "The man who recounts himself is himself searching his self through his history; he is not engaged in an objective and disinterested pursuit but in a work of personal justification. Autobiography appeases the more or less anguished uneasiness of an aging man who wonders if his life has not been lived in vain, frittered away haphazardly, ending now in simple failure. . . . So autobiography is the final chance to win back what has been lost."\textsuperscript{23} Through the process of memory White tried to redeem the lost time, to find some meaningful order and symbolic pattern in the waste and emotional chaos of his life, to discover at last the elusive, beckoning, reconciling "word."

White told Dorothy that "he remembers writing the first book, the Autobiography, at 'extraordinary high-pressure.' He was then at work every night at the House of Commons, and he wrote in the mornings, 4:30" (GD, 51). Under this "high-pressure," White did more than momentarily stay the fleet passage of time. He not only preserved identity by recalling and
interpreting himself, he also created it. Through the writing, another dimension was added to William Hale White. He created Mark Rutherford, who became from that point on a permanent (though continually growing) part of his creator. In this, of course, White resembles many other autobiographers, who have "discovered, asserted, created a self in the process of writing it out." Mark Rutherford, freed from the psychological restraints imposed by temperament and heritage on Hale White, was brought into active being to write several more novels and stories.

There are other, related reasons why White was impelled to recall and recreate his inner life at this particular moment. He was becoming aware of his increasing personal isolation and, I think, beginning to feel the approach of death. In 1880, George Eliot died, an event that grieved White severely. White's children were also growing up and moving away from home. Willie had already gone, and in 1882 Jack would leave home to begin his career. Mrs. White's half-sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Street, whom White had loved and revered, died in 1877. His mother had been dead for several years; in 1882 his beloved father would follow her. In his discussion of Pilgrim's Progress White states that "Bunyan takes it for granted that the life of a man who is redeemed by the grace of God is a pilgrimage to a better world." Although, White suggests, this is the leading thought in Bunyan's book, "it is one which we find most difficult to make our own. We can follow him through all the incidents of his journey; we know the Valley of Humiliation, the Valley of the Shadow, and Doubting Castle, but we are not sure, as he was sure, that the wayfarer will reach a celestial home at last" (B, 169–70). The autobiographical act is, then, also a way of trying to ensure, if not a celestial home, at least a form of immortality. Through the creative impact of his own memory he would continue to exist in the memories of others, and survive his death.

The autobiographical act, therefore, both "fixes" his life and extends it, both recalls and creates a self, both stays time and
outruns it. In the *Autobiography*, the question that underlies all White's work—"what can I do to be saved?"—often connotes only "how can I survive?" Survival, however, was not only the sustaining question but the dynamic force behind the book's inception. White had reached the point where he had either to try to overcome his spiritual and emotional exile or wither away. The need to share the "serious" dimension of being, the wish to break down the barriers separating him from the world, became a pressure strong enough to require some decisive action. Rutherford, as we have seen, could "pour" himself out to his congregation and receive no response—"not a soul kindled at any word of mine." Moreover, "nobody more than myself could desire self-revelation," he writes; yet he produced, in conversation, "blank silence in the majority of those who listened to me" (A, 23). The desire for confession, self-revelation, relationship, had long been part of White as well, but no ideal friend appeared to offer him the necessary attention and sympathy. In the *Autobiography*, White gives meaning to his life not only through the powerful interaction of imagination and memory but also by creating in the unknown anonymous reader the missing "perfect friend," the responsive and empathic congregation. He reenters suffering and reaches out across the void to transform, in the act of writing, his alienation. As one of White's characters puts it, "expression is as indispensable to me as expiration of breath." Further, "with me expression in some form or other, if the thing which should be expressed is to live, is an absolute necessity."26 Here, the thing that requires expression if it is to live is White's most vulnerable self, his most intimate life.

Mark Rutherford introduces his autobiography self-consciously, armed with justifications for writing about himself that are familiar from other confessional works. His reasons, however, are neither camouflage nor the false modesty that announces a successful life. They are entirely sincere. First, he claims that his experience may have some historical value in that
he is able to give a personal account of nineteenth-century Non-conformity. But, more important, "I have observed that the mere knowing that other people have been tried as we have been tried is a consolation to us, and that we are relieved by the assurance that our sufferings are not special and peculiar, but common to us with many others. . . . some few whose experience has been like mine may, by my example, be freed from that sense of solitude which they find so depressing." (A, 2) Freed from a sense of solitude. This White himself had sought. He was consoled and relieved by knowing that other human beings, especially his favorite writers—Bunyan, Johnson, Wordsworth, Carlyle—had survived the Valley of the Shadow.

Thus if White wrote out of a need for confession and from a desire to create meaningful order, he also wrote to liberate others from the prison of self and heal them from their "self-despisings." The question whether or not a person should give voice to his suffering was one that troubled him a great deal. In some places he remarks that we should abstain from burdening others with our troubles, that we should first endeavor to help ourselves. Yet one of his characters, Mrs. Fairfax, exclaims that "it is difficult for anybody to know whether his suffering is excessive: there is no means of measuring it with that of others" (P, 254).

The idea that confessional autobiography is justified by the help it can bring to others may be understood as a modern reformulation of the didactic intention of many seventeenth-century sectarian autobiographies. White's understanding of Bunyan's motives in writing Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners suggests that he believed he shared Bunyan's justification: "It is a terrible story of the mental struggle of a man of genius of a particularly nervous and almost hypochondriacal temperament; whose sufferings, although they are intertwined with Puritanism, have roots which lie deep in our common nature. Bunyan's object in writing it was not the pleasure of
self-analysis, but to strengthen those of his friends who had suffered his temptations” (B, 9; my emphasis).

Moreover, like Zachariah Coleman, who, in recollecting the trials of Bunyan’s pilgrim, is able to “connect his [own] trouble with the trouble of others” and “give it a place in the dispensation of things” (RTL, 137–38), White discovered that by aligning himself with Bunyan he did much more than imitate: it is a wonderful paradox that this self-creative, individualizing act also served to connect him with a spiritual community.29

But White also clearly recognized how profoundly his experience and his didactic impulse differed from Bunyan’s, and this awareness is reflected in the diffidence with which White treated his own book. He invented Reuben Shapcott to serve a number of purposes. Among other things, Shapcott allows White to remain at a distance from his own experience and to appear indifferent to the fate of his written record. “I have decided . . . to let the manuscript remain,” says Mark Rutherford, “although I will not take the responsibility of printing it” (A, 1–2). This disclaimer suggests an uneasiness both about the intimate nature of his testimony and about its secular quality, its lack of overt religious intention. White understood that Bunyan wrote for the edification of his fellow Christians, “to show,” as Paul Delany says, “the conscience-stricken faithful that no sin was too great to be redeemed by Christ” (p. 92; cf. p. 88). He knew that Bunyan’s autobiography was, as Elizabeth Bruss has it, “at best a side effect of his actual intention to give witness to abounding grace in the place where he had discovered it.”30 White is acutely aware that although his own apologia is similar—he also is trying to “strengthen those of his friends who had suffered his temptations”—it is not the same thing. The creed that had “concentrated my thoughts upon myself, and made me of great importance” (EL, 59), also helped to engender the Autobiography. But the relationship with God that was the center and meaning of Bunyan’s experience was, if not totally lacking,
substantially transformed in White's own. His work neither glorified God nor testified to his own salvation, and, lacking the religious sanction, White feared that his confessions might prove merely solipsistic ravings. The shift from "examination of the soul" to "examination of the self," as John Morris characterizes the gradual secularization of the autobiographical impulse, intensified White's anxiety. His uncertainty about the justification for all his writing may have its source here: "I wish I had never written stories," he exclaimed to Dorothy: "they are somewhat of a degradation" (GD, 176). The "degradation" lies in the confessional nature of all his works. Was it only an end in itself? Had he only egoistically exposed his soul without sufficient reason?

There is, however, no question of White's integrity. Mark Rutherford does not portray a life of success and triumph. Rather, the Autobiography gives expression to humiliation and loneliness, despair and longing, vanity and fear. The narrator of Albert Camus's The Fall warns against the dishonesty of the confessional writer: "Authors of Confessions write especially to avoid confessing, to tell nothing of what they know. When they claim to get to the painful admission, you have to watch out, for they are about to dress the corpse." But "dressing the corpse" is just what White is incapable of doing, and it is for this reason that many readers have found him so valuable. Self-justification there is, but dishonesty never. For White, remarks Valentine Cunningham, writing "was a species of personal testimony. 'As far as Bunyan knew he spoke'; and as far as White knew he too was to speak.'"

White makes himself exceptionally vulnerable in his confessions, wondering throughout "of what use is it . . . to present to the world what is mainly a record of weaknesses and failures." His self-perception is harsh: "Mine is the tale of a commonplace life, perplexed by many problems I have never solved; disturbed by many difficulties I have never surmounted; and blotted by
ignoble concessions which are a constant regret" (A, 1). He fears being known but at the same time requires recognition. The suffering reader, the potential perfect friend, might silently offer not only understanding but forgiveness—not for what he had done but for who he was. "If I had been given you as a wife when I was thirty I would never have let the public hear a syllable from me," he told Dorothy (GD, 176). This remarkable statement is best understood not as a repudiation of what he had written but as a partial explanation of why he began to write at all. If he had had the complete, renewing love of Dorothy, his confessional might not have been the reading public. He felt, at the distance of some years, that the need for confession and forgiveness, for recognition and acceptance, the attempt to remain spiritually alive that drove him to the recollection and recreation of his life, might have been realized in her affection.34

Two other aspects of White's autobiographical work remain to be discussed: his use of a pseudonym and the form of the Autobiography. I have already suggested one reason for his pseudonymous detachment from his work. He felt there was some "degradation" in confessional writing: he had demanded, albeit behind two masks, that attention be paid to his suffering. He was therefore remarkably secretive about his authorship. His son writes, "He hated crowds, disliked mankind in the mass and detested publicity, hence he published his novels under a pseudonym, and if anyone wrote to him about them he got his daughter to reply, saying that her father had not among his acquaintances any one of the name of Mark Rutherford."35 His first wife was unaware of his novels until years after the publication of the Autobiography; he then confided to her that he had published books under an assumed name, and that their son Jack could read them to her some day.36 His daughter Molly, born in 1869, remarked that she did not know that her father had written novels until her twenty-first birthday.37 White was reticent with his family and even denied his authorship to close
friends, although he words his disclaimers with care for strict truth: "Tell—, not as [a] message from me but as one from yourself, that you understand I disclaim it," he writes to Mrs. Colenutt. "I have never owned the book you name, and should be quite justified in denying its authorship" (L, 11). Dorothy White remarks that White disliked speaking to anyone but her about his books, and "even to me he speaks of them in an odd unaccustomed way, and not as if he had written them. He said, 'You will find the story in that book Miriam's Schooling' etc. etc." (GD, 36).38 He regretted that his authorship had ever been known, because the awareness of others’ knowledge inhibited him in the further exploration of that dimension of himself known as Mark Rutherford and added to his already oppressive burden of self-consciousness. He could write to the anonymous reader with some freedom, but the moment he thought of family and intimate friends peering over his shoulder, "the result is perversion."39

It is illuminating to realize that the two people who learned first about the authorship of the Autobiography were not White's intimates, but men with whom he corresponded and whose good opinion he valued deeply: J. Hutchison Stirling and George Jacob Holyoake. White had been corresponding with Stirling since 1874 but had not yet actually met him. In January 1883, Stirling wrote: "I am obliged by your kindness in sending me your book. It is an unusual one, and I have read it with pleasure. The general theme, of course, is the prevalent one of Doubt. . . . I should never have thought it yours: there is scarcely a clue in it to your studies now; not but that you do allude to Germany, & you use the word universal, I think, twice."40 Eight pages of careful commentary on the Autobiography follow. It is evident from this correspondence that White sent the Stirlings in 1884 the story that became "A Dream of Two Dimensions," and also that Stirling read the Deliverance, and knew of the other novels.41 Stirling’s letter lends support to the view that a
pseudonym gave White a means of exploring areas of himself that he could not normally reveal; but further, it suggests that his hunger for recognition and praise from men he admired was stronger than his natural reserve. Of course, since Stirling did not know how much the *Autobiography* and *Deliverance* really comprised White's own spiritual experience, White could be perceived by him simply as the gifted author of a book on the theme of Doubt. Counting on the same misapprehension, White could tell Holyoake that "I simply designed to depict a victim of the century."42

White was also not as indifferent to the fate of the *Autobiography* as he pretended. He wrote Holyoake that "'The New York Nation' had the best review which has appeared as yet."43 And when, early in their friendship, Dorothy Horace Smith wrote out her response to the *Autobiography*, he valued it enough to cut it out and paste it in his "Dorothy Book." Again, although he stressed his desire for anonymity, a letter to William Dean Howells (who had reviewed the *Autobiography* in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*) indicates how much White wanted and appreciated recognition. After stating his strong wish for anonymity, he concludes, "I should be less than human did I not feel gladdened and exalted by such a criticism as that now before me by a man in your position and with such a name. Again I thank you, thank you with—to me—unaccustomed emotion; and as to such a friend I cannot wear a mask I beg to subscribe myself—devotedly yours—W. Hale White."44

The tension between White's diffidence and his need for recognition also appears in his attitude toward his nonfictional writing. These pieces he at least acknowledged, though his letters about them are distressing reading. He wants friends or children to know he has written a book or essay; he would like to hear their responses but is afraid of bringing anything to their attention that they might find tedious or inferior. Although he shrank from criticism, even worse to contemplate was the possibility that his work would be praised from a sense of loyalty or obligation. He
This Body of Death

anticipates objections, therefore, by making self-effacing or disparaging remarks before anyone else can. A few examples will suffice to illustrate my point. In 1895 he wrote to Mrs. Colenutt about a *Times* report of a paper on sunspots that he read to the British Astronomical Association. White first draws her attention to it and then erects a shield: "It is not particularly interesting. The paper was only as long as this note, and it took me two years to write it" (L, 71). Again to Mrs. Colenutt he writes in 1899 that he has "amused . . . [himself] lately" by writing a preface and notes to a volume of Coleridge manuscripts. He assumes that it will be "of no interest whatever to the ordinary reader" and that not "a dozen copies will be sold." Characteristically, he concludes, "if it had possessed any value other than that which it possesses for a biographer or editor I would have sent you one. As it is, I am sure you would not think it worth the postage" (L, 92–93).

And when he sends his friend Philip Webb—with whom he often exchanged books—a copy of his *John Bunyan*, he spends a good part of the letter justifying the gift: "I was asked two years ago to write it and refused, knowing that I was unfitted for the task. Some time afterwards the invitation was renewed. . . . But with the utmost sincerity I also say that my essay fails. It wants strength, patience, and historical knowledge. It wants ten years' more work. Say nothing about it. It is a pity to pay postage back" (L, 327–28)—and more in this vein.

We have seen that White in the *Autobiography* is consciously responding to, if not directly imitating, the tradition of Puritan autobiography. It is also clear that he was influenced by the autobiographical writing of his own century. In particular, he appears to have used the narrative form of *Sartor Resartus* as a model for the *Autobiography* and *Deliverance*. This influence is most evident in the invention of masks and voices that help to preserve anonymity and allow the self-conscious autobiographer a measure of confessional freedom. As Carlyle filters, interprets, and transforms remembered experience through the dual voices of Teuflesdröckh and the British editor, so White's
life is transmuted through the voice of Shapcott commenting on his friend Rutherford's history. I have already remarked that Mark Rutherford is an extension, an added dimension of, Hale White rather than a completely individualized character in a fiction. He is, if anything, White's remembered youthful self. Neither is Shapcott a totally separate persona. I have spoken before of White's "Shapcott moods"; Shapcott is a part of his creator's personality and consciousness. Together, the two characters come close to representing the "argument with himself" that White sustained in the 1880s.

Like Carlyle's editor, Shapcott is a conservative, sensible, down-to-earth, stable voice. He tends to give advice that White knew was best but was driven to ignore. He is the bridge over the chaos of Rutherford's despair, and helps to attach him to the ordinary world. We might even say that Shapcott "tailors" Rutherford's anguish in a way similar to the editor's tailoring of Teuflesdröckh's ideas. This tailoring—interpreting, counterpointing, extending—is also, of course, a means both of anticipating criticism and of creating sympathy for the protagonist. We tend to be "for" the suffering Rutherford over the cautious editor who comments upon him. Rutherford is an exile from the world in which Shapcott clearly moves with ease.

Shapcott's function in the Autobiography is certainly simpler and less active than that of Carlyle's editor; his deliberations afford a more straightforward "frame" to Rutherford's history. His function is often quite practical: he introduces the manuscript, takes credit for discovering, editing, and publishing it, and hints, at the end of the Autobiography, that more manuscripts might be found (thus paving the way for the Deliverance a few years later). At the end of the first volume he surfaces to tell readers of Mary Mardon's death and Rutherford's "crisis," and at the end of the second he reports Rutherford's own death. Shapcott's commentary suggests generally that White is detached from and in control of his experience of suffering.
Some recent commentators are uncomfortable with Shapcott's editorial function. Peter Allen, for example, accuses White of displaying his own confusion in "the unresolved tension" between Rutherford and Shapcott, and appears irritated that White had not found tidy solutions to the questions his autobiographical novel raises: "the reader is thus caught between the dramatic representation of a necessarily unhappy life and the supposed editor's belief that we must learn to find joy in the commonplace. One is likely to emerge from the work in a somewhat perplexed frame of mind." It is certainly true that Shapcott's function is to make Rutherford's experience and the negative conclusions it might encourage less clear-cut, and to make our experience of his experience more elusive and complex. I suggest, though, that the tension created by the dialogue of two (and if we consider Mardon's role, three) voices is a fruitful one. We need not choose between Shapcott and Rutherford; they allow us differing responses to stark and potentially destructive material. Shapcott's is the voice of hope mediating the voice of memory. Rutherford's autobiography documents the experience of melancholia and exile; Shapcott advises against the egoistic cultivation of alienation. White thus warns himself that in talking about angst he can sustain it, that by wedding sorrow he might deliberately deny grace and refuse the ordinary joy that is there for the taking.

Both the act of writing itself and the discovery of appropriate form transmuted the autobiographical material. The content or matter of the first volume of the autobiographical pilgrimage, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, which ends tentatively with Rutherford's "crisis" (reported by Shapcott), is the experience of a "victim of the century." This, then, is the static design. But the autobiographical act itself is dynamic. Remembering, arranging, choosing, discarding, patterning: even in the choice and arrangement of fictions, the writer shapes, defines, and controls the life he is "describing." White thus transforms the quality not only of the static raw material but the nature
of the consciousness engaged in the process of writing. Performing this activity, he ceases to be a victim and becomes the creator of his life. The truth of this observation is proved by the writing and issuing in 1885 of the second part of the life, Mark Rutherford's Deliverance. At the end of the first volume, Shapcott hints that more autobiography might be located. White was not yet quite ready. After he had written the first volume, however, the second became almost inevitable. The act of writing his spiritual autobiography had engendered the creative self who imagines and orders. In the process itself he had discovered (or created) his own value. Thus the Deliverance becomes the culmination of the narrated history of the protagonist Mark Rutherford, who achieves momentarily (in the final words of his narrative) "actual joy"; and the writing of it is also the culminating triumph of the author's life. Gamini Salgado remarks that in the Autobiography "the hero and the narrator are in effect two different personages. The 'I' who suffers is removed in time from the 'I' who creates." This is true, but by the time the Deliverance was completed, the "I" who rejoices had become the "I" who creates. The self who writes and the self who is written about are momentarily one.

Moreover, the recollection and transformation of his own "commonplace" existence liberated White into his power as a novelist. In the novels that followed the Autobiography and Deliverance, the erstwhile lament, "mine is the tale of a commonplace life," becomes the source of his creative genius. This intense realization of what George Eliot called "the tragedy of frequency" is White's great gift. He recognizes the tragedy of insignificant people who see more than they can attain, whose heroism lies in the endurance of obscure and isolated lives. The setting of his novels—Cowfold, Eastthorpe, Fenmarket—is Bedford in various guises. But in these apparently dull rural towns, as within the hearts and souls of seemingly ordinary characters, White perceives and dramatizes volcanic depths of experience. Cowfold, the setting of much of the action of The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, appears on the surface to be lacking in romance and adventure.
In reality, the narrator comments, that town contains, potentially and in fact, the sum of human history:

The garden of Eden, the murder of Cain, the deluge, the salvation of Noah, the exodus from Egypt, David and Bathsheba, with the murder of Uriah, the Assyrian invasion, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection from the Dead; to say nothing of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, the tragedy of Count Cenci, the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, the Inquisition in Spain, and Revolt of the Netherlands, all happened in Cowfold, as well as elsewhere, and were perhaps more interesting there because they could be studied in detail and the records were authentic. (RTL, 243–44)

I have argued that Wordsworth’s poetry initiated for White the movement through the external appearance to the vital center of things. The *Lyrical Ballads* led him to the immediate experience of the living God in nature, who had been heretofore shrouded in the forms of dogma. In a more general way, Wordsworth first revealed for White, as for countless others, “the miraculous inherent in the commonplace, but obscured by the ‘film of familiarity’ ” (P, 107). Having removed that “film” from his own life experience, he now became concerned to redefine the miraculous and the heroic for a public whose experience, now more than ever, was suffused with anxiety and confusion. If Mark Rutherford denied all claim to heroism, Zachariah Coleman of *The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane* (1887) was offered as the modern hero. He is neither a gentleman nor a wit, neither noble nor especially brave. Nevertheless, he hopes, fears, loves, and endures. The narrator remarks that when individual human worth is finally justly appraised, it will no longer be the martyr and saint who qualify as the great heroes. Rather, “a diviner heroism is that of the poor printer, who, in dingy, smoky, Rosomon Street, Clerkenwell, with forty years before him, determined to live through them . . . without a murmur, although there was to be no pleasure in them. A diviner heroism is this, but divinest
of all, is that of him who can in these days do what Zachariah did, and without Zachariah's faith’’ (RTL, 20). In his mind’s eye White now sees not only Zachariah but himself: he has attempted to endure without the faith of his fathers, and has tried to understand, in recreating his life, its value.

White attempts in his subsequent fiction, then, to remove the film of familiarity from the environment, from ordinary people, and finally from the commonplace truths which enable us to live. Philosophical verities, made stale by repetition, he penetrates and revitalizes by fictional exploration. Those ideas which originally inspired religions or moral structures become real and accessible once more. Describing Samuel Johnson’s *Rambler*, White remarks that it is neglected “because its philosophy is nothing more than everybody knows.” Johnson’s essays “may be called platitudes”; but all consolation in distress is platitudinous in some sense. Johnson may have found nothing better than what is “‘known to all the sons of men,’” but “‘he is wise enough not to discard that which is common: he had discovered that it is our duty to put life and meaning into the common; that the only salvation attainable lies therein.’” Similarly, the truths to be found in Bunyan are, White states, “‘not new, but saving truths are mostly commonplace. There has been enough truth in the world for centuries past to redeem every soul in it’” (B, 61).

Saving truths, freedom from commonplaceness and self-despisings, however, were for White the achievements of a lifelong struggle. The act that initiated his career as a novelist was a defense against his self-tormenting personality, a way of combating “‘this body of death.’” I have suggested that in the writing of his spiritual autobiography, White stayed time and extended existence, broke down some of the walls imprisoning his religious life and transformed in some measure his exile. But the metamorphosis was not total, and it occurred only after the worst trials of his married and working life had been endured. To that period of his life I shall now return.
The Leaden Order of Things: Marriage and Work

He perpetually, therefore, had before him an enfeebled reflection of himself, and this much irritated him, notwithstanding his love for her; for who could help loving a woman who, without the least hesitation, would have opened her veins at his command, and have given up every drop of blood in her body for him?

—Mark Rutherford's Deliverance

I

In February 1854, Hale White refused John Chapman's offer of a partnership in his publishing business and left 142 Strand. Turning his back on the "heartless emptiness" that he felt was characteristic of that establishment, he moved to the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Street, a generous, religious woman who was a good friend of the Reverend Caleb Morris. It is possible to see this decision as a flight from unorthodox attitudes in both the religious and social spheres. Wollaston, Mark Rutherford notes, "had 'liberal' notions about the relationship between the sexes," and "he disbelieved in marriage" (A, 123). White was never particularly comfortable in Chapman's milieu; after Marian Evans's departure he may have felt more out of place than ever. In Mrs. Street's "unworldly" household he returned to the familiar values of his childhood—loyalty, fidelity, piety—and conventional behavior. Here, at 11 Serle Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, White met and courted Harriet Arthur, the young half-sister of Mrs. Street.
After a two-year engagement, Hale and Harriet married, on his birthday in 1856. He was twenty-five years old. He records this event rather tersely in The Early Life: after describing his life at Chapman's and his next job as a clerk in the Registrar-General's Office, Somerset House, he adds, "Meanwhile I had married" (EL, 88). Because one of the major themes of White's fiction is the anguish of unhappy marriage, attention has naturally been focused on his own. It is true that few novelists have portrayed with such stark realism the gradual decay of love and the barriers that can arise between people who are irrevocably bound; and true also that his marriage became a burden and a substantial source of pain to him. But the causes of this unhappiness were complex; more so than in the novels.

By all accounts, Harriet was a gentle and affectionate woman. Her children recall that she knew French and German, loved simple lyrical poetry, and was an accomplished pianist who had studied with Sir Charles Halle. She was sweet, earnest, unintellectual, beloved by all who knew her. Shortly after the marriage, though, her health, always delicate, began to decline. It was discovered that she had an incurable disease, which eventually made her an invalid. She suffered increasingly for thirty years until her death in 1891. White's children felt, with good reason, that much of his "hypochondria" was related to this agonizing fact. Sir William Hale-White, his eldest son and a renowned physician at the turn of the century, writes of his father: "He had one great sorrow, enough to overwhelm most men. It was this. Shortly after his happy marriage, my mother showed signs of disseminated sclerosis—an incurable disease of the nervous system—which had been completely unsuspected. . . . My father cannot be understood by those who are unaware of his wife's illness."  

Earlier I argued that White's tragedy lay in the quality of his isolation. He had forfeited the vocation and been disowned by the religious community that might have provided a natural
home to him, and he was never quite happy in a secular environment. He may well have felt that although he had been denied the "Emmaus walk" and the self-realization it would have afforded, he might still reasonably expect to find in marriage some of the intimacy and community that he craved. Sadly, this hope was also gradually eroded, and his marriage slowly became the source of another form of exile.

Harriet White's children could scarcely recall when their mother was not an invalid. The disease induces gradual paralysis of the limbs and general decay of the organs. Mrs. White eventually became paralyzed in both legs, and was taken about in a bath chair. The paralysis then spread to her arms, "so that she could not write and hardly feed herself." In her last years, she was almost blind, although to the end of her life "she managed to read the Bible in large clear type and with the help of a magnifying glass." Because of her predicament, housekeepers and nurses were necessary.

The implications of this invalidism were staggering. In addition to his journalism and daily job in the Admiralty, White shouldered all the household cares. He was isolated a great deal of the time, for Mrs. White's condition made participation in many of his concerns and interests impossible. "When he came home from his work," his son writes, "he and she together would have liked to be alone, but a stranger was always there." Not only was his privacy invaded by nurses and housekeepers; but he also feared the calamity that would strike them all should he fall ill and be unable to work. Mark Rutherford expresses this anxiety: "What would become of . . . [Ellen]—this was the thought which kept me awake night after night when the terrors of depression were upon me, as they often were" (A, 255).

The description of Mrs. White by her sons is extraordinary. They believed her to be infinitely wise, gentle, long-suffering, and generous. Jack White thought she resembled the Madonna in Rossetti's painting "The Annunciation"; her eldest son
testified that "to all of us she was a saint" who awakened "not only reverence but great love": "for thirty weary years she endured but never once complained." White himself spoke of her patience and unselfishness. Yet his married life was hardly the ideal union he had dreamed of. He would have been more than human if he had not questioned the justice of his lot. Zachariah Coleman cries out to his wife, "My life is blasted, and it might have been different" (RTL, 171). Harriet, of course, in no way resembled the cold and rigid Jane Coleman, yet it is clear that White sometimes resented the loving creature who had inadvertently shattered his dreams. Such resentment was promptly succeeded by guilt.

On Christmas Eve, 1887, White wrote to Mrs. Colenutt: "Everybody here is well, excepting my wretched self, over whom the shadow rests, darkening every day, and darkening the house too. It is very sad when the master of the household to whom everybody in it—at least it has always been so here—looks for guidance and stimulus falls into silence and despair. It would be different if I had a wife energetic and active; able to take my place, but her disease, rendering her unfit for all exertion, makes the position very dismal." Although such expressions of self-pity rarely escaped him, we can still understand that White's love for his wife was compromised by this feeling, and that his response to her suffering was distressingly ambivalent. One of the worst aspects of the situation was his daily observation of her decline and his total helplessness in the presence of her pain. In letters to his son Jack, White refers with despairing frequency to Harriet's "growing weakness and weariness which I cannot relieve." The constant spectacle of her suffering both humbled and angered him.

We should consider that his wife's fortitude may also have appeared to White as a subtle, indirect judgment of his own confessional impulse. He frequently voices the fear that his desire to share suffering may actually be mere selfishness. Two passages
in particular seem to illuminate his emotional conflict. In the first, Mr. Cardew is described as despising his wife's inability to express herself with originality and vividness: "He had inwardly taunted her, even when she was suffering, and had said to himself that her trouble must be insignificant, for there was no colour nor vivacity in her description of it" (CF, 133). Cardew's egotism is censured ("Mistaken mortal! it was her patient heroism which made her dumb to him about her sorrows and his faults"); but the original complaint rings as true as the rebuke. In the second passage, Mark Rutherford describes the shame he feels upon discovering that Mary Mardon has been enduring the agony of neuralgia all evening without mentioning it to anyone. Mentally, Rutherford had "accused her of slightness" because she did not participate in the conversation. When he learns how she is suffering, he springs to contemptuous self-judgment:

I thought how rash I had been in judging her as I continually judged other people, without being aware of everything they had to pass through; and I thought, too, that if I had a fit of neuralgia, everybody near me would know it, and be almost as much annoyed by me as I myself should be by the pain. . . . when thus proclaiming my troubles I often considered my eloquence meritorious. . . . to parade my toothache, describing it with unusual adjectives, making it felt by all the company . . . , was to me an assertion of my superior nature. (A, 53)

One cannot help feeling that it might have been better if Harriet had complained upon occasion and spared her husband some guilt and self-hatred. While White greatly admired stoic conduct and struggled daily for patience and endurance, it seems probable that Harriet's silent heroism also estranged him. He declares that he often complained to her about his problems, but doubtless he tried to mask much of his spiritual anguish in her presence. It seems likely that the contrast of her visible physical suffering with his own spiritual pain made the latter appear
abstract and self-indulgent. Harriet’s saintliness was therefore both a nearly divine example and a perpetual reprimand, an oblique reminder of his own weakness and egotism. A curious passage in *Catharine Furze* further reveals the emotional turmoil occasioned by his wife’s condition. The narrator describes the loving-kindness Phoebe’s family shows to her when she is dying. Suddenly he interjects: “It was not with them as with a man known to the writer of this history. His wife, whom he professed to love, was dying of consumption. ‘I do not deny she suffers,’ he said, ‘but nobody thinks of me’” (CF, 318).

Nevertheless, there is no question that White loved his wife. Jack White writes that his mother’s relationship to his father was “one of devotion, almost of adoration: she was absorbed in him.” Not surprisingly, White remarked that “it was impossible to help loving such a tender affectionate creature.” Yet the fact remains that he shouldered most burdens—domestic, financial, emotional, spiritual—more or less alone. The haunting question of what “might have been” is present in all White’s novels. It also explains White’s strange distress concerning his eldest son’s impending marriage. Although he approved of his son’s choice, and was to become exceptionally close to his daughter-in-law, he found that he could not bear to attend the wedding. His response included more than the natural fear of losing a much-loved son. On the eve of Willie’s marriage, his father wrote: “But you must think of us. It is not all bliss to us—simply because your joy reminds us of a whole life’s joy missed through her illness. What she has denied herself God only knows.”

White’s children, then, declared emphatically that their parents were devoted to one another. Not unnaturally, at least some readers of his novels have regarded their testimonials with suspicion, finding it odd that a man so happily married should be obsessed with imagining and examining marital incompatibility in its myriad forms. For unhappy marriage and the consequent isolation of one or both of the partners is the single strongest
theme in White's fiction. In the *Autobiography* and *Deliverance* alone, Miss Arbour, Rutherford's friend M'Kay, Ellen Butts, and two of the members of the Drury Lane room—Taylor and John the waiter—are unhappily married. In *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, Zachariah Coleman in the first half of the novel, and George Allen in the second, both learn the "sad truth—the saddest a man can know"—that they have "missed the great delight of existence" (RTL, 18). Miriam Tacchi eventually becomes reconciled to her lot, but not before the novelist explores her feelings shortly after her marriage, when contemplation of the "dreary length" of the future stretching out before her, married to a man she does not love, leads to her depression (MS, 133). Cardew, in *Catharine Furze*, and minor characters in *Clara Hopgood* may be added to the list. In the short stories, Michael Trevanion, both Mrs. Fairfax and the rector ("Mrs. Fairfax"), Esther ("Letters from My Aunt Eleanor"), and the narrators of "A Dream of Two Dimensions" and "The Sweetness of a Man's Friend" all discover with Mark Rutherford that "while there is nothing which a man does which is of greater consequence than the choice of a woman with whom he is to live, there is nothing he does in which he is more liable to self-deception" (A, 74–75). Clearly White found the complexities of the marital relation a fascinating and compelling subject. But what exactly is the relationship between this aspect of his life and his art, and how did his marriage affect his creative and spiritual development?

I shall begin by saying that I think it certain that White's dominant theme had an autobiographical foundation. The autobiographical material, however, is used in at least three different ways. My discussion of White's creative process to this point has, I hope, now made familiar the imaginative transformation that frees the novelist from inhibiting self-judgment, gives access to his deepest feelings, and allows investigation of them in a way that purely autobiographical representation would prohibit. The first way, then, in which White's biography informs his fictions
is in the creation of fictional situations that provide a focus for feelings he could not bear to acknowledge directly, feelings that would appear to be unfair to his wife and unworthy of himself: resentment, anger, frustration, self-pity, loneliness. These stories portray marriage in which one partner is cold and unloving, and alienates the other by unsympathetic, rejecting behavior. The coldness of such characters provides an excuse as well as a cause for the unhappiness of the spouse: thus these fictions allow both the expression and the justification of feelings deemed unacceptable in the novelist's own life.

If in the first category of fictions the novelist transforms the raw material of his life into the energies and tensions of his art, in a second category, he himself is transformed by the very act of exploring the situations he has created. This second class of fictional relationships comes closest to White's "real-life" marriage, in that these fictions portray the relationship between an intellectually proud, self-centered man or woman and a kind, unpretentious, unintellectual spouse. White seems here to be trying to teach himself what the intellectual partner learns: to appreciate the valuable human qualities of the neglected spouse.

The third category is the most nebulous, and treats matters that White probably found most difficult to acknowledge consciously. Here the imaginative conversion includes the possibility of dreams fulfilled via second choices, idealized women and what, however muted, may be called sexual fantasy. This is fiction as a form of wish fulfillment.

_The Revolution in Tanner's Lane_ is White's finest and most thorough exploration of an unhappy marriage in which the protagonist is bound to an unsympathetic and commonplace spouse. The first half of the novel charts his growing isolation. Three months after his wedding day, Zachariah is thoroughly depressed. "It was, he feared, true he did not love her, nor she him; but why could not they have found that out before?" "Paralysed, dead in half of his soul," he "would have to exist
with the other half as well as he could” (RTL, 17, 18). Zachariah can blame no one but himself for his mistaken choice; “he could not accuse her of passing herself off upon him with false pretences” (RTL, 17). He is deceived solely by his own innocence and ignorance. Like Dorothea with Casaubon, Zachariah quickly discovers that “the light had changed, and you cannot find the pearly dawn at noonday.”

Zachariah’s discovery that in the soul of the “woman with whom he was to be for ever in this world” there was “nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing which answered anything in himself with a smile of recognition” (RTL, 130) is conveyed by a series of scenes in which husband and wife reveal how far apart they are and how totally their marriage has failed. White creates a smoldering compound of resentment, hostility, and guilt through faltering dialogue, awkward silences, and the narrator’s account of Zachariah’s inner turmoil. In one such scene, Zachariah returns home from the theater after seeing Othello for the first time and, “burning with excitement at what was a discovery to him”—that while men and women may not actually murder one another, they deliberately “misconstrue and lose each other” daily—desires to be reconciled with his wife. Once home, confronted with her brisk “Oh, here you are at last,” he feels the impossibility of reaching out to her. He “was struck dumb[,] . . . shut up again in his old prison, and what was so hopeful three hours before was all vanity” (RTL, 49–51).

The creation of this kind of marital relation seems to be a way of revealing the peculiar loneliness that is the result of alienation from the person with whom one is supposed to be “one flesh.” White makes a great point, in this novel and elsewhere, of stressing the irrevocable nature of the marital bond: “It came upon him with fearful distinctness that he was alone—that he could never hope for sympathy from his wife as long as he lived.” White is also able to reveal the anger and helplessness Zachariah feels because he is so bound. He questions God’s designs: “Could
anybody be better for not being loved?’ ‘Why had God so decreed?’ (RTL, 105, 106).

Jane Coleman is certainly the coldest and most rigid of White’s characters. She is portrayed as intellectually shallow and inanely conventional. Her obsession with cleanliness and order is emphasized, not without some humor: “The sight of dirt, in fact, gave her a quiet kind of delight, because she foresaw the pleasure of annihilating it. . . . she would have risen from her deathbed, if she could have done so, to put a chair straight” (RTL, 146). White hints that she is sexually reserved (a familiar gesture is smoothing her apron over her knees), although she is pleased and flattered by Major Maitland’s attentions and clearly finds him attractive. She has no sympathy with Zachariah’s religious doubts and is obviously threatened by his infidel friends. In fact, she doesn’t much like her husband and disapproves of his political enthusiasm in the same way that she disapproves of his table manners. White suggests that Zachariah shuts his wife out from his emotional life, too. Mrs. Coleman’s social and religious orthodoxy stems from her lack of self-confidence, and White makes it clear that beneath her conventional exterior she is a frightened and lonely woman, who goes to pieces when she is suddenly removed from London and the sphere of known duties and familiar attitudes. White is also astute enough to suggest that her increasing frigidity and self-righteousness are jealous and defensive responses to her husband’s attraction to Pauline Caillaud. White allows us to see events momentarily from her point of view and implies that with a man other than Zachariah she would have been a better and a happier woman: “injustice, not only to others, but to ourselves, is always begotten by a false relationship” (RTL, 222).

Others of White’s fictional marriages have characteristics similar to Zachariah’s. Miss Arbour’s husband, Mr. Hexton, is “cold, hard, and impenetrable. His habits were precise and methodical, beyond what is natural for a man of his years”
Esther’s husband (in “Esther”) is not really interested in who his wife is, desiring only that she observe the formalities and do her duty. Esther writes to her mother that “this absence of curiosity to explore what is in me kills me” (MP, 46). All these characters—Jane Coleman, Esther’s husband, Mr. Hexton—are fastidious, rigid, and unsympathetic, and all cause their partners to question their own value and identity. All provide a focus for diffuse marital dissatisfactions on the part of the author, and for his feelings of worthlessness and frustration. Behind their creation is the helpless thought that “it might have been different.”

In the second group of fictional relationships, White’s own marital situation is more obviously represented and his complex response to it worked through. Here, as I have suggested, we discover him in the process of enlarging his sympathies and extending his moral nature through the creation of and conscious engagement in the lives (and deaths) of his characters. Mark Rutherford and Ellen of the Autobiography and Deliverance, Mr. and Mrs. M’Kay of that novel, Mr. and Mrs. Cardew of Catharine Furze, Miriam and her husband in Miriam’s Schooling, and couples in two short stories, “A Dream of Two Dimensions” and “The Sweetness of a Man’s Friend,” all reflect several aspects of White’s own marriage. They have in common a conflict of intellect with unintellectual piety or virtue; in all cases the neglected spouse is devoted to his/her mate; the intellectual partner feels hard done by and desires more intellectual sympathy or passion (or both). In all these instances, intellectual pride is humbled by simple human charity.

White’s son remarked that if his father “drew any character from . . . [Harriet] it was that of Mary Mardon to whom Mark Rutherford was not married in the story, and who is one of his most sympathetic creations.” Mary is indeed a sympathetic character, but her role in Mark’s history, and in the Autobiography as a whole, is not at all clear. She resembles Harriet White in many ways: she is delicate and sweet-looking; her manner of talking
is characterized by "perfect simplicity"; she is a musician, whose voice (like Harriet's playing) "wound itself into the very centre of my existence"; she teaches Rutherford, through her silent endurance of pain, "that such virtues as patience and self-denial" are "heroism, and that my contrary tendency was pitiful vanity" (A, 50, 91, 53). Rutherford falls in love with her: "I thought I chose Mary, but there was no choice. . . . My soul rushed to hers as if dragged by the force of a loadstone"; and he remarks that "looking backward" he feels that "what I did then was the one perfectly right thing which I have done in my life" (A, 96–97).

This last remark has the air of personal conviction, yet the plot of the novel demands that Mary refuse Mark's offer of marriage.¹⁵ She succumbs to consumption shortly after her father's death. Reuben Shapcott informs us that after Mary's death, Mark was for a time "not only broken-hearted, but broken-spirited" (A, 137). He is in such bad shape that he is forced to leave Wollaston's. In "real life," Hale White left Chapman's to get married. At the very least, it is interesting that in his spiritual autobiography White should replace a marriage with the death of the woman who most resembles his own wife. Mary Mardon dies, but she is resurrected in Ellen, her surrogate and counterpart. Like Mary, Ellen is kind, affectionate, gentle, and loyal. After a lengthy engagement, however, Mark breaks off with her: "I became at once aware that my affection for her, if it ever really existed, had departed. I saw before me the long days of wedded life with no sympathy, and I shuddered when I thought what I should do with such a wife" (A, 57). At this juncture, Ellen is a much more sympathetic character than Mark, whose main concern is that Mardon would be unimpressed by her and her orthodox religious views. Several years later they meet, fall in love again, and marry. "All the old confidences, confessions, tender­nesses, rushed upon me. What is there which is more potent than the recollection of past love to move us to love, and knit love
with closest bonds?” (A, 244). Mark finds a clerical job, and also writes for a couple of newspapers, like his creator.

How are we to understand this chaos of feelings and choices? I have suggested that in the Autobiography and Deliverance the author’s conflicting impulses are expressed in the similar characterizations of Mary and Ellen, and through the apparently gratuitous twists of the plot: the death of Mary, the initial rejection of Ellen. These elements embody, I believe, White’s impulse to deny his married situation and undo imaginatively the possibility of its occurrence. He is free in this way simultaneously to celebrate Mary’s virtue and to mourn its passing. This impulse, however, is rapidly succeeded by its opposite: Mary is recreated in Ellen, and marriage to her affirms both characters.

In the novel, Rutherford’s feelings about love and marriage evolve and mature. Miss Arbour’s advice, that Mark break off his first engagement to Ellen, is surely right. Given his feelings at the time, marriage would have been a fatal mistake. A marriage is seen to be possible later because Mark—and Ellen, too—are no longer the same people. Both characters have matured through their individual suffering. The emotional development of Mark Rutherford may be seen to parallel White’s own shifting feelings for his wife. The difference is that White did marry in his youth, and his emotional response doubtless underwent a series of transformations within the bonds of marriage. But the dominant attitudes that emerge from the conflicting creative and destructive impulses are acceptance and recognition. Three years before Harriet’s death, White wrote to his son Jack: “As I get older I more and more learn to set store upon the virtues which are not intellectual but emotional and moral. . . . I recur now to the preference of Jesus for the simple and not for the philosophers; for Peter, Mary, Mary Magdalen, and not for the priests and the Greeks. The simple too have saved the world.”

Rutherford’s Ellen is not the ideal partner, but she is still his conscious choice. The placement of Rutherford’s marriage at the
end of the _Deliverance_ rather than at the chronologically appropriate—for its author—end of the _Autobiography_ is symbolic of White's recognition of his responsibility, and an affirmation of his commitment. Here as elsewhere, he vicariously atones for his frequent feelings of resentment, irritation, and the yearning for "something different" that punctuated his actual marriage.

Young Mark Rutherford rejects Ellen primarily because he thinks she is not enough for his complex personality. After the marriage, Rutherford celebrates the enduring power and the renewal possible to him through a woman's devotion, but he also remarks that love must be constantly fed, or it will all too easily dissolve: "It wanted perpetual cherishing. The lamp, if it is to burn brightly, required daily trimming. . . . if through relapse into idleness we do not attempt to bring soul and heart into active communion day by day, what wonder if this once exalted relationship become vulgar and mean?" (A, 257). This statement, like so much of the novel, is autodidactic: both an explanation of White's affection for Harriet and a reminder to himself of the proper attitude and course of action.

The great complaint of the "superior" partner in this group of relationships is that his/her spouse is not an intellectual or spiritual equal who can discuss, guide, and challenge. Mark Rutherford describes his friend M'Kay's wife as being "an honest, good little woman, but so much attached to him and so dependent on him that she was his mere echo. She had no opinions which were not his" (A, 163). M'Kay condescends to her, reduces her to tears, ignores her unselfish devotion, and humiliates her by refusing to discuss anything with her but household management. His wife responds by loving him despite his cruelty and defending him to their children. When she becomes seriously ill, M'Kay begins to understand how much he depends upon her and repents his brutality. Now that time is running out, he sees who she is and reads to her, talks to her, defers to her opinion. The period before Mrs. M'Kay's death is "the most blessed time of
her married life”: “She grew under the soft rain of his loving care, and opened out, not, indeed, into an oriental flower, . . . but into a blossom of the chalk-down. . . . There are some natures that cannot unfold under pressure or in the presence of unregarding power. Hers was one” (A, 165). The language is important here: Mrs. M’Kay is a “good little woman,” not exotic but a “blossom of the chalk-down.” White often referred to Harriet as his “poor wife”; in a letter to Mrs. Colenutt he speaks of Harriet’s “shy, unpretending soul” (L, 50). Harriet died in 1891, and the Autobiography was published in 1881. We can reasonably assume that White was in the process of learning the hard lesson M’Kay learns only at the end, and that Rutherford’s disapproval of M’Kay’s earlier conduct toward his wife is a self-judgment.

Mr. Cardew, the parish minister in Catharine Furze, finds his wife’s intellectual inferiority sufficient justification for his seeking solace elsewhere. Mrs. Cardew, though loyal, gentle, and devoted, has neither the passionate nature nor the intellectual curiosity of Catharine Furze. Although Mrs. Cardew tries valiantly, she is incapable of analyzing Milton’s poetry. (The neglected wife in “The Sweetness of a Man’s Friend” cannot appreciate Shelley’s symbolism.) Cardew upbraids his wife for her want of intelligence and imagination in language that echoes Zachariah’s complaint: “I don’t know how it is, Jane, but whenever I say anything I feel you are just the one person on whom it seems to make no impression. You have a trick of repetition, and you manage to turn everything into a platitude. If you cannot do better than that, you might be silent” (CF, 127–28). At this juncture, White is able to enter into Mrs. Cardew’s pain. (In one episode, she asks Catharine Furze for help in discussing poetry: “Do you think I could learn how to talk? What I mean is, could I be taught how to say what is appropriate?” [CF, 134].) Mrs. Cardew passionately loves a man who finds her inadequate and, though she understands what is wanted, without his affection she is powerless to become acceptable. Nevertheless, White does
not entirely condemn Cardew, whose needs, fears, and self-distrust are analyzed with compassion.

Miriam Tacchi (Miriam's Schooling) also has a spouse whose intelligence is unsympathetic to her own. After great struggle, she reconciles herself to the marital bond and tries to be grateful for her husband's continuing affection. In this novel, however, the atmosphere of resigned compromise is more pronounced than in the others. Out of a sense of duty, Miriam renounces her dream of passionate love and accepts her husband with quiet affection. But the delight that she felt in the presence of her first lover seems to have been drowned in the symbolic storm that concludes the novel.

In varying degrees all these situations resemble White's own married life. But the story that seems to me to be the most exact and subtle exploration of White's own marriage is "A Dream of Two Dimensions." Here, White turns from his characteristic realism toward fantasy.

This story, published in Last Pages From a Journal, was written during the 1870s and circulated privately under the title of Flatland in 1884. Narrated in the first person, the story as a whole is a revealing psychological exploration of the author's ambivalent feelings toward his wife, his marriage, and his domestic situation. The story opens on a Sunday afternoon, with the narrator resentfully trying to teach his son mathematics. The child had been incapable of mastering his lesson the previous day and now intrudes upon his father's leisure time, "the only day . . . [he] had for reading." The opening scene is astonishingly realistic. In style, tone, and content it in fact resembles White's Christmas Eve letter to Mrs. Colenutt, quoted above:

I bundled him off upstairs and proceeded to bewail to his mother, as I generally did on Sunday afternoons, my hard lot, my lack of leisure and society, etc., etc. Whenever I went into other houses everything seemed cheerful and bright: here there was nothing
THE LEADEN ORDER OF THINGS

but gloom; life for me was a perpetual grind and nobody cared two pins about me. My poor little wife, as her habit was, tried to console me, and observed that our greatest blessings were, perhaps, those of which we took the least notice because we were so used to them. I held my tongue. I had got into the habit of despising her counsels as feeble. She did not appreciate me, and I could never hope she would. What a thing it would be to have a wife with some intelligence, who could see that my sufferings were real and could soothe them! I answered her by turning my head on one side in my easy chair and obtrusively shutting my eyes, as if what she had said were not worth notice. It was my usual way of meeting her endeavours to help me. (LP, 138-39)

A brief summary of the story will facilitate discussion. Following this opening, the narrator's wife leaves the room in tears. Slowly a mist steals over him, and he enters a world of colored shadows. This realm is initially strange and disconcerting because everything in it has only two dimensions. The narrator is the only being who possesses three dimensions; everyone and everything else has only length and breadth. This world seems delightfully simple and the protagonist enjoys himself hugely, but eventually he grows depressed and is particularly distressed by the disappearance of the entire population at sunset and their reappearance each morning. After a doctor suggests that marriage will cure his melancholy, he wins a "bright, charming damsel" and marries her. He is pleased with his wife's society but is worried by her nightly disappearance: "'What does it matter,' said I to myself, 'that she is with me all day if she is dead during the rest of the twenty-four hours?' I dwelt upon my trouble till I became enveloped in it, worse than I had ever been" (LP, 144).

His wife attempts to understand the cause of his low spirits, but an explanation of his third dimension makes her think that her husband is mad. The narrator remarks, "'I wished all the time she were something different'" (LP, 145). "Several times I made up my mind to be satisfied and to torment myself no longer. We
were decently well off; she loved me tenderly—why not be con­tent?’’ In spite of this recognition, the narrator grows more obsessed with the value of his third dimension, even while rec­ognizing his wife’s virtue, charm, and pathetic attempts to dis­tract him from his overmastering concern. At length, his growing brutality tells upon her and she becomes ill. The narrator, intercepting a letter from a doctor whom his wife has consulted about her husband’s strange obsession, finds that the physician has sent her a remedy—a magic potion which, if they both drink it at the same time, will make them equal in insight and affection. The nar­rator, fearing the loss of his third dimension, refuses to drink the potion. In desperation, his wife drinks it alone, hoping her hus­band will follow her. Still refusing, he watches his wife grow phantasmal and finally, along with the entire population, disap­pear. The husband, overcome with remorse, belatedly drinks the potion, but it now has no effect: “I had to lament the loss of a woman to whose loveliness, virtues, and gifts I had wilfully blinded myself, and I had lost her, not through anything which was part of my own self, but through an assumed, false conceit. It was worse than murder in a moment of anger” (LP, 150). After desperately wandering about for a long while, the penitent hus­band goes home and in a deep sleep perceives his wife once more, her features altered and misty. He promises to do anything to regain her, and they both drink again of the liquid she offers him. The narrator is just moving to embrace the phantom when he awakes in his own living room with his earthly wife beside him.

The first paragraph of the story reveals many aspects of White’s marital situation. He loves his “poor little wife” in his own way but still wishes “she were something different.” He is frustrated by the apparent injustice of his lot; other men have “leisure” and “society,” whereas his household (one of illness and stress) seems full of gloom. He tends to brood about his prob­lems and thus intensifies them. We can also see here White’s deep need to share his mental and emotional suffering and have it
appreciated and understood. He is irritated by pious platitudes that dismiss or mitigate his pain and frustration. As in the case of his characters Cardew and Michael Trevanion, the wife’s counsels “give no help”; facile formulae diminish his uniqueness; her suggestions are felt as indirect reprimands that trivialize and alienate him. The reminder that his suffering is commonplace and the hint that his complaints may be self-indulgent cause his latent self-loathing to erupt, and the self-tormentor emerges once again. Helplessly caught in this conflict of self-hatred and self-love, he desires to strike back, to annihilate momentarily the source of his original anguish and subsequent guilt. “Obtrusively” closing his eyes, he separates himself from his wife, and temporarily erases her. The suppressed violence of the following dream-vision extends and completes the process already begun in the realistic introduction of the story.

The dream world of this story exposes two particular problems. The husband is distressed and frustrated because his wife “disappears” each night, and he is obsessed with his third dimension, which no one else perceives or comprehends. The narrator’s response to this second difficulty is characteristic of Hale White: the needs of the ego go into battle with his sense of justice. He wants, on the one hand, to be content with what he has; on the other, the drive toward self-realization and the need for recognition of his uniqueness force him into egotism and cruelty. “To a being ignorant of my third dimension,” writes the narrator, “it was not worth while to communicate my plans, and I actually felt a secret pleasure in stalking out of the house, informing her, in answer to her earnest inquiries, that I could not tell her when she might expect me” (LP, 147). The “third dimension” primarily symbolizes his intellectual or spiritual life (including his melancholia), which no one, especially his wife, recognizes or values. Unknown, it becomes a torment to him. Less specifically, the third dimension suggests any unique or important aspect of the self which remains imprisoned within
and unfulfilled. Circumstances (Harriet’s illness, her lack of intellectual interest) do not allow full expression or realization of it. The second problem, the nocturnal disappearance of the narrator’s wife, is more complicated. Specifically, it seems to suggest sexual frustration, and, more generally, it points to White’s isolation from wife and community, his constant feelings of only partial existence. He is, I think, obliquely alluding here to his loneliness—mental and physical—in a household of pain and depression.

This singular work of fiction provides White with an opportunity for the expression, however indirect, of his resentment, frustration, and loneliness. In addition, it allows for the equally powerful operation of conscience and remorse. The narrator controls his wife’s very existence; lack of affection causes the “bright, charming damsel” to fade away and die. In the dream world, the dreamer has power over life and death. How far Harriet White actually depended upon her husband for life is open to conjecture. Yet we recall Jack White’s comment that her feeling for her husband was “one of devotion, almost of adoration: she was absorbed in him.” All the “inadequate” spouses discussed in this section, and especially the wife of this story, are long-suffering and patient, devoted but unintellectual. Here the frustrated narrator unleashes his carefully controlled emotions and allows them to swell to a murderous climax. In his passionate egotism he destroys the offending object, his loving wife. The narrator recognizes that his willed, conscious rejection of her—which causes her death—is “worse than murder in a moment of anger.” His immediate response to her death is remorse, horror, and fear. Love for the gentle creature then springs up, and he wishes to sacrifice himself in order to atone, to undo his self-centered response. Here we see again the destructive/creative conflict that was at work in the Autobiography. White does not allow anger and violence to triumph in this instance, either. Through the operation of remorse, he denies the wish to destroy
once it is expressed and promises the self-sacrifice necessary to
resurrect his “poor little wife.” Nevertheless, the story concludes
ambiguously. The narrator drinks from the magic phial and is
about to embrace his fantasy wife when he awakens to the real
one beside him. The fantasy offers no resolution. Rather, the
story as a whole expresses the emotional and psychological con­
flict that White was experiencing at this stage of his life. This
story and _The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane_ are also more dis­
tinctly imaginative safety valves for growing negative feelings
than are White’s other treatments of marriage. Anger, pain,
resentment, frustration emerge—though so does the genuine
wish to deny his own needs in recognition of his wife’s gentle­
ness and loving-kindness. But exactly what future the dream­
vision and the final movement toward repentance signify for the
relationship with the “earthly wife” we are never told.

The fantastic mode of “A Dream of Two Dimensions” seems
to have freed White from some inhibitions and encouraged the
exploration of hidden desires and needs. His own suppression
of the story, however (Dorothy writes that White told her he
had destroyed remaining copies because he was “ashamed” of
it [GD, 73]), may suggest that he understood full well—and feared
others might also—the extent to which he had exposed his equiv­
ocal feelings about his marriage. In the third category of White’s
imaginative investigations of the marital relation, the conflicts
I have been pointing to take place at what appears to be a less
conscious level. In this uncertain territory of wish fulfillment,
the possibility of another chance and the power of sexuality are
key elements.

White emphasizes the self-deception that operates in his
characters’ mistaken marriage choices. As in religious conver­
sion, their innocence and lack of self-knowledge are dangerous.
Victorian social practice complicates the problem. In describing
Zachariah’s history, the narrator sardonically remarks, “the
courtship between Zachariah and the lady who became his wife
had been short, for there could be no mistake, as they had known one another so long” (RTL, 11–12). As for Michael Trevanion, Rutherford notes that his case was “the simplest, commonest case in life”: “He married . . . when he was young, before he knew what he was doing, and after he had been married twelve-months, he found he did not care for his wife. . . . He mistook passion for love; reason was dumb, and had nothing to do with his choice; he made the one irretrievable false step and was ruined” (MS, 156–57). Similarly, the rector in “Mrs. Fairfax” first marries at twenty-five, and in maturity declares that his choice was “the arbitrary selection of a weary will” (P, 266). Zachariah, George Allen, Esther, Miss Arbour, Michael Trevanion, and various other characters all project their own natures onto their marriage partners and initially convince themselves that apparent limitations are really virtues. They all pay heavily for what Dickens calls the "undisciplined heart."

Some of these characters are able to escape the consequences of their mistakes;20 a few are given second chances. Thus, in middle age Baruch Cohen (whose first wife died in childbirth) wins Madge Hopgood, and a new life begins for him. After the death of Jane Coleman, Zachariah is free to wed the beautiful Pauline. And in spite of his general cynicism, the middle-aged rector of “Mrs. Fairfax” marries Mrs. Fairfax. These mature decisions, presented as the fruit of suffering and self-knowledge, seem to involve a form of wish fulfillment.

The women chosen the second time all strikingly resemble Marian Evans as White remembered her. They are independent, intelligent, passionate, and, above all, vital. Indeed, these traits characterize a number of White’s heroines. Pauline, Madge Hopgood, Miriam, and Catharine Furze all forge their individual values through their original response to experience. White is especially attracted to this originality. Mark Rutherford remarks that Theresa was a woman who dealt in ideas, but nevertheless could be overcome by emotion (A, 127–28). In the creation of his
heroines, then, White incorporated many of Marian Evans’s attributes, but he also found it necessary to look beyond his own nation, culture, and religious heritage for material. Miss Leroy of the Autobiography, the Hopgood sisters, and Pauline, for example, are either French or educated on the Continent. Pauline and Miss Leroy are perceived as being out of place in conventional rural English society. The former is described as being “like a wild seagull in a farm-yard of peaceful, clucking, brown-speckled fowls” (RTL, 86). Miss Leroy, similarly, lives amidst Cowfold society “as an Arabian bird with its peculiar habits, cries, and plumage might live in one of our barnyards with the ordinary barn-door fowls” (A, 184). Pauline is the adopted daughter of a French radical (she is in fact the natural daughter of a French aristocrat and his mistress, Victorine, who heroically saves him from the guillotine); the Hopgood sisters have lived in Weimar (the home not only of Goethe but of Marian Evans and G. H. Lewes when they first left England). These characters and the women of Cowfold/Eastthorpe/Fenmarket (with the exception of Catharine Furze) differ markedly. White frequently attacks the Victorian education of women, both by championing intelligent foreign infidels and by more direct analysis. Mark Rutherford makes the contrast explicitly in The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane: “In . . . [Zachariah’s] Calvinistic Dissenting society, the pious women who were members of the church took little or no interest in the mental life of their husbands. They read no books, knew nothing of politics, were astonishingly ignorant, and lived in their household duties. To be with a woman who could stand up against him was a new experience. Here was a girl [Pauline] to whom every thought her father possessed was familiar!” (RTL, 77).

White’s conflict and longing are expressed indirectly in these contrasts between the women characters in his fiction. He was not an intellectual snob, irritated because his wife was unable to engage him in literary chats. Nevertheless, the idealized,
unconventional heroines of his fiction and the imaginative projections of "what might have been" reflect his profound desire for mutual understanding and passionate commitment. All White's heroines have intellectual and moral power. In differing ways, they challenge the men who admire them and demand equality in marriage. Their freedom and originality seem to inspire in their male counterparts both love and the freedom to be themselves.

The emergence of this imagined possibility of another chance to realize an ideal relationship and fulfill the hidden dream is not without some unconscious censoring. Here we encounter the area of deepest conflict and ambiguity—White's response to sexuality as it emerges in his fictional characters and their relationships.

White's treatment of sexuality is complicated, but there is no question about his understanding of its power. Directly or indirectly, this power is often revealed as destructive. We can see this in Zachariah Coleman's relationship with Pauline Caillaud, the "second choice" par excellence. Zachariah is clearly sexually attracted to her. White shows Zachariah's arousal and his confusion in the face of it through his ambivalent response to Pauline's dancing. "Even ordinary dancing was a thing prohibited" in Zachariah's Puritan circle, and Pauline's exquisite solitary performance, executed in a short black dress and red stockings, would have been denounced "as the work of the devil" (RTL, 167, 75). Zachariah, who has never witnessed anything of the kind before, detects "a secret pleasure in what he had seen" (RTL, 75), and on the next occasion follows her every movement "with hungry eyes" (RTL, 167). His religious background provides him with no armor against the strength of his attraction, and he is unable to prevent "the very sinful occupation of dwelling upon every attitude of Pauline, and outlining every one of her limbs" in his mind's eye (RTL, 77). "Even in his prayer he saw Pauline's red stockings" (RTL, 79). White is
acute enough to recognize that Zachariah's sexual response is the more powerful because of the repression that preceded it. When unhappy Jane Coleman dies, Zachariah marries Pauline and presumably has a brief period of intellectual fulfillment and physical delight. Pauline dies in childbirth a year later. One cannot but feel that White's guilt had something to do with this gratuitous death. Zachariah is allowed to realize his desire momentarily, but he is also punished for it. He is left alone and unhappy, with a "bitter sense of wrong, a feeling that he had more than his proper share of life's misery" (RTL, 281). This is more familiar and less threatening territory. Pauline's reappearance as Zachariah's daughter (who is said to resemble her mother in both appearance and temperament) may imply that White was more comfortable investigating the ideal woman without the sexual dimension.

Other works support the notion that White felt free to explore sexual attraction in his fiction only if he simultaneously denied its fulfillment as a real possibility. We may remind ourselves that in "A Dream of Two Dimensions" the husband regrets, and wishes he could undo, all the destructive feelings that culminate in his wife's death. This dual response—a kind of imaginative opening of the door and closing it—seems also to be at work in Miriam's Schooling. Miriam's melancholia, which ends in her near suicide, is largely initiated by her unfulfilled passion for George Montgomery. Later, she is able to make her marriage to plodding Didymus Farrow tolerable by escaping daily tedium through literature. For Miriam, imaginative escape is what it is to Maggie Tulliver: "the form in which she took her opium."21 She becomes aware of the "possibilities of love" by immersing herself in Romeo and Juliet, and Cowfold disappears as she imagines herself on the balcony in Verona, with Romeo below (MS, 129). Later, when she yields to her husband's embrace, "it was not Mr. Farrow who held her in his arms; she purposely strove to think an imaginary Romeo's head was on her neck—his face was something like the face of Montgomery—
and she kept up the illusion all that night. When she came down
to breakfast and sat opposite her husband, it struck her suddenly
that she had cheated him and was a sinner'' (MS, 131). Again we
have the indulgence of sexual possibility and its immediate retrac-
tion. Through Miriam's self-judgment concerning her sexual
fantasy White surely condemns himself, for his character's imagi-
native activity is parallel to his own: both are tentatively explor­
ing sexual possibility in their fictional worlds, and both see this
imaginative flight as a subtle betrayal of their marriage partners.
In the next novel, Catharine Furze, Cardew fantasizes about
Catharine. He embraces his wife "tenderly, fervently, more than
fervently, and yet! while his mouth was on her neck, and his arms
were round her body, the face of Catharine presented itself, and
it was not altogether his wife whom he caressed'' (CF, 226). This
repetition of the scene would seem to suggest that the treachery
of the imagination in this particular was a familiar thing.

White's interest in the erotic dimension of marriage erupts
most dramatically in his retelling of 1 Samuel. "Saul" is one of
the "Other Papers" published with Miriam's Schooling. The
story is a prose dramatic monologue told from the point of view
of Saul's widow: "Rizpah the Horite, in her old age, talks of Saul
to the wife of Armoni, her son'' (MS, 29). The linguistic energy,
deep feeling, and psychological insight shown here are White
at his best, getting (like Caleb Morris or Thomas Binney) "into
the interior of a Bible character," bringing to life a hidden aspect
of the biblical story. The monologue confirms my view that
White found a liberating sanction in the creation of masks and
disguises. The choice of a female narrator whose role in the
biblical narrative is negligible, and whose emotions he can there­
fore invent, gives him tremendous freedom and allows him to
discuss eros with a conviction and directness not found, I think,
to the same degree in any of his other works. In her monologue,
Rizpah tells of Samuel’s treachery and Saul’s madness, of her
hatred for the son of Jesse and her in comprehension of the
"ways of Jehovah" (MS, 44), who has struck down her beloved husband and left her alone, waiting for death. She was Saul's beloved before he became king, and "I am eighty years old now, but the blood moves in me, and I grow warm as I think of him" (MS, 29). She remembers the time Saul was crowned king:

O that night! never to be forgotten, were I to live a thousand years, when I held the king in my arms! Never—no, not even on the night when I first became his—had I known such delight. . . . when I call to mind the night after he was crowned, and its rapture of an hour—the strength and the eagerness of his love: the strength, the eagerness, and the pride of mine—I say it is good that I have lived. The next morning I saw him with his valiant men—. . . him higher than any of them, from the shoulders upwards; and I said to myself, he is mine, the king is mine, that body of his is mine, and I am his. (MS, 30)

She remembers Saul's deep sadness, which she tried to relieve; unlike David he "never sang, nor danced, nor played." "Would to God he had smiled oftener; and yet if he could not laugh, he could love. Ah me! how strait was his embrace" (MS, 43–44).

This extraordinarily wholehearted celebration of erotic joy is rare in White's work. The context partially explains his lack of inhibition. Not only is an Old Testament attitude to human sexuality emphatically not a Victorian one, but Saul is now dead; Rizpah's delight is a memory. There is no continuing sexual relation to defend: Rizpah's present isolation exists as adequate punishment for her earlier joy.

If "Saul" embodies White's uninhibited treatment of eros, Catharine Furze constitutes his fullest investigation of its destructive power. White's fear of this power and his attempt to discover ways to survive the experience of it are reflected in the shifting perspectives of the novel. Catharine's situation is considered by Rutherford in his capacity as narrator; by Dr. Turnbull, whose sane and stolid perspective issues from White's own hard-won
conclusions; and indirectly, by Cardew, who has inspired her passion.

In a later chapter, I shall discuss Catharine's death as self-sacrifice prompted by love. It is, however, still possible to agree with John Lucas's conclusion that Catharine wants to die; that "denied her sexual identity she simply gives up on life"; that, finally, "Catharine's love for Cardew destroys her." White traces the growth of Catharine's passion and her gradual decline with intelligence and subtlety. Here he admits no possibility of consummation: Cardew has a loving and worthy wife at home. The scene which precedes Catharine's rejection of Cardew—in spite of, or indeed because of, her love for him—is one of the most carefully conceived and beautifully executed in White's canon. It is worth quoting at length:

One afternoon, late in August, Catharine had gone with the dog down to the riverside, her favourite haunt. Clouds, massive, white, sharply outlined, betokening thunder, lay on the horizon in a long line: the fish were active; great chub rose, and every now and then a scurrying dimple on the pool showed that the jack and the perch were busy. It was a day full of heat, a day of exultation, for it proclaimed that the sun was alive; it was a day on which to forget winter with its doubts, its despairs, and its indistinguishable grey; it was a day on which to believe in immortality. Catharine was at that happy age when summer has power to warm the brain; it passed into her blood and created in her simple, uncontaminated bliss. She sat down close to an alder which overhung the bank. It was curious, but so it was, that her thoughts suddenly turned from the water and the thunderclouds and the blazing heat to Mr. Cardew, and it is still more strange that at that moment she saw him coming along the towing-path. In a minute he was at her side, but before he reached her she had risen.

"Good morning, Miss Furze."

"Mr. Cardew! What brings you here?"

"I have been here several times; I often go out for the day;
it is a favourite walk.'"

He was silent, and did not move. He seemed prepossessed and anxious, taking no note of the beauty of the scene around him.

"How is Mrs. Cardew?"

"She is well, I believe."

"You have not left home this morning, then?"

"No; I was not at home last night."

"I think I must be going."

"I will walk a little way with you."

"My way is over the bridge to the farmhouse, where I am staying."

"I will go as far as you go."

Catharine turned toward the bridge.

"Is it the house beyond the meadows?"

"Yes."

It is curious how indifferent conversation often is just at the moment when the two who are talking may be trembling with passion.

"You should have brought Mrs. Cardew with you," said Catharine, tearing to pieces a water lily, and letting the beautiful white petals fall bit by bit into the river.

Mr. Cardew looked at her steadfastly, scrutinisingly, but her eyes were on the thunderclouds, and the lily fell faster and faster. The face of this girl had hovered before him for weeks, day and night. He never for a moment proposed to himself deliberate love for her—he could not do it, and yet he had come there, not, perhaps, consciously in order to find her, but dreaming of her all the time. He was literally possessed. . . . Catharine felt his gaze, although her eyes were not towards him. At last the lily came to an end, and she tossed the naked stalk after the flower. (CF, 176-79)

White does a great deal in this delicate fusion of realistic detail and symbolic suggestiveness. The scene is a powerful celebration of natural joy, of the "animal gladness" that pervades Catharine's young life. It is not insignificant, I think, that the
imagery and the lyrical cadence of the passage echo the opening chapter of the *Autobiography*. White associates both childhood and eros with water and sunshine and heat, the body’s languor and the “mackerel-crowded seas.” The reiterated “it was a day” recalls the idyllic “I remember” of Rutherford’s boyhood. It seems natural and right that Cardew is almost conjured up by the force of Catharine’s passion, as if he were in a dream, and that they are drawn inevitably and magnetically together. It is convincing that Catharine should try to protect herself from her building emotion by repeating Mrs. Cardew’s name as if it were a talisman. The turbulent landscape serves to mirror Catharine’s increasing agitation, while the piquant stripping of the lily, “faster and faster,” clarifies her vulnerability as well as her growing sexual excitement. The mechanical nature of her activity, the awkward, self-conscious dialogue—both sharply convey the ineffectuality of the characters’ efforts to command their distress. Yet at this “perilous moment,” as Rutherford calls it, thunder is heard, the image of Mrs. Cardew appears suddenly before Catharine’s eyes, and she abruptly bids Cardew goodbye.

Lucas thinks that *Catharine Furze* is “partly about the nature of female sexuality,” and how it cannot be considered apart from the social context in which it finds itself. While it is true that in Catharine, as in his other extraordinary heroines, White examines the general plight of intelligent and passionate women in Victorian England, I am bound to say that the sexuality he explores here is essentially his own. Catharine’s situation is so emphatically White’s dilemma, her psyche so clearly familiar ground. When Catharine first met Cardew, she stood “by herself, affiliated to nothing, an individual belonging to no species” (*CF*, 192). She is unable to realize her complete nature. In an earlier chapter I described her intense isolation Mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and then sexually, she is in exile; born vocationless, two hundred years too late. With skillful care White analyses
the source, nature, and extent of her displacement. In so many
areas, she is quintessentially himself.

In contrast to other representations of himself, though, in
the creation of this character White develops his natural, sponta­
aneous side. Because they are being filtered through a female
consciousness, he feels greater freedom to indulge his wishes
and dreams and to explore the nature of desire. *Catharine Furze*
is a celebration of White's own passionate nature: but it is also
something of a farewell. Catharine, after all, dies unfulfilled. Her
disparate energies have been gathered and channeled into her
love for Cardew; that love is thwarted, then repressed. In the
summer of her passion, "it was a day on which to believe in
immortality." But the winter, the death of Phoebe, the consum­
ing fire of love, change her. The following spring, Catharine goes
to the stream again: "Once more, as on a memorable day in
August, the sun was upon the water." But the landscape, and
the emotions for which it was the objective correlative, have
been subtly transformed: "Then the heat was intense, and the
heavy cumulus clouds were charged with thunder and lightning.
Now the sun shone with nothing more than warmth, and though
the clouds, the same clouds, hung in the south-west, there was
no fire in them, nothing but soft, warm showers" (CF, 361–62).
The fire has burned away into mere warmth; Catharine no longer
imagines immortality but only natural death: "she could happily
have lain down amid the hum of the insects to die on the grass."

This gently elegiac passage signals the end of a possibility.
White's dream would very likely never be fulfilled now. Harriet
was recently dead, and he was in his mid-sixties. Catharine
embodies White's emotional isolation and his sexual yearning,
without the restraint of duty and conscience that guided his own
life. Hale, in fact, had forced himself to learn Dr. Turnbull's
advice—to consider himself "a piece of common humanity and
bound by its laws" (CF, 334), evading melancholy through active
duty to others. Catharine's glorious sexuality is created and
destroyed within the space of a year, but her author spent a lifetime subduing his natural desires to his sense of decency and marital obligation. Mark Rutherford, Pauline, Catharine Furze all die before their passion can afford them or their partners much delight. Miriam’s lover is killed and she is meted a “good man.” *Clara Hopgood* is the only novel in which sexuality goes unpunished—and that is because Clara is her sister's proxy in suffering and death. White’s final novel makes it clear that someone will pay the penalty for sexual indulgence, even if the actor escapes unscathed.

White’s fiction thus celebrates his belief that genuine passion “is earnest as flame, and essentially pure” (A, 18), while simultaneously conveying his suspicion and fear of sexuality. Impurity, Rutherford remarks, “was a sin for which dreadful punishment was reserved,” and sometimes, “I hanker . . . after the old prohibitions and penalties” (A, 8). White’s deep-rooted conflict is a natural enough response to the peculiarities of his heritage and his situation. His conscience had already been sensitized by the potent combination of Victorian social mores and Puritan sexual attitudes. In addition, through no fault of his own, he was deprived in his prime of ordinary marital fulfillment. It is difficult not to conclude that some kind of sexual repression was the inevitable result.

White’s preoccupation with the power of sexual temptation and the imperative need to conquer it emerges in a number of places. The most revealing of these is the intriguing digression in the first chapter of the *Autobiography*, when Mark Rutherford states that in addition to “a rigid regard for truthfulness,” “purity of life” was the chief advantage conferred on him by his religious education. The passage is astonishing. He begins by lamenting the loss nowadays of the “old prohibitions and penalties” for illicit sex: “Physiological penalties are too remote, and the subtler penalties—the degradation, the growth of callousness to finer pleasures, the loss of sensitiveness to all that is most nobly attractive in woman—are too feeble to withstand temptation
THE LEADEN ORDER OF THINGS

when it lies in ambush like a garrotter, and has the reason stunned in a moment” (A, 8–9). He goes on to suggest that day after day a father must attempt to divert his son’s attention from sex, and attempt to form “an antipathy in him to brutish selfish sensuality.” The child’s reading should be carefully censored; to a youth, Byron “is fatal.” But the conclusion of this fervent Victorian speech is the unsettling remark that “parents greatly err by not telling their children a good many things which they ought to know. Had I been taught when I was young a few facts about myself, which I only learned accidentally long afterwards, a good deal of misery might have been spared me” (A, 9). A comment removed from the published Groombridge Diary, but preserved in the manuscript, suggests that White continued to think this way as late as 1908. “He distinctly affirmed that if only his parents had told him more facts about himself, he would have been spared much misery.”26 While Mark Rutherford stridently affirms that purity of life, however come by, is “a simply incalculable gain” (A, 8), the sexual ignorance which fostered it appears to have generated only “misery.”

White’s efforts to triumph over the natural man were constant. The Deliverance documents the trials of early manhood that succeeded the confused ignorance of boyhood. As a young and impressionable clerk, White daily endured the obscene conversation of his colleagues. Rutherford describes his employment as an occupation breeding “strange habits, humours, fancies, and diseases” (A, 247). In a close basement room tediously copying letters all day, he is shut up with three other men, “of rather a degraded type” (A, 224), whose “enforced idleness of brain” generated “the most loathsome tendency to obscenity” (A, 247–48). Although Rutherford soon comes to understand that, ironically, their obscenity is a kind of sanity-preserving release, and that the real fault lies with their trade, whose deadly monotony “compelled some countervailing stimulus,” his initial horror “when I first found out into what society I was thrust was unspeakable” (A, 248). Rutherford tries to remain aloof from
this encompassing sensuality, encouraging the belief that he is a Plymouth Brother. He comes in for a good deal of abuse. Dorothy White again confirms that here as elsewhere, memory was the source of White's creative inspiration. "He told me that, when he was a young man at the Office, he had to endure plenty of such talk [obscene joking], but he never joined in it, and never laughed at it—never, at least, if he could possibly help it. . . . I asked Hale what they thought of him for never joining in. He said: 'Oh, of course I got called names—Pious, I think that was the word'" (GD, 264–65). He may not have joined in, but the conversation nevertheless had its effect. The Autobiography describes not only Rutherford's clerkship but that of his friend Clark. In this second account (transferred for safety to a clearly fictitious character), White suggests with disturbing conviction what results attended the "filthy grossness" daily confounding him: "They excited in him loathsome images, from which he could not free himself either by day or night. He was peculiarly weak in his inability to cast off impressions, or to get rid of mental pictures when once formed, and his distress at being haunted by these hateful, disgusting thoughts was pitiable. They were in fact almost more than thoughts, they were transportations out of himself—real visions" (A, 224).

This passage is, I think, the only suggestion we have that the "phantom foes," the ghostly hallucinations of melancholia, might have had a sexual aspect. It also gives us a context in which to place White's obscure praise of Tennyson's "Lucretius": "I should imagine it is hardly intelligible to a woman. . . . Many a man has blessed A.T. for printing those daring verses, showing thereby that this temptation or disease was not strange to him" (L, 168). And it illuminates to some degree the nature of White's strong sense of sin, and his obsession with "perfect purity."27 His own personal struggle to transcend what in himself he judged to be vicious must have been fierce.

Aware as he was of the powerful lure of "vice," it is not surprising to find White, in the last years of his life, dismayed by
what he suspected might be a tendency toward indecency among some of the rough youths in Dorothy's Boys' Bible Class and Club. The Boys' Club, writes Dorothy, was "our only quarrel. . . . He cannot . . . understand the relationship. I find it very hard to explain." One reason for White's irritation and impatience was his oft-reiterated distrust of boys: "It is a thing inexplicable to me, who see nothing attractive in boys as boys and can only partly see why they should be attractive to you" (GD, 84). The language he uses to describe boys in general hints at his fears: "I have been a boy of boys myself. This makes it so difficult to comprehend. I wonder if these boys have ever allowed Dorothy to look into themselves, their selfish, dirty, brutal selves. I must say that my schoolfellows, except in personal courage, were detestable" (GD, 44). His querulous letters to Dorothy on the subject, and his frequent assertions that he knows "what boys are," are revealing. When he discovered that one of Dorothy's boys was indeed guilty of self-abuse and wanted to confess all to her, he took control of the situation, wrote to Dorothy's brother, who was a headmaster, and expressed his personal view that the youth had a weak character and could do no better than to ship out to the colonies. White judges the boy severely, much more for his inability to struggle against temptation than for the original propensity.28 A few years earlier, White had met the young man and talked with him. According to the boy's journal, White had then asked him, "how the boys in Miss Horace Smith's Bible Class behaved to her. 'Were there many rough young men?'" (GD, 225). Sexuality, and especially what he considered sexual impurity, was a subject that exercised him until his death. It is not, I think, finally possible to determine the extent to which the obscure suffering that imbues the novels has a sexual origin or even a sexual dimension. What we can perceive, however, is the constant complexity of White's feelings about eros in general.

To return to my original point of departure: what can we conclude about the relationship between White's complicated
domestic situation and his melancholia, his creative work, his quest for spiritual freedom and reconciliation? White obviously loved his wife, but while he admired her fortitude and gratefully accepted her devotion, he continued to experience a sense of isolation and frustration. The eventual necessity of sexual abstinence doubtless made married life even more difficult. His own spiritual existence was constantly threatened by a plethora of "sordid cares." He certainly questioned the Eternal Justice which had both allowed Harriet to suffer and elected him to bear the cross. Nevertheless, the effort, which his fiction documents, to transcend his own selfishness and enact compassion was largely successful. In his story "The Sweetness of a Man's Friend," a family friend helps the intellectually superior husband to comprehend the value of his wife's extraordinary virtues. The final sentence says much about White's character and his struggle: "She died ten years ago. The face in the vision which is always before me is a happy face, thank God" (LP, 46).

After Harriet died in 1891, White wrote to Mrs. Colenutt about her:

It is difficult for an outsider to comprehend. . . . He sees of course nothing but the death of a woman to whom death was a release. I think of five and thirty years ago, and think too that this history has ended as all things end. Furthermore you can hardly imagine what it is to be at once deprived of an outlet for what you feel most intimately. Much as children are loved, it is impossible to impart to them all one hopes or fears. My poor wife daily heard from me what nobody now can hear, and offered a sympathy which nobody else can give. The world, aware of so small a portion of what was in her shy, unpretending soul, would have been astonished perhaps that she could be of such service to me, but she was for me and not for the world. The lesson of her heroic patience and perfect unselfishness was obvious to everybody, and that daily teaching has also departed. (L, 50)
Harriet was clearly not George Eliot nor even Pauline Caillaud. She was a "flower of the chalk-downs" rather than a "wild seagull" or an "Arabian bird." If White's letter to Mrs. Colenutt seems defensive and something of an apologia, a comment of Mark Rutherford's may shed some light on its tone. Rutherford, wishing at this stage to break his engagement with Ellen, remarks: "I could have endured, I believe, even discord at home, if only I could have had a woman whom I could present to my friends, and whom they would admire. . . . I have always been more anxious that people should respect my wife than respect me, and at any time would withdraw myself into the shade if only she might be brought into the light" (A, 57). Rutherford wants a wife he can be proud of and show off. Recognizing this attitude as a "form of egotism," he nevertheless breaks his engagement. White in marriage often wished his wife to be "something different." He knew her value and hated himself when, in his imagination, he denied it in favor of a more flamboyant feminine ideal. The defensive tone of his letter to Mrs. Colenutt suggests that not only the world but he himself would be astonished at her worth. In the letter, he affirms the value of his wife and accepts the bond he sometimes wished to break. This difficult situation was one more obstacle in the journey toward spiritual freedom. When we consider this addition to a soul already immensely burdened, we can appreciate more justly White's slowly evolving faith and how painfully he earned his ultimate affirmation of life and the power of love.

II

If the "sordid cares" of White's domestic situation limited his inner freedom, his daily work added another level of frustration. The 1850s were a crucial decade for White. The decisions made during these years would bear fruit much later, especially in the novels. In 1852 he was expelled from New College and
exiled for life from a religious community. In 1855 he married and was gradually shut out from normal marital happiness. The year before, he had left Chapman's and found, or had found for him, a job in the Registrar-General’s Office, Somerset House. This was the beginning of his career as a civil servant, and of his estrangement from a literary, academic, or religious vocation.

White remained at Somerset House for a few years, achieving in 1857 the position of Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages for Marleybone. The following year he transferred to the Admiralty, where he worked in the Contract and Purchase Department until his retirement at the age of sixty, in 1892, one year after Mrs. White's death. 29 I have already noted that until he rose to the position of Assistant Director of Naval Contracts in 1879, his salary was insufficient to support his family. For more than twenty years, White supplemented his income by writing for various newspapers and periodicals.

The expenditure of so much time and energy in the performance of these duties was in itself a major cause of the melancholy and frustration which pervaded White’s adult life. His negative feelings about the nature of the work added to the burden. The scathing remarks of Mark Rutherford and many of White’s conversations with Dorothy on the subject of his work suggest that he suffered considerably in giving his life to tasks that nowhere touched his spiritual life and were alien to his imaginative and religious temperament. In spite of his Puritan heritage, he could not adopt a Carlylean attitude to work. He aligns himself rather with Dickens and Ruskin in markedly distinguishing among different kinds of work. Mark Rutherford bitterly exclaims that the mechanical labor performed by the London masses is slavery: "There is no possibility of relieving it, and all the ordinary copy-book advice of moralists and poets as to the temper in which we should earn our bread is childish nonsense. If a man is a painter, or a physician, or a barrister, or even a tradesman, well and good. The maxims of authors may be of some service to
him. . . . but if he is a copying clerk they are an insult, and he can do nothing but arch his back to bear his burden and find some compensation elsewhere'" (A, 250–51).

White's republican attitudes and his indignant sympathy for the poor arose partly from his own bitter experiences in the labor market. He seems to have disliked working for Chapman, and he heartily detested working as a clerk. Although the transfer to the Admiralty was a tremendous relief to him, White still had mixed feelings about the job that was to occupy most of his working life. "I never liked it," he told Dorothy early in their friendship (GD, 2), though he evidently did the job very well.30

Many of the circumstances of White's work are echoed in the tribulations of his characters. Mark Rutherford's friend Taylor, for instance, is able to get work only as an occasional messenger. He is therefore "a servant of servants," who compensate for the tyrannies to which they have themselves been exposed by treating him with brutality. Taylor finds it a new experience to "feel that he was a thing fit for nothing but to be cuffed and cursed. . . . Nobody ever cared to know the most ordinary facts about him. . . . Suffering of any kind is hard to bear, but the suffering which especially damages character is that which is caused by the neglect or oppression of man. . . . He could not lie still under contempt" (A, 212–13). In this description of Taylor's situation, White clarifies what most horrifies and angers him. Taylor is disregarded, looked upon as a "thing." No one cares to know him, and he is reduced to less than the mud under others' feet. Contempt destroys his self-respect, and lack of concern about him threatens his identity. The threat is that others' perception of him might be an accurate estimate of who he is. White further describes Taylor as "powerless," impotent in the face of pettiness. The deprivation of human respect and concern casts him into despair. White's earlier experience as a clerk, and to a lesser extent his job in the Admiralty, deprived him of what he instinctively believed to be possible in work:
personal fulfillment, human fellowship. The repeated pattern in the situations of his various characters is one of oscillation between hatred of the job which they desire to leave and recognition that it must be endured, if life, and often the lives of others, is to continue.

In addition to its isolation and degradation, and the exposure to obscenity which I mentioned earlier, White details the monotonous triviality of clerkdom. His characters are alternately bored and offended by aspects of their work. Rutherford's friend Clark is oppressed by the crowded working space, artificial light, and soul-destroying boredom of his daily task. White remarks that Clark's love of literature became an actual curse to him, in that the earlier exposure to something good and noble served now only to remind him of the contrast between earlier aspirations and present degradation. Worse, "the monotony of that perpetual address-copying was terrible. He has told me with a kind of shame what an effect it had upon him. . . . for days he would feed upon the prospect of the most childish trifle because it would break in some slight degree the uniformity of his toil" (A, 223). Clark finds himself joyfully anticipating the change from a steel pen to a quill, or a different route to work.

In his own work White continually encountered "the facts": degradation, obscenity, reduction of selfhood, and boredom. Abstract religious principles could not help him preserve sanity in the office—they were simply irrelevant. Here, as in other areas of life, he required a faith that would provide aid in the sordid situations he confronted daily. White, one suspects, like his character Mark Rutherford, strove to preserve his individuality by devising what he calls "strategems of defence." Rutherford, like Dickens's Wemmick, keeps his private and public lives completely separate. He refuses to tell anyone at the office anything personal about himself. (We should, however, bear in mind his earlier complaint, that no one cared to know him anyway.) "I cut off my office life . . . from my life at home so completely
that I was two selves, and my true self was not stained by contact with my other self." Rutherford feels that "scrupulous isolation" preserved him, that thus the "clerk was not debarred from the domain of freedom" (A, 250). His language is telling. His "true self" had nothing to do with his office work; this self he tries to keep "free." Nevertheless, this self-inflicted division of being and the internal conflict that accompanies it cost him dearly. White's instinctive impulse is toward wholeness, toward reconciliation. Ironically, the "strategems of defence" only preserved and intensified his isolation. His constant struggle to transform waste and frustration into duty and imaginative integrity is impressive. To his religious heritage, his melancholia, his marriage, and his civil service posts we owe the novels, the fruit of an intellect fighting to cling to sanity and identity.

Dorothy writes that White "used to go to the House after work. His dread, terror, was lest he should not finish his office duties in time, for, if he failed in that, he knew he should never get promotion. This was a perpetual nightmare, and the strain on the nerves was very bad. After the House he came home to supper, then must write out his reports; home to an invalid wife. He said that he told me all this (so egotistical, he thought it!) because it explained so much in him" (GD, 72). The situation explains not only White's character and much of his personal sadness but also sheds light on his intense empathy with the working classes of his century and his understanding of the plight of the urban poor. White, like Mark Rutherford, recognized that his own situation did not approach the horrors of the London poor, but some part of their desperation he knew from his own experience. The degradation and selfishness he perceived in these lives was "naturally begotten of their incessant struggle for existence and the incessant warfare with society." With prophetic fervor of the kind we associate with Dickens, Carlyle, and Ruskin, White proclaims, "our civilisation seemed nothing but a thin film or crust lying over a volcanic pit, and I often
wondered whether some day the pit would not break up through it and destroy us all” (A, 209).

Rutherford and his friend M’Kay, responding practically to the corruption and human torment which they witness, open a room in Drury Lane and do what they can to provide quiet space and human fellowship for the inhabitants of the area. White himself attempted the same experiment. In 1859 he ventured to establish a room where people could come and meditate, talk, read, or worship. The room was in Little Portland Street, and according to White’s mother’s diaries, Hale often spoke to the few who attended the essentially religious meetings. Rutherford did not wish to convert anyone to anything. The purpose of the meeting place was twofold. “Poor people,” he says, “frequently cannot read for want of a place in which to read,” and often people will listen to someone talk, who have not the necessary motivation to read. Second, they aimed to “create in . . . [their] hearers contentment with their lot, and even some joy in it” (A, 227). The “central, shaping force” of Drury Lane was to “teach Christ in the proper sense of the word,” to have the listeners ask themselves, when “any choice of conduct is presented to us, . . . how would Christ have it?” (A, 172, 173). The experiment was a limited success. He and M’Kay did not, Rutherford says, “convert Drury Lane,” but only “saved two or three” by giving them friendship and practical help (A, 210). They could not provide interesting jobs, dispense money, or set up a program of advanced education, but they touched the lives of the laborer, the clerk, the waiter, the commercial traveler—wretched human creatures in whose lives there had been till then “no break in the uniformity of squalor” (A, 169). Given the conditions they had to work under, their success was not contemptible, for in the back streets of the great city even “the preaching of Jesus would have been powerless” (A, 171).

The room in Portland Place and White’s own experience of poverty and uncongenial labor strengthened the acute social
conscience that was one of his Puritan legacies. His satire is most savage when he describes the response of cultured or religious people to Victorian social problems; his anger is most bitter when he observes the profession of Christian belief in the absence of compassion. When Phoebe, the servant girl in *Catharine Furze*, dies in a damp, unventilated, wretched rural cottage, White uses the occasion both to attack the culpable ignorance of the Victorian upper classes about the living conditions of their less fortunate brethren and to point out the vicious ramifications of pastoral escapism: "Diana Eaton, eldest daughter of the Honourable Mr. Eaton, had made a sketch in water-colour of the cottage. It hung in the great drawing-room, and was considered most picturesque" (CF, 313). White owes something here to Dickens, whose Skimpole justifies the existence of the American slaves by arguing, "they people the landscape for me, they give it a poetry for me." Both writers clarify the evil of justifying the existence of hovels and ruins and brutality on aesthetic grounds. Both denounce the refusal of human responsibility, the unwillingness to see that an "artistic" facade shrouds corruption and death:

That we should take pleasure in pictures of filthy, ruined hovels, in which health and even virtue are impossible, is a strange sign of the times. It is more than strange; it is an omen and a prophecy that people will go into sham ecstasies over one of these pigstyes so long as it is in a gilt frame; that they will give a thousand guineas for its light and shade—light, forsooth!—or for its Prout-like quality, or for its quality of this, that, and the other, while inside the real sty, at the very moment when the auctioneer knocks down the drawing amidst applause, lies the mother dying from dirt fever; the mother of six children starving and sleeping there—starving, save for the parish allowance, for the snow is on the ground and the father is out of work. (CF, 314)

One comes to recognize, too, that a considerable measure of personal guilt underlies these scathing attacks on the artistic
but irresponsible temperament. In the *Autobiography*, Mark Rutherford describes an evening in which he and M'Kay go to hear a great violinist, whose music is so exquisite that "the limits of life . . . [are] removed." Their walk home is through the Haymarket. At the end of this walk, violin-playing seems to them "the merest trifling" (A, 167). M'Kay, who is, according to Rutherford, "tormented . . . incessantly" by the "spectacle of the misery of London," "never seemed sure that he had a right to the enjoyment of the simplest pleasures so long as London was before him."

What a farce, he would cry, is all this poetry, philosophy, art, and culture, when millions of wretched mortals are doomed to the eternal darkness and crime of the city! Here are the educated classes occupying themselves with exquisite emotions, with speculations upon the Infinite, with addresses to flowers, with the worship of waterfalls and flying clouds, and with the incessant portraiture of a thousand moods and variations of love, while their neighbours lie grovelling in the mire, and never know anything more of life or its duties than is afforded them by a police report in a bit of newspaper picked out of the kennel. (A, 166–67)

This attack is not self-righteous but self-condemning, for White himself was one of the "educated classes" who loved literature and music and was often healed by the power of art and nature. Such passages show the operations of an acute Puritan conscience. Feeling the waste and brutality that caused so much human suffering in Victorian England, White cries, "I ask myself the question 'what good are you?' and my conscience tells me that I should be more virtuous in relieving the least bit of misery than in discovering and propounding—had I the brains to do so—a new theory of *Hamlet*" (L, 198). This strain—feelings of guilt and uselessness, his finer nature regarded as a curse separating him from the suffering of his fellow creatures—runs ominously through White's writing.
His feelings about waste and unnecessary pain also mark his attitude to war. White believed in applying Christian ethics, and his attacks upon the Boer War in particular were virulent because he felt Christian principles were either being used as justification for violence or ignored altogether. White was a republican to the core and a committed believer in democracy from his youth. In 1866 he wrote *An Argument for an Extension of the Franchise: A Letter addressed to George Jacob Holyoake*. Many years later, in response to the Boer War, he distributed antiwar pamphlets and proclaimed that he wished he were still young enough to stand on a soapbox and express his outrage. His letters during this period record his genuine horror and fear that the nation, which professed to be Christian, had lost all sense of the meaning of its faith. He writes to Mrs. Colenutt that he hopes she is "sound" on the Transvaal question and is openly protesting the war (L, 98); he urges Miss Partridge to demand of the first clerical person she meets "of what use Christianity is." The great majority of English people, he writes, approve the war, and in so doing, "must put Christ in a cupboard and turn the key." If a religion has nothing to do with politics, he exclaims, "it is not a religion" (L, 211-12). Again, during this period, when White urges everyone who has a conscience "to protestation," we hear the familiar plaint: "all art, literature, seem to me to be a mockery now—mere trifling" (L, 193). Another statement on the necessary opposition of genuine Christianity to the Boer War reveals an additional aspect of his concern:

I affirm that if we were genuine believers in the gospels, if we were true disciples of Jesus, not of the official, symbolic, ecclesiastical Christ, but of the real Galilean . . . , we should not be at war in South Africa. . . . Furthermore, that the attempt to reconcile our modern ways with the teaching of the New Testament produces a condition of mind worse than that in which we should be without the New Testament, because we have immorality plus
hypocrisy and because the embrace of opposites is damnation to the soul, incapacitating it for any vision of the truth. (L, 217)

He is appalled here by the inability to perceive the contradiction in professing a faith while enacting what opposes it. He goes on to add that, if men do become incapacitated for truth, there will come "such an earthquake before long as the civilised world has never beheld."

Marriage, work, and recognition of evil and suffering in the world initially inhibited but finally enriched White's religious faith. It was difficult, in the face of the "leaden order of things," to sustain a sense of self and a larger purpose. Despite his anguish, though, he was able to continue to forge the experiential faith which permitted freedom of being. He had to confront essential questions in the process: How can one preserve the experience of the momentary rending of the veil, those moments when life is full of purpose? How can one pursue a genuine spiritual life in a world of "chaotic power"? Where is the "indwelling Christ" to be found in a world that rejects His message?
FIVE

Toward a Personal Creed

Pain and death are nothing new, and men have been driven into perplexed scepticism and insurrection by them, ever since men came into being. Always, however, have the majority, the vast majority of the race, felt instinctively that in this scepticism and insurrection they could not abide, and they have struggled more or less blindly after explanation.
—Mark Rutherford’s Deliverance

COMMENTATOR ON WHITE’S religious thought has a natural desire to shape his ideas into a unified theological system and subdivide his intuitions into parts that reveal a logical and organized whole. We can do so only by ignoring the ambiguities and tensions in White’s own mind. He would be the first to deny that he had access to a unified system; it was the process toward truth which he valued. We have seen how his religious heritage, his temperament, and his private life all engendered the need for inner freedom, a spiritual community, and a personal, experiential faith. White’s initial rejection of orthodox Calvinism implied a release from intellectual bondage. Although he was freed from dogma and system, sterility and hypocrisy, this early freedom was largely negative, because it involved him in rejection rather than in affirmation. The experience of Wordsworth’s poetry created a new vulnerability of mind and feeling and encouraged renewed vision; but a Romantic
perspective, however valuable as an added dimension, could not sustain him. The “abstraction Nature” that deposed the Calvinist deity could not answer his religious needs any more than a Straussian Christ-myth could replace a personal Savior.

The faith that served him best came to be a reinterpretation of Puritanism. I have already mentioned White’s “reaching after a meaning” and his need for a faith grounded in human experience and needs. “What is religion?” he asks. “It is the desire to find reason and order in the world” (LP, 282). Of Peter Bulkley’s Gospel Covenant, he writes, “If we have patience and come close to the Gospel Covenant, we shall find that it is a genuine religion, and an attempt, as all real religions at bottom are, to make the universe and its ways by some means intelligible” (LP, 203). Elsewhere he writes that “the core of religion is the relationship of the individual to the whole” (CH, 276). All of White’s writings on the Puritans manifest his sympathy with a temper of mind that asserts the importance of the individual and his or her relation to God. As we have seen, White was not able to dismiss easily the beliefs of his childhood. Years later they “revived under new forms, and . . . I sympathized more with the Calvinistic Independency of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than with the modern Christianity of church or chapel” (EL, 78).

In his work White continually tries to reinterpret Christianity for a modern public. In the Autobiography, Rutherford describes how he came to see “the kingdom of God through a little child,” his stepdaughter. “How I see the meaning of those words now!” he exclaims, “and so it is that a text will be with us for half a lifetime, recognised as great and good, but not penetrated till the experience comes round to us in which it was born” (A, 269–70). In his Bible stories, retold from a different point of view, in his journals, essays, and in the stories and sermons that are the seed of each novel, White penetrates great religious ideas and brings them dramatically, experientially,
to life. Especially from 1880 on, in the fruitful period following his 1879 promotion, his journals testify to his daily effort to "connect," as he calls it, to enter the minds and feel with the hearts of those in whom the original ideas were born. In the "Black Notebook" (parts published posthumously in Last Pages From a Journal), White, quoting freely in French, German, Latin and Greek, recorded along with his comments quotations from his readings in Plato, Aristotle, Luther, Calvin, Bacon, Milton, Bunyan, George Fox, Spinoza, Wesley, and Kant, in addition to the Greek dramatists, eighteenth-century novelists, the Talmud, the Romantic poets, and other sources.¹

In his reinterpretation White is not only true to a Puritan tradition, but becomes a forerunner of modern theological trends. In The Analogy of Experience (1973), John E. Smith writes that in recent religious thought there has been "an increasing sense of dissatisfaction with abstractions, with ideas and doctrines commended for their antiquity and their faithfulness to the past rather than for their illumination of present and future experience." Smith argues that the modern religious thinker must now do again what was done for Christianity by Luther, Calvin, Schleiermacher, and Jonathan Edwards; that is, "to connect the meaning of theological ideas with human experience and to show their bearing on the life of each individual."² What we require, he adds, is creative reinterpretation of the content of the Christian faith in the light of "new knowledge and fresh experience."³ White undertook this task not through systematic theology but within his fiction. He recognized that ordinary people are not concerned with "the fallacies of Arianism, the personality of the Holy Ghost, or the doctrine of the Eucharist." Preachers, Rutherford points out, "do not know where the fatal spot lies on lung or heart or nerve which robs us of life." He observes that the members of the Drury Lane room come not for doctrinal explication but because the "fatal spot" is destroying individual identity and value. They
all "wanted something distinctly" (A, 226). They wanted direction, meaning, and reconciliation.

"Drury Lane Theology," a central chapter in *Deliverance*, contains the essence of the "new forms," the religious thought which is expanded, dramatized, and reshaped in White's other work. In this chapter he discusses the need for a personal and individually earned faith, and suggests that the center of that faith must be "the religion of the Reconciliation, the reconciliation of man with God" (A, 228). Like other Victorians, White also maintains the necessary coexistence of faith and doubt. He suggests that a healthy agnosticism may be positive, for in it there "is an element of hope." The human mind is not oppressed by pure doubt. Rather, "it is dogmatism under the cloak of doubt which pulls us down." Nature, the "beyond and the beyond" of infinity, is a corrective, in that the contemplation of it can expand the mind and relieve the oppression of introspection. This sense of the infinite ought to be encouraged, for such contemplation is a "constant, visible warning not to make our minds the measure of the universe" (A, 230). Therefore the center of our concern must be shifted "from self to what is outside self, and yet is truly self, and the sole truth of self" (A, 231). This, in brief, is Drury Lane theology. In this chapter, I shall look more closely at three main ideas of White's creed: his understanding of a personal and positive faith, his belief in the central importance of the relationship of God and the individual, and his conception of sin.

A personally earned faith was paramount for White. The narrator of the *Autobiography* clarifies the quality and complexity of the process by which it is gained:

I cannot too earnestly insist upon the need of our holding, each man for himself, by some faith which shall anchor him. It must not be taken up by chance. We must fight for it, for only so will it become our faith. The halt in indifference or in hostility is easy
enough and seductive enough. The half-hearted thinks that when he has attained that stage he has completed the term of human wisdom. I say go on: do not stay there; do not take it for granted that there is nothing beyond; incessantly attempt an advance, and at last a light, dim it may be, will arise. It will not be a completed system, perfect in all points, an answer to all our questions, but at least it will give ground for hope. (A, 229)

White’s own faith is not a “completed system,” but his work contains various exhortations and guides to developing a personal faith. The first principle is always that a personal faith must be applicable to the facts of experience; that is, the relation between belief and action must be explicit. Faith must help the individual and be a genuine source of comfort and guidance in adversity. While we cannot, he writes, expect a remedy which is “uniformly and progressively efficacious,” we may hope that “gradually, very gradually, it will assist us to a real victory” (CH, 190). A genuine faith, then, must help the seeker toward self-transcendence. Second, while faith must, for White, arise out of and address itself to the facts of experience, he recognizes that the “facts” are not only tragic. Life is also continually pervaded by joyful, intuitive, and imaginative understanding. A genuine faith must therefore also include the witness of the heart, the “inner light” which if intangible is nonetheless profoundly real. Third, although personal faith must be forged anew, not once but continually, White argues that a principle should not be abandoned merely because it does not apply uniformly to all situations: we are not in a position to insist on a tidy set of infallible rules for life. The practical meaning of all these concepts, will, I hope, become clear as we proceed.

White felt that the need to find a personal faith was particularly urgent in his own time. Especially in the 1880s and 1890s, he saw the direction religion and art were taking as a manifestation of decadence. His essay “Marcus Antoninus”
(1880), which reveals more about White's own attitudes than about those of the philosopher, makes this point forcefully. White perceives in Antoninus a kindred spirit. Antoninus, he writes:

was in the position in which many of us now are. He had no traditionary faith to which he could resort for oracular and unquestionable replies to all his doubts. The old Roman worship had decayed, and whatever help was necessary he had to obtain for himself. It is probable that all men who think at all about these things are compelled to work out their own salvation, even if born into the straitest sect from which they may never stray. . . . Nevertheless, it ever must be true that, when popular religions have all gone to dust, or when, as in our day, they are halfway towards it—the most disgusting stage of all putrefaction—our difficulties are increased and the solitude is deepened.⁴

The solitude is deepened. We are again on familiar ground. From White's point of view, Antoninus heroically fashioned for himself a creed which confronted the facts and did not deceive with false expectations. The Stoic feels that "no man will lose any other life than that which he now possesses." White is consoled by Antoninus's view that death is good, "seasonable and profitable and congruent with the universal," a view he held in spite of being "tormented with a desire to be remembered." Antoninus thinks "we have been invited to a feast; we have eaten and drunken; let us arise with thanks to the gods and depart." Furthermore, Antoninus, like Reuben Shapcott, discouraged philosophical speculation that could have no practical results: "He disbelieves . . . in any useless speculation why things are constituted as they are constituted." White admired the courage and endurance characteristic of Stoicism, but of even greater importance to him was its very bleakness: "There was no possibility that . . . [Antoninus] should wake up one morning and find that some sceptic or scoffer had undermined his faith,
had proved his miracles to be false, his saviour an imposter, his scriptures to be forgeries of a later date, and his heaven a delusion." This bitter summary of nineteenth-century historical criticism and its consequences clearly has a personal application: it echoes back to Bunyan Meeting and New College. Stoic philosophy drew White because in it he found truths which, however meager, could not be undermined. With its stark, unhopeful view of life, Stoic philosophy cannot be further diminished; the believer would not be first deceived and then disillusioned. "Compared with the magnificent promises of the religions, it may be thought that his results were meagre. . . . Whatever they were, they were irreversible, as solid as any proposition in Euclid."5

But while Stoicism had great appeal, it did not conclude White's quest for a personal faith. It was his lot to hunger for those very "magnificent promises" that Stoic philosophy eschews. White's study of Antoninus reveals his continuing conflict between a desire to set to rest the anxieties produced by attention to ultimate questions and an equally strong need to pursue them. The Stoic attitude of endurance and resignation expresses that side of White that heartily desired not to look "around the corner" (A, viii); Antoninus's position constituted yet one more of his defensive strategies against despair.

White required a religion that would not disappoint or dissolve upon inquiry and that was applicable to the needs of limited human nature. His evaluation of Stoicism can be judged more precisely in the context of his other comments on a personal faith. The Reverend Mr. Bradshaw, the powerful Puritan minister of *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, also encourages his congregation to develop an authentic and individual creed. If a religion helps one to nothing but knowledge of heaven and a future life, he exclaims, it is useless. White's own voice and attitude are apparent in Bradshaw's sermon: "the sign of a true religion—true for you, is this—Does it assist you to bear
your own private difficulties? . . . not the difficulties of the schools and theology, but those of the parlour and count­ing-house; ay, difficulties most difficult, those with persons nearest to you?” (RTL, 324). Bradshaw adds, in effect, another element to the “meagre” counsels of Stoicism: he suggests in his sermon that one can form an individual faith within the context of discipleship to Christ. Bradshaw preaches the Bible not only because it contains the revealed Word, but because the truths to be found in it are both universal and particular. The wisdom of “millions of apostles, of heroes, of martyrs, of poor field labourers, of solitary widows, of orphans, of the destitute, of men driven to their last extremity” (RTL, 325) must be felt, sifted, adapted to individual needs.

This is a central point in White’s thought: although personal experience must be the basis of a personal creed, experience alone is insufficient. The spiritual community of those who have felt as he has felt both authenticates his own experience and paradoxically particularizes and concretizes it. Like his creator, Zachariah Coleman never completely loses his old Calvinist beliefs; they are, instead, through his unique experience of the world, modified and transformed. In maturity, Zachariah is able to embrace what he calls both the “yes and no.” Once poles apart and mutually exclusive, the old beliefs and his recent experiences now sustain and interpret each other in a dynamic synthesis: “Blanketeer marches; his first wife; the workhouse; imprisonment; his second wife; the little Pauline, had each come to him with its own special message” (RTL, 327–28). Through the interpretation of his individual experience in the light of his inherited faith, Zachariah discovers his own religion. He becomes in the exploration what White terms “a character,” as the process of forging his own creed both creates and sustains his identity as an individual.

Thus the process of creating a personal faith is of crucial importance. From his own experience, White knew that “we are
always forcing our own gods on other people, never reflecting that God, to be God and not an idol, must be sought and found by the worshipper" (L, 251). Here we encounter another paradox in his thinking. He had rejected the Calvinist doctrine that the elect cannot fall from grace, and his own life taught him that the individual requires continual forgiveness, and that a living faith must be constantly renewed and reshaped. Yet he also maintained that beliefs which have been fought for and earned should not be jettisoned simply because they sometimes prove inapplicable. "It is our duty," he writes, "to struggle to maintain convictions against decay. They often die, not by reason of counter convictions . . . but by mere inactivity" (LP, 269). This idea is reiterated with personal emphasis in More Pages From a Journal: "I want no more beliefs. What I want is active strength in those I have. I know there is no ghost round the corner, but I dare not go" (MP, 242).

We should not interpret White's purposefulness, therefore, as a linear movement toward a final goal, but as an earnest struggle to preserve what he had come to believe was true, while also remaining open to new truths. As he himself perceived, his attitude here reflects the fragmentation of the age as well as his own particular psychic defenses. One final statement may clarify his perspective: "Faith, the belief which saves, is not to be preserved without a struggle. It is not a conclusion which comes automatically from evidence presented. A hundred times a day suggestions are made within us to abandon this or that result we have achieved with much effort, and we are not then to balance but to hold fast with claws" (LP, 302).

The intellectual temptations of the nineteenth century created a need to cling to "what we have once heard, really heard in our best moments." Reading and reflection daily confronted him with "fifty fine thoughts," each of which had the potential to challenge or disorient him (P, 195). The intellectual conflict I discussed in an earlier chapter is most apparent when he
confronts religious questions. "During the major portion of my life I am the victim of antagonisms, and each opposing force seems able to plead equal justification," he writes in the essay "Principles" (A, 304). Because his ability to see merit in each of two contradictory perspectives often resulted in psychological paralysis, "holding fast with claws" became yet another guard against mental and emotional chaos.

If principles were difficult to apply, White nonetheless felt that "perpetual undying faith in principles is of the utmost importance. I sometimes think it is the very Alpha and Omega of life. Belief in principles is the only intelligible interpretation I have ever been able to attach to the word faith" (A, 306). Similarly, in his penultimate novel, Catharine Furze, Cardew preaches that "we must, in the conduct of life, shape our behaviour by some one standard, or the result is chaos" (CF, 111). These remarks expand the idea of "holding fast with claws." In the process of struggle the authority of a principle may reveal itself. It becomes clear that for White willed endurance itself is an act of faith.

White also felt that the process of forging a personal faith should be positive, that the intellect should not be applied merely to destruction. He makes this belief clear in the Autobiography, when, after leaving the ministry, Rutherford ponders his future course. Now that he is without a belief in Christian revelation, the notion of preaching morality alone is repugnant. Another activity might be the proclamation of "a message of negations, emancipating a number of persons from the dogma of the Trinity or future punishment, and spending my strength in merely demonstrating the nonsense of orthodoxy." But his "soul sickened at the very thought of it" (A, 86). White's desire to respond to the query, "wherein would men be helped, and wherein should I be helped?" requires affirmation rather than mere iconoclasm. Later in the novel, Rutherford and M'Kay attend a "freethinking hall" to hear a debate between a Christian
minister and an atheist opponent. The narrator describes the atheist's attack as ironic, clever, and destructive. Listening to the skeptic's speech reinforces Rutherford's feeling that the demolition of a faith for no positive end is futile and frivolous: "That they should spend their time in picking the Bible to pieces when there was so much positive work for them to do, seemed to me as melancholy as if they had spent themselves upon theology. To waste a Sunday morning in ridiculing such stories as that of Jonah was surely as imbecile as to waste it in proving their verbal veracity" (A, 160).

"Positive work" is continually contrasted with "waste" in White's religious thought. Because of his conviction of the necessity of a positive creed, he frequently questioned the ultimate value of the critical-historical trend of the nineteenth century. While perceiving the need for critical investigation in religious matters, he also suspected the motives of some critics and worried about the effects of criticism on those who did not move beyond it to seek a positive truth. Thus, in the Autobiography, he writes that: "all great religions should be treated with respect, and in a certain sense preserved. It is nothing less than a wicked waste of accumulated human strivings to sneer them out of existence. They will be found, every one of them, to have incarnated certain vital doctrines which it has cost centuries of toil and devotion properly to appreciate" (A, 228–29). In his final journal he observes that "the danger of criticism, of Biblical criticism for example, is that it tends to divert us from that which is positive, indisputable, life-giving" (LP, 317).

White's abhorrence of the merely critical attitude of mind, which undermines belief and gives no help, extends to his literary response. As well as depising some biblical criticism because it is merely negative, and substitute religions because they are sentimental or facile, he reproaches many modern writers' glorification of melancholy for a similar combination of reasons.
Mark Rutherford writes:

So many books I find are written which aim merely at new presentation of the hopeless. The contradictions of fate, the darkness of death, the fleeting of man over this brief stage of existence, whence we know not, and whither we know not, are favourite subjects with writers who seem to think that they are profound, because they can propose questions which cannot be answered. There is really more strength of mind required for resolving the commonest difficulty than is necessary for the production of poems on these topics. The characteristic of so much that is said and written now is melancholy; and it is melancholy, not because of any deeper acquaintance with the secrets of man than that which was possessed by our forefathers, but because it is easy to be melancholy, and the time lacks strength. (A, 256).

White's reading confirmed his fear that the literature of the decade "did no good." Like Matthew Arnold and George Eliot, he insisted on the relationship of literature to life. Echoing Arnold, he argued that "poetry, if it is to be good for anything, must help us to live. It is to this we come at last in our criticism, and if it does not help us to live it may as well disappear, no matter what its fine qualities may be" (P, 108). No more than Arnold does White mean to suggest by such statements a narrow, moralistic didacticism. His own love of Byron, I think, helps to clarify his meaning. By contact with the "mass of white hot coal" (L, 109) that defines for him the essence of Byron's poetry, he is healed, uplifted, made joyful. In the combined beauty and energy of Byron's verse, Zachariah Coleman discovers "courage—root of all virtue—that dares and evermore dares in the very last extremity, the love of the illimitable, of freedom" (RTL, 25).

These few examples suggest the relationship between White's response to imaginative literature and his response to
religion. In both he seeks reconciliation. In literature and in life, "why," he asks, "should we neglect the mass of truth which tends to reconciliation with existence for the truth which breeds despair?" (LP, 281). In his essay on Peter Bulkley, White emphasizes the point that the "reason and order," the intelligibility of the universe that constitutes religion, is to be found in relationship; "the reconciliation provided by the Gospel Covenant may not be ours, but the important point is that it assumes that a reconciliation should and could be obtained" (LP, 203–04). In his short story "Michael Trevanion," White describes the self-denial that is a potent feature of Trevanion's Calvinism. Characteristically, White remarks that in his own time unselfishness is of less importance than the ability to analyze poetry. The narrator looks forward to a time when "we shall . . . spend ourselves not in criticism of the record of the saints who sat by the sepulchre, but we shall love as they loved" (MS, 181). In this statement we approach the center of White's religious thought: a faith that is informed by love is impossible to the critical, alienated outsider. His own fight for religious integrity led him through critical rejection of Puritanism toward "reaching after a meaning." He struggled to move beyond iconoclasm to reinterpretation and reconciliation—reconciliation with God, with his fellow man, with himself, and with his inherited faith. "We need to be taught to admire, to surrender ourselves to admiration," White declares in an essay on George Eliot (LP, 134). Similarly, in More Pages From a Journal, he writes that "it is by admiration and not by criticism that we live, and the main purpose of criticism should be to point out something to admire, which we should not have noticed" (MP, 257).

The second major area of White's religious thought I shall consider is his understanding of the relationship between the individual and God. In a conversation with Dorothy, White said, "but don't let any one think that, because I use the word so
rarely, I don’t believe in God. I do. It is the only thing in which I do believe” (GD, 193). This is a strong statement, but precisely what White meant by it is problematic. His article “Ixion” (1880), written, like “Marcus Antoninus,” for The Secular Review, seems at first glance to be a secular attack on the traditional conception of God. While the essay primarily informs us of what White does not believe, it also indirectly suggests how he understands God. White argues that the usual terminology is either contradictory or meaningless. He dissects the “common formula,” which views God as “personal, perfect, omnipotent, omniscient, all-loving, and absolutely just.” He then proceeds to analyze and reject each of these terms. Taking the first attribute, he states, “Personality means consciousness of separate self-hood. . . . It means definition, limitation.” The idea of “perfection” is similarly empty; since the intellect is incapable of grasping it as an idea, the concept recedes into nothingness. Omnipotence White also regards as self-contradictory, “unless it be taken merely to mean a power beyond our conception.” Other attributes must limit divine omnipotence, for in fact “God does not and cannot do everything which is conceivable to an abstractly omnipotent being.”

This analysis is not an ironic example of White’s own engagement in negative criticism, for the dissection is not an end in itself. His concern is that the traditional vocabulary is sufficiently abstract to kill a living God and replace Him with an idol composed of meaningless terms. White rejects abstract definition divorced from experiential meaning, perceiving that the attempt to glorify God by abstract superlatives can in fact limit and reduce His being. “It is remarkable,” he notes, “that Moses should have been aware of this constant tendency in man to imprison God in form, and should have striven against it as earnestly as if it were a crime.”

Even in his desire for a vital relationship with God, White remained alert to the self-centeredness latent in such a wish. His
suspicion of claims to personal knowledge of God (of the "He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am his own" variety) perhaps arose from his youthful memory of Calvinism. In Bunyan Meeting, it seemed that God was appropriated by the elect, who testified to intimate relationship with Him. At the conclusion of the "Ixion" article, White characteristically suggests that the individual should concentrate upon perceiving himself as part of the "universal life." Then, he hopes, "our God will no longer be a God who would reverse the rules of this great universe to gratify the whinings of foolish children, but will be the vitality and purpose of the whole." Yet White is aware of a God who is alive and immanent in the individual heart and in the external world. An isolated comment in his journals might stand as a gloss upon the article as a whole: "Intense feeling gives intellectual precision. . . . But the first effect of intense feeling is often to break up false precision. The ideas of God, life, personality, right and wrong, are examples" (MP, 236). "Ixion" is just such an attempt to break up the false precision of orthodox conceptions of God.

Scattered remarks elsewhere in White's work place the Ixion article in a larger perspective. In his preface to Spinoza's Ethic (1883), White suggests that in addition to providing the believer with moral counsel, a genuine religion should encourage men to move emotionally beyond "the limits of the world in which . . . [they] live." Religion should be "the perpetual affirmation against the perpetual negation which lies in the routine and vulgarity of existence." He goes on in this preface to explain that the most important achievement of Christianity is that it "tells the humblest of a supreme God to whom we are each one of us personally related." Thus White struggles for some kind of description of a relationship which is real for him but which continues to elude expression. The very actuality of the divine-human relationship undermines attempts at definition. "The unapproachable ideal possesses no regulative value for
us. God, as an ideal, has no effect on the character’’ (LP, 272; my emphasis). Precisely. This statement again qualifies the apparent iconoclasm of ‘‘Ixion.’’ An ‘‘unapproachable’’ ideal allows no relationship and remains, though abstractly definable, personally irrelevant. Another notebook entry clarifies White’s struggle and the reason for his apparent confusion: ‘‘It is difficult to believe in God, not because He is so far off, but because He is so near’’ (LP, 281). Relationship with the divine breaks down the barriers of selfhood, so that the word belief itself becomes superfluous.

White’s concern to understand and his attempt to express the relationship of God to the individual, though, are best illuminated in his discussion of the Book of Job. I suggested earlier that White had a personal stake in that work. He can deeply empathize with the man who cries, ‘‘For I fear a fear; it meets me; and what I shudder at comes to me’’ (Job 3:25). His comments on this statement reveal one reason for his fascination with the Old Testament protagonist: ‘‘The object of the dread which haunts us does not generally become real to us, but to Job the horror of all his worst dreams had become actual.’’ This was White’s greatest fear. His interpretation of Job’s battle with God therefore clarifies and extends his apprehension of his own relationship to God.

White explains that the example of Job demonstrates to the reader that one can express doubt without blaspheming, for Job batters heaven for a response, any kind of response, from God: ‘‘Nothing can be more daring than his interrogations. There is no impiety whatever in them, nor are they recognised as impious in the final chapters of the book’’ (A, 282–83). Job is afflicted with poverty, illness, and sorrow; if he could elicit some form of explanation for his trials (White’s frequent wish), he could endure in patience. But there is no explanation, and significantly White perceives that the departure of the divine Presence from Job’s consciousness and his total isolation as a consequence of
a now-broken relationship with God are the chief sources of his anguish: "the real agony is the silence, the ignorance of the why and the wherefore, the sphinx-like imperturbability which meets his prayers" (A, 276). As White did on many occasions, Job submits and waits. The voice from the whirlwind which finally speaks to him, White argues, "is in no sense whatever [an appeal] to the bare omnipotence of God" (A, 297). White notes further that Job is never told of the drama in heaven between God and Satan. But while he is not given an explanation of the divine actions, he is given a response. He is told by God to "open the eyes and look abroad over the universe" (A, 298). White concludes that

God reminds us of His wisdom, of the mystery of things, and that man is not the measure of His creation. The world is immense, constructed on no plan or theory which the intellect of man can grasp. It is transcendent everywhere. This is the burden of every verse, and is the secret, if there be one, of the poem. Sufficient or insufficient, there is nothing more. Job is to hold fast to the law within; that is his candle which is to light his path: but God is infinite. Job, if he is not satisfied, submits... All his thinkings seemed like hearsay. This then was the real God. "Now mine eye seeth Thee." (A, 299).

White does not suggest in this interpretation mindless resignation in the face of the incomprehensible. Rather, the meaning of the story lies for him in Job's experience of God, in his confrontation with God's living presence. It is only because the relationship with God which had been broken is renewed that Job can submit to "things too wonderful for" him. Job is told to open his eyes, to apprehend God's reality in the world, even "where no man is." What has occurred in him is direct enlightenment, which may have nothing to do with rational explanation. Job has lived by tradition and orthodoxy; he has known God only by "hearsay." At the end of the book, this
traditional understanding has been replaced by direct experiential knowledge of God. "Now mine eye seeth thee." White suggests that of greater moment than self-centered concern for God's personal interest is genuine recognition of the mystery of God, which is "transcendent everywhere." Out of this recognition arises genuine relationship. Hence, in White's view, Job does not blindly or resentfully submit; he is reconciled.12

Job, White argues, is now to "hold fast to the moral law within." White reiterates this point throughout his work. In his biography of Bunyan, he suggests that Emmanuel Kant had "regained that reverence which the Puritan felt for something supernatural" (B, 244). White refers here to the well-known statement from *The Critique of Practical Reason*: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within."13 As we shall discover in the next chapter, White's own reverence for "the starry heavens above" was immense. What concerns us here, however, is his understanding of the "moral law within," which he suggests is Job's human reference point for conduct and the source of his relationship to God. In this matter, too, White returns to Puritanism, reinterpreting the experience of the "inner light" for a secular public.

Mark Rutherford, as the narrator of *Catharine Furze*, discusses this experience: "We have discarded Providence as our forefathers believed in it; but nevertheless there is a providence without the big P, if we choose so to spell it, and yet surely deserving it as much as the Providence of theology, a non-theological Providence which watches over us and leads us. It appears as instinct prompting us to do this and not to do that, to decide this way or that way when we have no consciously rational ground for decision, to cleave to this person and shun the other, almost before knowing anything of either"
One might argue that White's pervasive interest in the "inner light" is merely the inarticulate residue of a Nonconformist conscience tainted by Romanticism. But his treatment of the "instinct" that he sees operating strongly in human beings is, rather, another attempt to clarify and evaluate, as he does in "Ixion" and "Notes on the Book of Job," that elusive sense of divine relationship that continually escapes definition. In his journals he refers to this sense of divine immanence repeatedly: "A mere dream, a vague hope may be more potent than certainty in a lesser matter. The faintest vision of God is more determinative of life than a gross earthly certainty" (MP, 220). "The thoughts by which we live may lie too deep for expression; perhaps even for distinct consciousness. The Hope which is our support is based on something below anything which can be brought to visibility" (LP, 256). "None of the formal arguments for the existence of God really convince. The proof lies in hints and dreams which are not expressible by human language" (LP, 274).14 Such comments reveal White's reaching after a meaning in the matter of the reality of God and the reality of divine relationship. The instinct may be "too deep for expression," but it is nevertheless sufficiently potent to be "determinative" of action.

The experience of the inner light that culminates in human response to recognized divine authority—to a "non-theological Providence" acting as "the moral law within"—is variously dramatized in White's fiction. Some characters, the mother of Esther for instance, must attempt to subdue violent emotion and wait patiently for the divine voice. Hearing that her daughter is desperately unhappy in her new marriage, Esther's mother wrestles with the possibilities of action open to her. She writes to her child: "I must still wait for the light which I trust will be given me. It is wonderful how sometimes it strikes down on me suddenly and sometimes grows by degrees like the day over Ingleby Fen" (MP, 51). As the "light" grows more powerful, she
is able to act. Her daughter must leave her husband and come home: "I could not make up my mind last night, but this morning the light, the direction, as my mother used to say, was like a star" (MP, 55). The language suggests a conscious use of White's religious heritage. For the Puritan, direction followed prayer and openness to the Word.

Others among White's characters undergo similar struggles before they instinctively perceive how to act. Miss Eyre, the heroine of "Conscience," falls in love with her pupil's fiancé and recognizes that he returns her affection. After days and nights of anxiety and conflict, at the crucial moment she refuses him: "no sooner had she left him than she was confounded, and wondered who or what it was which gave that answer. She wavered, and thought of going back, but she did not." The same sense that an unknown power operates within the heart without the conscious sanction of the mind occurs in Catharine Furze. At the height of her passion for Cardew, in the episode by the river discussed in the preceding chapter, an image of his suffering wife arises in Catharine's consciousness. She leaves this intense scene, later wondering what had prompted her sudden and intuitive action. Catharine wanders in the garden, "and again cursed herself that she had dismissed him. Who had dismissed him? Not she. How had it been done? She could not tell" (CF, 180). At this moment she does not know if she has acted rightly; but she comes to believe that her renunciation has led to salvation for both herself and Cardew.

Madge Hopgood's internal struggle is more carefully described, for her inner light directs her toward what appears to be selfishness. White returns to the problem several times. Madge decides "instinctively" that she cannot marry the father of her child. She is encouraged to change her mind by the man himself, who claims he still loves her; by the woman who has come to stand in the place of a mother to her; and finally by her sister Clara, whose spiritual authority Madge has all her life
recognized and valued. She wavers but then stands firm: "There was nothing to support her but something veiled, which would not altogether disclose or explain itself. Nevertheless, in a few minutes, her enemies had vanished, like a mist before a sudden wind, and she was once more victorious. Precious and rare are those divine souls, to whom that which is aërial is substantial, the only true substance; those for whom a pale vision possesses an authority they are forced unconditionally to obey" (CH, 197).

In this episode, White deliberately echoes the three temptations of Christ. Madge recognizes the validity of the reasons the tempters (Frank, Mrs. Caffyn, Clara) offer her but still obeys the "something veiled" that has greater authority.

White nevertheless perceives that obedience to the divine voice is possible only if the individual recognizes it as divine. I have already discussed the internal debate that often resulted for White in emotional and psychological paralysis. In the Autobiography, Miss Arbour tells Mark Rutherford how to escape this impasse: not by further ratiocination, but by learning to hear and trust the quiet voice that gives direction. She uses her own life as an example: she had made a great mistake, she tells Rutherford, by ignoring her "first and sovereign impulse" not to marry. But how is one to "distinguish heavenly instigation from hellish temptation?" Miss Arbour claims that her mistake was to look "for something more authoritative"; now late in life she has finally learned that "the voice of God . . . hardly ever comes in thunder. . . . I have to listen with perfect stillness to make it out" (A, 62). White suggests that although there is "no law by which infallibly to recognise the messenger from God," when the moment of crisis actually arrives, by listening quietly, by paying attention before rational calculation takes over, "it is perfectly easy for us to recognise him."

Thus White affirms the reality of the "moral law within" while perfectly comprehending the difficulty of hearing and then obeying it. Once it is recognized, the individual must "hold fast
with claws” to what has been intuitively understood. Miss Arbour reminds Rutherford of Psalm 119, to which White also alludes in his discussion of Job. The moral law within is Job’s “candle which is to light his path.” Miss Arbour elaborates: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.” We have no light promised us to show us our road a hundred miles away, but we have a light for the next footstep, and if we take that, we shall have a light for the one which is to follow” (A, 69). White, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, looks for direction in a personal faith; he does not expect a unified and completed system or a ground plan of the universe. His reinterpretation of the Puritan “inner light” does not trivialize the concept but rather gives it life in ordinary human terms.

The “moral law within” filled Kant with “admiration and awe.” White takes this statement and expands its meaning in his own reinterpretation of faith, but nevertheless qualifies his debt. Significantly, he adds, “Bunyan goes beyond Kant and lays an additional and even deeper foundation stone for righteousness” (B, 244). Bunyan, White declares, believed that man departs from iniquity because faith apprehends the love of God in Christ, and love persuades the believer to turn away from sin. Puritanism insists upon “the difference between right and wrong and on the doctrine of responsibility” (B, 245). The two are inseparable. Because there is a relationship between human beings and God, there must be responsibility. “Puritanism,” White argues, “insisted on our responsibility to God. When we lie, we break, not a human convention, but a divine ordinance imposed on us. Puritanism becomes a religion more particularly in this idea of responsibility” (B, 241). White’s Puritan ancestors strongly emphasized the duality of human nature. A real religion for White, as we have seen, must be personal, affirmative, and centered in a genuine relationship with God. Finally, it must confront human duality, must assume and address the fallen nature of man.
If one reads White superficially, it is possible to conclude that he rejects Puritan doctrine in his lack of emphasis on sin. Drury Lane theology, for instance, refers to "sins" rather than "sin"—errors rather than radical depravity. But there are clear reasons for White's avoidance of the word sin. First, in his own early experience of Calvinism, sin as an abstract notion and not a felt reality led to hypocrisy. Second, White feared that undue emphasis upon human depravity might be psychologically destructive. If one is hopelessly sinful, why struggle to endure? Because White seeks an affirmative and vital faith, he is wary of propounding ideas that might only produce despair. Because White does not usually write specifically of "sin," at first glance he might seem to underestimate its power. But this is not the case. The whole burden of his fiction suggests his experiential knowledge of the virulence and pervasiveness of sin. The "fatal spot . . . which robs us of life" is, in his own experience, self-absorption in its myriad forms. White presupposes human brokenness and limitedness. His wife's suffering, his own melancholia, his awareness of social evil all reinforced the Puritan emphasis upon the distinction between good and evil. White could not escape the profound and farreaching influence of his religious heritage. R. H. Hutton's remark about Carlyle, that his "whole early teaching really rested on the principle of the immutable hostility of good and evil," might be applied with equal force to White. "Among other evils which . . . [Puritanism] has inflicted," John Morley exclaimed, is "this inability to conceive of conduct except as either right or wrong, and . . . teaching . . . as either true or false." Part of the religion that White could not "cast away like an old garment" was precisely this instinctive understanding of the "immutable hostility" of good and evil. As part of the texture of White's consciousness, this attitude enters into his judgment of, say, Arnold, whose analysis of Puritanism in St. Paul and Protestantism could provoke only contempt. "The theological
form of Puritanism . . . was not due, as Mr. Arnold supposes, to mere speculation. Heaven, hell and the Atonement were the results of the conception that there is a generic, eternal and profoundly important distinction between right and wrong” (B, 239). Thus White firmly states his allegiance to a temper of mind grown obsolete. He believed that “the words right and wrong are not felt now as they were felt by Paul. They shade off one into the other. Nevertheless, if mankind is not to be lost, the ancient antagonism must be maintained” (A, 234–35).

But however strong the impact of his religious heritage, White was also a nineteenth-century man, an early associate of George Eliot and erstwhile vender of heretical books, inevitably influenced by the positivist and progressivist theories of human nature current in his time. The general psychological conflict engendered by these two opposed tendencies also had particular ramifications. The facts of life forced him to accept the omnipresence of evil, yet while accepting the moral validity of the “ancient antagonism” he was intellectually unable to believe in the actuality of a diabolic opponent engaged in eternal warfare with the good. Satan’s continuing presence in human affairs may have been a vital belief for his ancestors, but here, as a nineteenth-century man, White cannot follow them. He therefore wrestles both for an explanation of evil in the world and for a reasonable definition of it that will allow him to oppose it aggressively.

I have suggested that the clarity of Puritan thought on good and evil strongly attracted White: “Many mistakes may be pardoned in Puritanism in view of the earnestness with which it insists on the distinction between right and wrong. This is vital. In modern religion the path is flowery” (EL, 78). Similarly, though he recognized that “the shallowest of mortals is able now to laugh at the notion of a personal devil,” he respects the feeling that gave birth to the idea: “No doubt there is no such thing existent; but the horror at evil which could find no other expression than in the creation of a devil is no subject for
laughter" (A, 235). Thus we find White applauding Puritanism for its emphasis on good and evil and recognizing the quality of mind that requires the concept of an evil force, but at the same time believing that "no doubt there is no such thing existent." The lack of a specific antagonist naturally makes the struggle against evil more complex. White often compares the quality of spiritual life in the nineteenth century with that of the sixteenth and seventeenth. The difference is not merely a reflection of general religious decadence: "The public evils which weigh upon us most heavily are so formless, so universally-penetrating that it seems hopeless to combat them. Luther had a definite foe. He believed that if he could overthrow the Papacy the world would be regenerated. Happy prophet! What can we do against omnipresent dishonesty, moral scepticism, and modern political methods?" (LP, 306). This is not, I think, the usual Victorian nostalgia for a lost golden age. The question is personal and immediate, for here as elsewhere White's difficulty is complicated by the absence of a "definite foe" to fight. In several places in this study I have discussed White's psychological need for a particular imaginative focus when caught in mental turmoil. In this instance, when he feels overwhelmed by the amorphous random evils of his time in combination with his personal emotional "enemy," his impulse is Manichaean. The feelings of uselessness and chaos that the pervasiveness of evil provoke impel his imagination to create the definite and particular foe it requires in order to sustain combat. "He said," writes Dorothy, "it was so much easier to fight against evil if we looked upon it as something outside ourselves; some body too, I said" (GD, 341). Elsewhere he remarks, "never treat the devil as a reasonable being." An extraordinary entry in the "White Notebook," written in his last years, contains an argument for the reality of—or the need for—a diabolic presence in the world:

There is strong evidence, not only for the existence of a Devil, but a designing Devil. . . . I take up a flower. It is a miracle of
designed loveliness, designed, unless my instinct and reason are valueless. At the very instant of its unfolding a blight is ready, waiting to ruin it. Can any sane man believe that both proceed from the same author? If this be true our confusion is far more terrible than that which comes from the acknowledgment of a spirit of evil. If God, the begetter of the rose plots to destroy it we despair, but if He is good and the darkness and horror of the world can be ascribed to a mighty enemy, victory over him seems nearer possibility. At any rate we know that there is a great Power in existence altogether friendly and it is not too much perhaps to say that already on rare occasions we hear afar off, “faintly,” a triumphal note.¹⁹

The passage reveals the nature of the conflict; the mental process it expresses is also familiar. In the first part, White confesses the need to imagine an Enemy that his intellect cannot sanction in order to preserve himself from “confusion” and insanity. But in the second part, he concedes his inability to understand and solve the problem, and moves toward hope, to the “rare occasions” when he, like Bunyan’s Pilgrim, dimly perceives divine order and senses divine victory.

As we shall see in the following chapter, the impulse toward unity and synthesis was strong in White. Nevertheless, throughout his work he also acknowledges dualism in human beings and in the world at large. “Man is inexplicable on any hypothesis of a unity,” he argues (LP, 258). Although such knowledge created anxiety, it was preferable to facile optimism. The facts of experience point to opposing tendencies in the individual and in the cosmos, and it is better that “we should be unable to find any justice in the divine procedure than that we should feign a justice which does not exist” (LP, 287). An entry in the “Black Notebook,” written at least fifteen years later than the “Ixion” essay, finds White reflecting again on the pernicious effect of the doctrine of God’s omnipotence: “most of our speculative difficulties arise from the conception of an
omnipotent Deity. It is because God could have done otherwise and did not that we are distressed. . . . It may be perplexing and depressing to think that God cannot do any better; that my suffering cannot be helped but at any rate it is not so depressing and perplexing as the belief that the suffering might have been prevented if He had so willed it."

These sentiments proceed from the same source as his defense of Stoicism. Feigning a unity and perceiving a justice that is not there require self-deception that may finally issue in the inability to distinguish between good and evil.

One way of keeping alive the hope that what he sometimes dimly perceived would eventually be clarified "face-to-face," through relationship, may be found in White's constant effort to acknowledge and glorify what he terms "the other side" of human life. In describing Drury Lane theology, Mark Rutherford admits that the group never found arguments sufficiently powerful to counter the facts of suffering and death: "But we were able to say there is some compensation, that there is another side, and this is all that man can say. No theory of the world is possible. The storm, the rain slowly rotting the harvest, children sickening in cellars are obvious; but equally obvious are an evening in June, the delight of men and women in one another, in music, and in the exercise of thought" (A, 229).

An earlier passage, similar in tone and content to this statement, contains an additional personal note: "Everything was full of contradiction. On the one hand was infinite misery; on the other there were exquisite adaptations producing the highest pleasure: on the one hand the mystery of life-long disease, and on the other the equal mystery of the unspeakable glory of the sunrise on a summer's morning over a quiet summer sea" (A, 84).

White's confrontation with evil and his refusal to be satisfied with false or sentimental solutions are central to his religious quest. He is able to see "another side"; he remains acutely aware of the fact of evil and yet struggles to transcend it in his own
designed loveliness, designed, unless my instinct and reason are valueless. At the very instant of its unfolding a blight is ready, waiting to ruin it. Can any sane man believe that both proceed from the same author? If this be true our confusion is far more terrible than that which comes from the acknowledgment of a spirit of evil. If God, the begetter of the rose plots to destroy it we despair, but if He is good and the darkness and horror of the world can be ascribed to a mighty enemy, victory over him seems nearer possibility. At any rate we know that there is a great Power in existence altogether friendly and it is not too much perhaps to say that already on rare occasions we hear afar off, "faintly," a triumphal note.19

The passage reveals the nature of the conflict; the mental process it expresses is also familiar. In the first part, White confesses the need to imagine an Enemy that his intellect cannot sanction in order to preserve himself from "confusion" and insanity. But in the second part, he concedes his inability to understand and solve the problem, and moves toward hope, to the "rare occasions" when he, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, dimly perceives divine order and senses divine victory.

As we shall see in the following chapter, the impulse toward unity and synthesis was strong in White. Nevertheless, throughout his work he also acknowledges dualism in human beings and in the world at large. "Man is inexplicable on any hypothesis of a unity," he argues (LP, 258). Although such knowledge created anxiety, it was preferable to facile optimism. The facts of experience point to opposing tendencies in the individual and in the cosmos, and it is better that "we should be unable to find any justice in the divine procedure than that we should feign a justice which does not exist" (LP, 287). An entry in the "Black Notebook," written at least fifteen years later than the "Ixion" essay, finds White reflecting again on the pernicious effect of the doctrine of God's omnipotence: "most of our speculative difficulties arise from the conception of an
omnipotent Deity. It is because God could have done otherwise and did not that we are distressed. . . . It may be perplexing and depressing to think that God cannot do any better; that my suffering cannot be helped but at any rate it is not so depressing and perplexing as the belief that the suffering might have been prevented if He had so willed it."

20 These sentiments proceed from the same source as his defense of Stoicism. Feigning a unity and perceiving a justice that is not there require self-deception that may finally issue in the inability to distinguish between good and evil.

One way of keeping alive the hope that what he sometimes dimly perceived would eventually be clarified "face-to-face," through relationship, may be found in White's constant effort to acknowledge and glorify what he terms "the other side" of human life. In describing Drury Lane theology, Mark Rutherford admits that the group never found arguments sufficiently powerful to counter the facts of suffering and death: "But we were able to say there is some compensation, that there is another side, and this is all that man can say. No theory of the world is possible. The storm, the rain slowly rotting the harvest, children sickening in cellars are obvious; but equally obvious are an evening in June, the delight of men and women in one another, in music, and in the exercise of thought" (A, 229). 21 An earlier passage, similar in tone and content to this statement, contains an additional personal note: "Everything was full of contradiction. On the one hand was infinite misery; on the other there were exquisite adaptations producing the highest pleasure: on the one hand the mystery of life-long disease, and on the other the equal mystery of the unspeakable glory of the sunrise on a summer's morning over a quiet summer sea" (A, 84).

White's confrontation with evil and his refusal to be satisfied with false or sentimental solutions are central to his religious quest. He is able to see "another side"; he remains acutely aware of the fact of evil and yet struggles to transcend it in his own
heart. Moreover, as I suggested earlier, he also remained aware of the great mystery inherent in pain. God Himself suffered on the cross; in White’s own experience suffering is often the path to salvation: deliverance sometimes arose from “between the horns of the wild oxen.”

In Drury Lane, Mark Rutherford gropes toward an explanation of the ambiguity and mystery which he perceives:

In my younger days the aim of theologians was the justification of the ways of God to man. They could not succeed. They succeeded no better than ourselves in satisfying the intellect with a system. Nor does the Christian religion profess any such satisfaction. It teaches rather the great doctrine of a Remedy, of a Mediator; and therein it is profoundly true. It is unphilosophical in the sense that it offers no explanation from a single principle, and leaves the ultimate mystery as dark as before, but it is in accordance with our intuitions. Everywhere in nature we see exaction of penalties down to the uttermost farthing, but following after this we discern forgiveness, obliterating and restorative. Both tendencies exist. Nature is Rhadamanthine, and more so, for she visits the sins of the fathers upon the children; but there is in her also an infinite Pity, healing all wounds, softening all calamities, ever hastening to alleviate and repair. Christianity in strange historical fashion is an expression of nature, a projection of her into a biography and a creed. (A, 234)

Christianity offered no explanation of evil in the terms that White often hungered for, yet he saw it as true to the facts of natural experience. In his own life, White continued to hope and to attempt an expansion and redirection of his freedom. Having begun with the reinterpretation of his inherited faith, he went on to explore specific sources of personal deliverance: “the starry heavens above,” the “exercise of thought,” and the Mediator who teaches that the norm of human life is love.
Spinoza and the Stars

What is more wonderful than the delight which the mind feels when it knows? . . . There may be also a divine purpose in this knowing, apart from the gratification of the creature.

—Last Pages From a Journal

I

MARK RUTHERFORD AND M’KAY ARE unable to offer the weary members of the Drury Lane room easy solutions for the omnipresent problems of evil, suffering, and death. Rutherford nevertheless argues that another side exists, that “compensation” may be found in the joy that springs from human relationships, from the world of nature, and from the creations of human thought and imagination. We have observed White’s progression from decadent Calvinism toward a reinterpretation of his inherited faith. He learned that while faith must be both personal and experiential, in the process one must grow out of self to that truth which is beyond self. Rutherford and M’Kay encourage their listeners to direct their attention toward the “universal and impersonal,” for in that direction health may be discovered (A, 232). “No man,” writes Rutherford, “can look up to the stars at night and reflect upon what lies behind them without feeling that the tyranny of
the senses is loosened, and the tyranny, too, of the conclusions of his logic” (A, 230).

White's frequent use of the terms "universal" and "infinite" may require some clarification. In the most general sense, he uses these words to refer to any large idea, which, when fruitfully contemplated, serves to expand the mind. In particular, freedom from the tyranny of the senses may be pursued in a vital experiencing of the natural world: in the stars, clouds, wind, and sea. Through the power of wonder, White himself attained a new and enlarged perspective on his individual significance in the world. Similarly, in the works of Spinoza, which White came to know intimately through his translations, he encountered the pure "exercise of thought" that became another source of deliverance for him. Finally, the experience of divine and human love revealed to him the self-denying service in which he found the greatest freedom. In this chapter, I shall explore the first two paths toward freedom.

White's constant advice is to shift attention away from the self as the center of concern. "Our aim," declares Rutherford, "ought not so much to be the salvation of this poor petty self, but of that in me which alone makes it worth while to save me; . . . immortal truth" (A, 231). We have seen how in White's own history the Calvinist emphasis on individual salvation had unfortunate and lasting consequences, how self-consciousness and self-concern blighted the glory of the external world and intensified his melancholia. His profound need for love conflicted with his self-hatred and made it difficult for him to transcend egotism and accept love when it was offered. Yet he learned, not as a lasting achievement but in moments that left a lasting impression, to conquer this self-centeredness. This gradual process was perhaps sparked by Wordsworth's poetry, although as the Autobiography makes clear, White had loved the natural world from childhood. But his serious interest in one aspect of nature—the stars—did not begin until late in life.
In July 1889, White wrote excitedly to a friend about his recent purchase, an astronomical telescope (L, 44). In his journal, he explains why this instrument was an unfailing source of joy:

Almost every clear night I spent hours in simply looking, with never-failing wonder. When I went into the observatory on a winter’s night, when I shut the door, opened the roof, and set the driving-clock going, the world and its cares were forgotten. How could they be remembered in the presence of Perseus, as he slowly came into view, falling westward across the sky, mysterious, awful, beautiful, without hurry, rest, acceleration, or delay. . . .

Later on I bought a spectroscope, and was able to see what is, perhaps, the most tremendous spectacle in the universe, flames of glowing gas shooting up thousands of miles from the body of the sun like volcanic explosions, reducing to absurdity the pretension and self-importance of man, convincing him of his almost entire irrelevance. There is another side: Thou has made him a little lower than the angels, and hast planted that in him which enables him to measure himself against Orion. (LP, 92–93)

Here the anxious impulse to control things is transformed. White is able (as he was with great literature) to surrender himself, to become pure sight. Through “simply looking” he is able to escape the tyranny not only of the senses and of his logic but of his powerful imagination. Contemplation of the heavens was also an activity with larger implications than the means of self-transcendence advocated by Mark Rutherford in the Autobiography—namely, the collecting of old coins, books, fossils, or butterflies. It is splendidly ironic that the impersonal laws of nature, the “forces which maintained the universe” (A, 110) that had replaced a loving God in White’s young mind, should in his maturity become a source of deliverance. He now perceived the predictability of the stars and the necessary motion of the planets as the meaningful and glorious manifestation of
those very laws. An alienating abstraction took concrete form and drew him back into the experience of the *mysterium tremendum* from which it had once ejected him. As he studied the stars, wonder overwhelmed anxiety. His intellect was catapulted out of the structures of partial logic. "The beyond and the beyond . . . is a constant, visible warning not to make our minds the measure of the universe" (A, 230).

White brought the same intellectual precision to his study of astronomy that he brought to all other areas of his thought. There is a good deal of evidence for the seriousness of his interest: his paper on sunspots for the Royal Society; his mathematical calculations, his precise descriptions of the planets and constellations throughout the novels, letters, and journals. We must not, therefore, imagine him repairing to his observatory every evening merely to be stunned out of rational thought by a sensational heavenly performance. Mr. Armstrong, the discontented vicar of *Miriam's Schooling*, explains White's own fascination. Armstrong allows Miriam to observe the stars through his telescope not so she may gape in astonishment but that she may glimpse universal order: "If you can once from your own observation *realise* the way the stars revolve—why some near the pole never set—why some never rise, and why Venus is seen both before the sun and after it—you will have done yourselves more real good than if you were to dream for years of immeasurable distances, and what is beyond and beyond and beyond, and all that nonsense. The great beauty of astronomy is not what is incomprehensible in it, but its comprehensibility—its geometrical exactitude" (MS, 139–40). The "geometrical exactitude" is a great part of White's delight. Miriam gradually learns to rejoice in astronomy for reasons that enticed White himself. The firmament, she discerns, "instead of being a mere muddle . . . *had a plan in it*" (MS, 142–43; my emphasis).

In the context of White's religious background and his experience of "the Enemy," such remarks are especially
meaningful. In the scientific apprehension of intelligible order he found a security more rational and less egocentric than an arbitrary scheme of election and damnation could provide. Paradoxically, the natural laws that he could study and calculate served to relax self-consciousness and yet include him, for though the individual self was here displaced from the center of divine concern ("God was scheming to save me"), it also became a part of a larger and designed whole. In melancholia the external cosmos is felt as a surrounding world of "chaotic power," in which the individual self is helpless and paralyzed. By contrast, White's joy in astronomy arises from his growing awareness of directed energy in the universe. The self, instead of being trapped in chaos, is experienced as part of the intelligent process of the universe, part of the purposeful motion of life.

White's fascination with the stars and the freedom he discovered in observing them are explored at various points in his fiction. Baruch Cohen, the mathematical instrument-maker in *Clara Hopgood*, illustrates this attraction. While the highest of all truths may be incapable of demonstration, Cohen remarks, yet his belief in the infinite "is a conclusion which is forced upon me." His own work has supplied a foundation for his belief. Mathematics, Cohen argues, leads to "ideas which are inconsistent with the notion that the imagination is a measure of all things. Mind, I do not for a moment pretend that I have any theory which explains the universe. It is something, however, to know that the sky is as real as the earth" (CH, 276–78). Baruch's calm understatements emphasize the point that White's awe in the presence of beauty and mystery was deepened rather than limited by his understanding of rational order. Wonder that emerges from knowledge may direct the mind to proper self-evaluation. White is always quick to criticize writers whose admiration of nature is motivated by ignorant awe, or whose praise is general and abstract. "It is strange and sad," he writes, "that few persons nowadays can recognise the constellations and
the planets.\textsuperscript{2} According to White's analyses, Carlyle and Tennyson knew the constellations well, but Coleridge's descriptions of them in \textit{The Rime of the Ancient Mariner} are erroneous—a circumstance that pained White greatly.\textsuperscript{3}

If Baruch Cohen's scientific perspective embodies several of White's mature conclusions about astronomy, Miriam Tacchi illustrates the gradual process of learning about the stars and their philosophical significance. Like White, she finds mere observation of the night sky comforting. Eventually, her increasing intellectual understanding of planetary motion frees her from preoccupation with her own unhappiness. At first she is unable to comprehend the process. The narrator remarks ironically that although Miriam could imagine "Verona and Romeo with such intense reality, . . . she could not perform such a simple feat as that of portraying to herself the revolution of an inclined sphere" (MS, 141). Her husband, a basket maker, constructs an orrery so Miriam may see and understand the "revolution of the heavens" (MS, 139). She also learns some trigonometry with his help. Before long, "she always thought of him when she looked at planets or stars, because he was so intimately connected with them in her mind" (MS, 147–48). Miriam's "schooling" includes a transformed perception of her place in the universe and a reevaluation of her husband's character.

In the same novel, Mr. Armstrong helps to extend his parishioners' understanding of the planets and constellations. They continue to connect the stars with heaven, but "Mr. Armstrong never undeceived them" (MS, 135). White himself, although better instructed than the poor laborers who constitute Armstrong's congregation, also felt that his nightly study of the constellations was in the largest sense a religious activity. Reflecting "on the great idea of God, and upon all that it involves, our animosities are softened, and our heat against our brother is cooled" (A, 204). Rutherford makes explicit the connection
between meditation on the idea of God and on the idea of the complex plan of the heavens. Following an event that makes him feel worthless and insignificant, he seeks "refuge in the idea of God, the God of a starry night with its incomprehensible distances." He is soon "at peace, content to be the meanest worm of all the millions that crawl on the earth" (A, 192). The effect upon the observer, however, is not merely a recognition of his or her own smallness in comparison with the immensity of the firmament or the great idea of God; a journal entry confirms another side of the perception: "On looking at any great natural object, a mountain, the sea, the stars, we are conscious of our own littleness and yet at the same moment of our greatness... we are a part of what we worship" (LP, 294–95; my emphasis).

This statement echoes one quoted above: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast planted that in him which enables him to measure himself against Orion." The paradox recalls a dimension of White's religious thought which we have already examined. While the immensity and beauty of the universe ignites wonder in him, that wonder does not reduce him but rather brings him into proper relation with the infinite. Preoccupation with self blots out the glory of the world; enlarged vision precipitates harmonious reconciliation. "Seek him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion and turneth the shadow of death into morning," he reminds himself. "There are," he writes, "not grander words than these in the Bible." This enlarged vision is, as I noted earlier, central to White's essay on Job. Jehovah commands Job to look abroad over the universe. White also tries to follow this counsel. The "starry heavens above" could make the scales to fall from his eyes, too. "Now mine eye seeth Thee." As he apprehends the source of the vast design, he experiences his own uniqueness through and by means of relationship.

An event that White describes in More Pages From A Journal as "nothing less than a transformation of myself and the
world'' (MP, 182) will serve to reinforce this point. He writes in "An Epoch'' of a morning in which he stood looking at a great oak tree. Suddenly, "it seemed to be no longer a tree away from me and apart from me. The enclosing barriers of consciousness were removed and the text came into my mind, *Thou in me and I in thee.* The distinction of self and not-self was an illusion.''' Although he "‘believed’ nothing new,” the veil was momentarily rent. He could feel both the rising sap of the tree, and in himself a sudden corresponding fountain of joy. The barriers of individual selfhood dissolve as the "‘tyranny of the senses’’ is loosened. The result is not loss of self but the truth of self found in the source that gives life to both the tree and its observer. This rare epiphany is emblematic of White’s quest for reconciliation. "‘Thou in me and I in thee’’ is here understood through the medium of nature. He experiences as a revelation both his own identity and the reality of his relationship to the universe. He is reconciled, and becomes truly a part of what he worships.

Frequent descriptions of natural phenomena in White’s novels, journals, and notebooks reveal his love not only for the stars but for all nature. The precision of both observation and expression bespeak a mind training itself to admire and wonder. "‘We do not sufficiently consider,’” he writes, "‘that enjoyment of every kind is an art carefully to be learnt’’ (A, 263). His lucid descriptions of the sky, water, wind, and trees explain much about their author. First, the willed act of observation, of intense and absorbed seeing, is a conscious movement of a temperamentally melancholy individual toward health. In the process of looking, he momentarily transcends self-consciousness. Furthermore, acute perceptual involvement in the world of external nature frees him, momentarily, from the tyranny of time.

In his youth, Mark Rutherford says, he was "‘the victim of that illusion . . . which causes us, on the brightest morning in June, to think immediately of a brighter morning which is to come in July’’ (A,55). White felt that one of the great curses of
his life was his propensity to live in the past through memory and in the future by anticipation, thus often losing "today." "The greatest part, far the greatest part, of our lives," laments Rutherford, "is spent in dreaming over the morrow, and when it comes, it, too, is consumed in the anticipation of a brighter tomorrow, and so the cheat is prolonged, even to the grave" (A, 258).

White’s careful, deliberate descriptions of nature are often a conscious attempt to halt this cheating of himself, an effort to school himself to present gladness and participation in the immediate processes of the world outside the self. His "set pieces" on the natural world are, then, attempts to remove the "film of custom" and experience the living creation. In these descriptions he is capturing both the uniqueness of the scene or object before him and his joy in beholding it. Time is thus held, for the moment, static.

White’s attempt to capture the living moment in prose is parallel also to his active study of the heavens: in the latter he temporarily became a part of what he worshipped; in the former he became what he celebrated in language. In this contemplation and expression of the natural world, the life which he looks back on, "with not one solitary achievement, with nothing properly learned, with nothing properly done" (A, 286), and the future that holds the grave, both cease for the moment to have power over him. Through intense vision he is freed.

In the Deliverance, Rutherford expresses this momentary freedom from time through his experience of nature during the two holidays he takes before his death. In the first instance, Rutherford and his family reach Hastings early in the day. The beautiful weather, the stillness of the great ocean, the clouds, and the intensity of the sunlight all combine to elicit extraordinary delight: "It was perfect—perfect in its beauty—and perfect because, from the sun in the heavens down to the fly with burnished wings on the hot rock, there was nothing out
of harmony. Everything breathed one spirit . . . No reminiscences and no anticipations disturbed us; the present was sufficient, and occupied us totally” (A, 263). His final holiday occurs after his wife has recovered from a nearly fatal illness and shortly before Rutherford’s own death. One Sunday, the family leaves London for an autumn holiday to celebrate his wife’s recovery. Rutherford describes the glory of the day in detail, concluding: “We were all completely happy. We strained our eyes to see the furthest point before us, and we tried to find it on the map we had brought with us. The season of the year, which is usually supposed to make men pensive, had no such effect upon us. Everything in the future, even the winter in London, was painted by Hope, and the death of the summer brought no sadness. Rather did summer dying in such fashion fill our hearts with repose, and even more than repose—with actual joy” (A, 272). For brief moments, then, White realized freedom of being; he felt at home in the world and in harmonious relationship with it. Anxiety, self-consciousness, melancholia, all were swallowed up in such moments, and he was able not only to evade the “fore-feeling of the end of summer” (P, 21), but to experience “actual joy.”

II

Through the medium of nature, through acute observation and willed participation in the nonself, White could transcend the prison of self-consciousness and break through the barriers of time and space. While the appeal of mystery illuminated by intelligible order was enduring, equally salutary was the thorough “exercise of thought” that he found in the philosophy of Spinoza. White’s most intense scholarly work over a number of years was his translation and criticism of the philosopher. The major works were his translations of Spinoza’s Ethic (1883; revised 1894, 1899, 1910) and his edition of the Tractatus de
Intellectus Emendatione (1895). Essays, reviews of other critics’ work on Spinoza, and frequent allusions to him in letters and notebooks all testify to White’s continuing interest. I have argued that we cannot trace the development of White’s religious thought through clearly distinguishable stages that culminate in a grand finale. He tended not to discard old ideas and take up new ones, or to move from one philosopher or thinker to another. Rather, as we have already had occasion to see, he sometimes oscillated between ideas that were in conflict or were even mutually exclusive. Throughout his life he glimpsed and lost helpful truths and then struggled to recover them and relate them to other ideas that seemed to be part of the “facts.” While he tried to cling to ideas and principles that he had earned, another part of his mind searched the intellectual horizon for new and positive material. Bunyan, Calvin, Luther, and Virgil expounded sober truths that satisfied one part of him. On the other side, Byron, Whitman, and Shakespeare affirmed the joy possible in life. In the nineteenth century, he believed, “we need Shakespeare as well as Bunyan, and oscillate between the Pilgrim’s Progress and As You Like It. We cannot bring ourselves into a unity. The time is yet to come when we shall live by a faith which is a harmony of all our faculties” (B, 249–50). At times, White could hold these dual impulses in an exquisite tension that generated the energy necessary for spiritual progress. Although much in Spinoza seems contrary to White’s temperament and instinctive Puritanism, we can still comprehend the vigorous appeal to him of both Spinoza’s method and his ideas. I have mentioned that White’s vision of human life was fundamentally tragic: it is no coincidence that Virgil was one of his favorite authors. Yet White also had an impulse toward joy, health, and salvation. Spinoza strengthened this impulse, for his method and comprehensive system enlarged White’s consciousness.
It is not my purpose to review or evaluate Spinoza's philosophy but to show why and how that philosophy influenced and enlarged White's mental life. In his preface to the 1883 edition of the *Ethic*, White elucidates the major attraction. Spinoza's thought answers the question "wherein can it help me?" with ideas, with "an insight which removes the limits of the world in which we live and shows us something beyond." His thought possesses the energy of all great religions, for "it is of the very essence of a genuine religion that it should take the other side; that it should be the counterpoise, the perpetual affirmation against the perpetual negation which lies in the routine and vulgarity of existence." Moreover, "there is no writer probably who loosens more effectually the hard tyranny of time and circumstance and provides us with more of those thoughts which it is the office of a real and speculative religion to supply." This was the fundamental appeal of Spinoza: he presented the "other side" of affirmative joy through an enlarged idea of God and a renewed perspective on the individual's place in the universe. And he provided these things through reason, logic, and fact.

Spinoza became a powerful gospel and a new source of inspirational energy for other Victorians besides White, in part because of his unique and spiritually uplifting synthesis. In the midst of chaos here was form. Spinoza provided not merely a substitute system for the Christian scheme of sin and redemption: he offered, instead, a method. Twenty years after White had begun his study of the philosopher, he wrote in his essay "Spinoza": "Much in him remains obscure, but there is enough which is sufficiently clear to give a direction to thought and to modify action. . . . Spinoza's object was not to make a scheme of the universe. He felt that the things on which men usually set their hearts give no permanent satisfaction, and he cast about for some means by which to secure 'a joy continuous and supreme to all eternity.'" (P, 32–33; my emphasis) Spinoza's
thinking power, his logical progression toward inevitable conclusions, was psychologically beneficial to a mind which saw both sides of a question so clearly that it could neither choose nor progress: "Spinoza, in his consecutiveness, his advance from position to position in complete connection and in perfect order, remains exemplary to us. The power to go from one ascertained point to another point, and so on and on, is what makes the strength of the human mind. It is this which creates for us principles, or at least the only principles worth the name."11

Spinoza’s emphasis upon thought and idea was of major importance to White. He clarified Spinoza’s distinction between idea and image early in the preface to the Ethic (1883): “If we deny what we cannot image, and if we consider it to be a sufficient objection to a religious or philosophical statement, ‘I cannot imagine it to be true,’ it is not worthwhile to have anything to do with Spinoza.”12 The active, thinking mind may not be able to imagine God, but it can nevertheless form a true conception and hence understanding of Him. Such an emancipation from the necessity of imagining divine essence is clearly invigorating for White. He remarks (on Ethic, part II, proposition 47) that “the human mind possesses an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God,” and that Spinoza’s demonstration of this proposition is initially unsatisfactory because “we look for one which shall enable us to form an image of God like that which we can form of a triangle.” But:

“To your question,” says Spinoza to Boxel, “whether I have as clear an idea of God as I have of a triangle? I answer, Yes. But if you ask me whether I have as clear an image of God as I have of a triangle I shall say, No; for we cannot imagine God, but we can in a measure understand Him. Here also, it is to be observed that I do not say that I altogether know God, but that I understand some of His attributes—not all, nor the greatest part, and it is clear
that my ignorance of very many does not prevent my knowledge of certain others." (P, 36–37)

This clear distinction between imagination and reason, picture and concept, is crucial in Spinoza’s thought. He postulates that through knowledge of “adequate ideas” the human mind expands. It becomes more perfect as the process of thought develops in thoroughness—that is, in truth. Thus when action is the necessary consequence of sufficient knowledge, the actor is free; he acts in accordance with his own nature. He is inevitably drawn toward appropriate action, since with knowledge of adequate ideas man cannot be externally compelled. The first step, then, toward freedom of being is thorough knowledge of any thing, for one suffers and is enslaved by confounding imagination and understanding. “Spinoza makes the remark that one frequent cause of error is the conjunction of what we imagine confusedly with what we really understand. We thoroughly comprehend some one particular thing: then we join to it a half-understood thing, the result being complete untruth.” Thus “confusion and error are due to imperfect apprehension.” As the mind increases in understanding, the power of the imaginative fancy decreases. We see how this conclusion was attractive to Hale White: increased understanding of nature leads to increased knowledge of one’s own mind; with greater understanding of one’s own mental powers and essence, one acts from that essence:

The distinction between action and passion is one which is vital throughout the whole of the Ethic. “I say that we act,” Spinoza observes in the second definition of the third part, “when anything is done, either within us or without us, of which we are the adequate cause, that is to say (by the preceding definition) when from our nature anything follows, either within us or without us, which by that nature alone can be clearly and distinctly understood. On the other hand, I say that we suffer
when anything is done within us, or when anything follows from our nature, of which we are not the cause excepting partially.”

White states here that Spinoza’s comments about action and passion are “specially and practically serviceable.” The mind can control passion, and thus destructive and paralyzing melancholia, through adequate thought. An affect, according to Spinoza (Ethic, part V, proposition 3), ceases to be a passion when we form a clear idea of it. The mind can think of a passion as it thinks of a triangle. To illustrate this point, White offers the example of a man who becomes for the time a victim of passion, one who only suffers: “A stream of images passes before him, over which he exercises no authority. But it is possible to break that series of images—to reflect, to put the insult from him, to consider it as if it were an effect of gravitation or electricity, to place himself outside it, to look at it as God looks at it. That is to refer it to God’s idea, or to have an adequate idea of it.”

White obviously does not approach Spinoza idly or with detachment: he seeks practical aid. Here the possibility of objectifying through the reason the “stream of images” of the idée fixe which haunts and diminishes his personhood in melancholia becomes a goal worth pursuing. The passive imagination or the confusion of idea and image destroys rational control or “authority” over one’s own being. Conversely, the greater the number of adequate ideas in the mind, the less tyrannical the fancy. In melancholia, the victim can only passively suffer. Spinoza’s “objection to passion,” White says, “is that it chokes thought.” The graphic verb “chokes” is characteristic, suggesting as it does suffocation, drowning, the abyss. “Everybody,” continues White, “who tries to lead a life from the intellect knows what a calamity is that incessant apparition of the object of a passion. It pursues the victim like a Fury.” He who can be affected by “the common properties of things, or God” (adequate ideas) can be cured. Spinoza
affirms the power of the reason over the fancy, the power of love over sin, the power of God over the suffering creature. This affirmation becomes for White indeed a "joy continuous and supreme to all eternity." We know that White was not always capable of realizing and effecting his desired goal. Spinoza nevertheless provided a true direction, a potentially viable way out of spiritual anguish. Thorough "exercise of thought," "adequate ideas," and increased mental energy offered a possible deliverance from that great sorrow of life, "the rigidity of the material universe in which we are placed" (P, 33).

Spinoza helps White even further. In his preface to the second edition of the *Ethic* (1894), he remarks that Spinoza's main achievements are "the enlargement of the idea of God: the removal of God from the provincial and petty position He had formerly occupied, and the introduction of unity into our conceptions of man and nature."\(^{21}\) Expansion and unity offer another means of deliverance. I noted earlier that Spinoza appealed to many in part because of the quality and comprehensiveness of his synthesis. In his essay on Spinoza in *Pages From a Journal*, White summarizes this synthesis and demonstrates how it is effected. Substance, which Spinoza posits and later identifies with the idea of God, is defined by him as "that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; in other words, that, the conception of which does not need the conception of another thing from which it must be formed."\(^{22}\) Further, "By God, I understand Being absolutely infinite, that is to say, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each one of which expresses eternal and infinite essence."\(^{23}\) Two of these infinite attributes are revealed to man, namely thought and extension. White sees that here Spinoza escapes the difficulty of having to reconcile a material universe with a Creator who is pure Spirit. Rather than contemplating duality, the opposition of mind and body, we may consider that "the object of the idea constituting the human mind is a body."\(^{24}\) As thought and
extension are the same thing "viewed in different ways, inside and outside of the same reality" (P, 35), so are body and mind one, considered in different aspects. Thus all individuals are modes of God's attributes: the intellect of God is the cause of things, and God is "one and infinite; . . . all being, without which nothing exists."25

This enlarged definition and conception of God, added to the belief that mind and body are one, though considered "at one time under the attribute of thought and at another under that of extension," leads to the conclusion that "the order and connection of things is . . . one, whether viewed under this or that attribute, and consequently the order of the actions or passions of the body is the same as that of the actions or passions of the mind."26 In Spinoza, White finds the "true unchangeableness of God"27 and a way of logically positing a form of immortality. This is not, of course, the personal and individual immortality of the soul projected in Christian theology but still an immortality of a rational and credible kind. In the preface to the first edition of the Ethic (1883), White elaborates on the idea of immortality in Spinoza's thought. We know that White's own fear of death and concern with immortality occupied him considerably. In his discussion of this question in Spinoza, we can discern the tension within White himself. He feels that Spinoza's ideas about immortality go as far as one can rationally proceed, yet they are not altogether sufficient or satisfactory. White notices that Spinoza, like all other men, cannot neglect the subject; yet when we attempt to pin down exactly what he believes about immortality, we "find ourselves in difficulties."28

Much in Spinoza remains obscure, White comments, but through careful investigation of the various propositions relating to the eternal nature of the mind, certain conclusions emerge. I have not the space in this discussion to follow White's progress through the various propositions of Spinoza. For our purposes,
it is sufficient to note two central conclusions. In part II, proposition 23, we learn that "the human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal." Immortality that extends to duration of imagination and memory, or of the body, Spinoza cannot conceive. What remains eternal is the reason, the intellect, that part of the mind which, through knowledge and consequently greater love of God, has become perfect. Second, as White remarks, "Spinoza affirms an immortality of degrees; the soul which is most of a soul being least under the dominion of death." This is important to White, for immortality of the intellect can be earned. The greater the mind and the more it acts in accordance with its own laws and from its own essence (which is part of the eternal intellect of God), the larger the hope of eternal life. Here White is careful to recognize that by eternality Spinoza does not mean "indefinite prolongation of time," but rather "existence itself, so far as it is conceived necessarily to follow from the definition alone of an eternal thing." White's own struggle toward wholeness, toward that freedom of being which in Spinoza's thinking is intellectual love of God, is apparent here. The mind that approaches the greatest perfection suffers less and acts more; the more it acts the more perfect it is. Proposition 39 of part V states that he who can "cause all the affections of the body to be related to God's idea, . . . [may] attain a love to God which must occupy or form the greatest part of the mind. He has a mind therefore, the greatest part of which is eternal."

Spinoza's conception of immortality thus offers White a goal. One struggles toward increase of knowledge and expansion of mind in order to participate eternally in that divine essence which is the source of our own: "Every adequate idea gained, every victory achieved by the intellectual part of us, is the addition of something permanent to us. Surely no nobler incentive to the highest aims and the most strenuous exertion
has ever been offered to the world. Every deed of self-denial done
in secret, every conviction wrought in secret, laboriously
strengthened and sharpened into distinct definition by diligent
practice, is recorded in a Book for ever with no possibility of
mistake or erasure." White found here, as did so many other
Victorian admirers of Spinoza, a reason for being virtuous that
was uncontaminated by the egocentric hope of reward and fear
of punishment (in this world or the next) and that yet preserved
the idea of immortality. In a clearly personal tone, White
explains: "The majority of mankind, even the best and
wisest, cannot reconcile themselves to the thought of a blank
hereafter, and derive from their hope the strongest stimulus to
work and to patience. It is not so much happiness in the ordinary
sense of the word which is coveted, but continued life, continued
thought, and continued progress through that great and gradual
revelation which unfolds itself to us from birth to death, and is
gradually unfolding itself to the world." In the preceding chapter I discussed White’s attraction to
dualism. “Philosophy,“ declares Mark Rutherford, “proclaims
the unity of our nature. To philosophy every passion is as natural
as every act of saintlike negation.” But such a philosophy cannot
re redeem the world. Christianity can: “It laid awful stress on the
duality in us, and the stress laid on that duality is the world’s
salvation” (A, 234). We may well ask how a man who believed
this statement, who emphatically remarked that “if mankind is
not to be lost, the ancient antagonism” between good and evil
must be maintained, can embrace a philosophy whose central
premise is the oneness of the universe? Wilfred Stone argues that
White never became a “Spinozist,” that Spinoza defined for
White “a mood rather than a metaphysic, an attitude rather than
a system.” It is certainly true that White was ambivalent about
some parts of Spinoza’s philosophy. But, as I have suggested,
White did not tend to progress intellectually from belief to belief,
shedding, along the path of truth, those that were superseded.
He attempted, rather, to assimilate new, liberating ideas to those he had already won. He felt, along with Zachariah Coleman, that a "perfectly consistent, unassailable creed . . . is impossible" (RTL, 85). Moreover, though he may not actually have believed in a diabolic force abroad in the world, he often felt that he had to act as if such a power existed. But the desire to conceive of a unity underlying his personal experience of brokenness and duality was also fundamental to him. White’s daily experience of sin—of melancholia and self-love and duality and exile—is the natural "fact" against which he exerts himself in an act of faith. His lifelong efforts to return "home" to a dimly sensed unity, to mutuality, reconciliation, and relationship constitute that act of faith. We have seen in this study his need to break down the barriers and be reunited to a living community of the faithful, to the perfect friend, to the beloved, to his work, to nature, and to God.

I believe that Stone underestimates the significance both of this impulse in White and of the moments of epiphany ("Thou in me and I in Thee") in which he felt he had transcended selfhood and its duality. Spinoza’s ideas concerning the unity of God and man appealed to White precisely because they went beyond a simple monism: "Let a man once believe in that God of infinite attributes of which thought and extension are those by which He manifests Himself to us; let him see that the opposition between thought and matter is fictitious; that his mind ‘is a part of the infinite intellect of God’; that he is not a mere transient, outside interpreter of the universe, but himself the soul or law, which is the universe, and he will feel a relationship with infinity which will emancipate him" (P, 38–39; my emphasis). This passage suggests what drew White to Spinoza: the possibility he opened up for freedom, relationship, reconciliation. Spinoza’s philosophy offered more to White than a "mood"; it suggested a rational way of approaching the mystery of divine and human relationship.
Nevertheless, White found significant limitations in Spinoza's work. The weakest link in its chain of thought he believed to be in the treatment of the problem of evil and pain. His response to Spinoza's exploration of human suffering is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, he felt that the philosopher's lack of emphasis on sin was positive, for thus the ability of human beings actively to pursue the good, without becoming paralyzed by a sense of depravity too awful to overcome, was affirmed. On the other hand, the conception of suffering as "lack of adequate ideas," of evil regarded as mere privation of the good, seemed an insufficient response to the problem of pain. White's various commentaries on Spinoza contain several indictments of the limitations of his philosophy on this topic. Referring to Spinoza's answer to the question of why God did not create all men in such a manner that they might be guided by reason alone, White quotes Spinoza's response and adds a critical comment:

"Because to Him material was not wanting for the creation of everything, from the highest down to the lowest grade of perfection; or, to speak more properly, because the laws of His nature were so ample they sufficed for the production of everything which can be conceived by an infinite intellect." Nevertheless of pain we have no explanation. Pain is not lessened by understanding it, nor is its mystery penetrated if we see that to God material could not have been wanting for the creation of men and animals who have to endure it all their lives. (P, 52; my emphasis)³⁶

White's sense of justice, however, demands that he remind readers that not only Spinoza but all religions and philosophies are essentially "silent in the presence of pain." Silence, he observes, is also the only conclusion to the Book of Job; we never learn why "suffering is apportioned so unequally or why it exists" (P, 52, 53).

The intriguing "Supplementary Note on the Devil" which White appended to the essay on Spinoza further clarifies the nature of his difficulties with the philosopher's treatment of evil. White remarks here that Spinoza denies the existence of the Devil, and that he argues that "if he is the mere opposite of God and has nothing from God, he is simply the Nothing" (P, 58). White allows that this doctrine may be "true" but finds it unhelpful: like nineteenth-century Calvinism, ironically, such a belief is useless in the face of practical problems. White then describes Bunyan's depiction of evil in *The Holy War* and elevates Bunyan's Devil—in which White himself did not believe—over Spinoza's abstraction. The testimony of melancholia proves stronger than the conclusions of his logic: "Consciousness seems to testify to the presence of two mortal foes within us—one Divine and the other diabolic" (P, 59). The evidence for this conflict lies in the "picturing and . . . mental processes which are almost entirely beyond our control." Then "we cry out with St. Paul against the law warring with the law of our minds." White instinctively returns, in this essay, to the Christian doctrine of sin: the law of God—love—wars with self-love, anger, covetousness, envy (Galatians 5). White senses that Paul offers something Spinoza cannot and returns to the tradition that comprehends temptation, sin, and spiritual anguish.

Nevertheless, the major contribution Spinoza made to White's religious thought is related to the question of evil. Spinoza never champions the law but constantly strives for love. Both men recognize the danger of adhering to rules merely out of fear of punishment as opposed to pursuing virtue for its own sake. White's innate magnanimity and his desire for what Matthew Arnold calls a "joy whose grounds are true" find reinforcement in Spinoza's philosophy: "Spinoza believed in the affirmative. His creed was not This thou shall not do under penalty, but rather This thou shalt do and rejoice therein, and he knew that the reformation of fear is no reformation, and that
the good is really nothing to men unless they take pleasure in it. . . . Life for him is not a penitentiary, a school in which we are to be thrashed into obedience to external law, but it is pleasure, the highest pleasure." In Spinoza's thought, genuine human freedom consists in being motivated toward the good. Faith is the knowledge of God that leads inevitably to obedience, and worship is "to do what is just and to love our neighbour." Therefore faith and obedience are "submission unhesitatingly to the precepts of justice and love." Spinoza's emphasis on the intellectual love of God, the worship of whom and obedience to whom meant "love to one's neighbour," is a compelling doctrine for White, answering both to his Calvinist background and to his own attempts to give and receive affection. Spinoza, White claims, provides the "truly human religion" he sought all his life.

In his essay, White dwells on Spinoza's definitions of love and joy, and sees in them a key to relationship between the human and the divine: "But it is possible for the word 'love' to be applied to the relationship between man and God. He who has a clear and adequate perception passes to greater perfection, and therefore rejoices. Joy, accompanied with the idea of a cause, is love" (P, 49). White perceives the intellectual love of God to be the highest fulfillment of rational human nature. It is joy eternal and supreme, and is the logical and inevitable consequence of adequate knowledge. Love of man to God is "heaven," in Spinoza's view. "Heaven," White explains, "is not a hereafter of reward: it is the here and hereafter of the intellectual love of God. In so far as the mind is capable of intellectual love, it is not only eternal but a part of God Himself." In this concept White discovers freedom and truth; one is impelled toward the good through neither egotism nor fear of punishment, for the "reward" which follows the active pursuit of the good is the perfection of individual selfhood realized through relationship.
Spinoza's philosophy gave White genuine and practical help in his continuing quest for inner freedom. Spinoza's ideas implied a religion of hope and were positive and life-affirming where other creeds were fixed in negativism and rooted in the fear of death. Spinoza enlarged the idea of God and opened a way toward a relationship to the universal through the exercise of thought. He provided a clear direction for human activity and extended the potential of life beyond its immediate, commonplace boundaries. But while in Spinoza’s thought “the whole of God is fact” (P, 38), White needed still more; he desired the emphasis on human love that is missing in Spinoza. The greatest freedom and individual fulfillment White found in divine love informing the human sphere—in the “indwelling Christ” of Protestant Christianity.
SEVEN

Freedom: Love and the Indwelling Christ

What originality Christianity admits! A man may be a Christian and yet lose nothing of that which is truly original in him. Nay, more, it provokes originality, just as the polishing of a pebble brings out the beauty and definiteness of its structure.

—Last Pages From a Journal

In an earlier chapter I mentioned White’s friendship with the Independent Welsh minister Caleb Morris, who preached in Fetter Lane Chapel and Eccleston Square Chapel in London from the 1830s to the 1850s and became the inspiration of White’s youth. White first knew Morris in 1849, just before he left Fetter Lane. White maintains that Morris was more eloquent than any of the other noteworthy speakers of his day whom he had heard—Roebuck, Cobden, Bright, Gladstone, Binney—and Morris’s influence on the younger man was deep and enduring (LP, 244–45). More than fifty years later White remarked to his wife Dorothy, “He made me.” He said that “had it not been for Caleb Morris he would either have settled down as a mere partisan in the Church, or else broken away from creeds altogether” (GD, 27–28). White felt that Morris “came nearer to his Master than any man I ever met” (GD, 16). Through Morris’s preaching, White began to question the orthodox
teaching of Bunyan Meeting and New College. He perceived in Morris what the Calvinism of Bedford had either made sterile or undervalued: the centrality of divine love in the Christian faith and the relationship between divine and human love. In the Welsh preacher White felt the presence of the "indwelling Christ" and perceived that this gracious activity of the Spirit within the human sphere afforded the most genuine human freedom:

I never beheld a man in whom Christianity, or rather Christ, was so vitally inherent. With him Christianity was not assent to certain propositions, nor external obedience to its precepts. It was an indwelling of the Christ of the Gospels, shaping thought, speech, and life. Hence he was not strictly orthodox, for orthodoxy is system, and system is something artificial and restrictive. He believed undoubtedly in the chief doctrines of Christianity, but he was one of the freest of men, if freedom is largeness of the space in which we move and live. . . . Thomas à Kempis and Bunyan were infinitely free. (LP, 247-48; my emphasis)

We have seen that Spinoza's philosophy helped White greatly in formulating his own faith. But the significant omission in Spinoza's intellectual love of God is the Mediator, the Christ. White's quest for freedom and reconciliation, and the central theme of his fiction, involve the full exploration of the meaning of the "indwelling of the Christ of the Gospels." Our investigation of the place of Christ in White's work will deal first with his view of the human Savior, Christ as example and pattern; and second, with the "indwelling Christ": grace and self-sacrificing love.

On the question of Christ's divinity, White could not escape the influence of the intellectual atmosphere of his age. What Mark Rutherford terms "the process of excavation" (A, 55) begun by Strauss culminated, for White and countless others, in the gradual sinking of the divine Redeemer for a greater emphasis on (and
glorification of) the humanity of Jesus. Although the “dissolution of Jesus into mythologic vapour was nothing less than the death of a friend dearer to me then than any other friend whom I knew” (A, 54), the results of historical criticism could not be ignored. Hegel, Schleiermacher, and Coleridge established the foundations of modern Christological inquiry, and the nature and work of Christ remained a major topic of discussion in the nineteenth century. F. D. Maurice, Jowett, Arnold, Renan, the contributors to *Lux Mundi* in 1889 and scores of other thinkers addressed the question. The nineteenth-century fascination with the person of the Christ had a number of causes. Inevitably, interest grew as more information concerning his historical period came to light. If such information made it more difficult to regard Christ as the Son of God, this very fact gave impetus to attempts to retain some form of relation with Christ—if only as hero, prophet, or spiritual guide. Doubts about the truth of miracle and testimony naturally contributed to the undermining of the authority of the Gospels, and on their authority so much else depended: if we cannot be certain that Christ actually said what he is reported to have said, what do we know about heaven and hell? If Christ did not heal the sick and raise the dead, how do we know that he himself is risen and ascended? If Christ did not rise from the dead, how can we be sure of salvation? Is there any immortality? And so on.

The reorientation of emphasis and perspective that emerged in response to historical criticism of the Bible was certainly known to White. In 1907, he wrote to Miss Partridge that he found Ernest Renan’s work “invaluable” and an “immense help” (L, 250). He is here referring to Renan’s *L’Antéchrist*, but I assume from the general nature of his praise of Renan that he also read the earlier, popular *Vie de Jésus* (1863), in which Renan celebrates a Jesus who espoused no dogma and was restrained by no authority. Renan’s imaginative reinterpretation of history issued in a Jesus who was a great human idealist, flawed but
noble, sustained and motivated by a powerful consciousness of God. Renan takes it for granted that miracles are rejected out of hand by the modern reader, since "up to this time a miracle has never been proved." Similarly, Arnold, repudiating the "popular religion" that "conceives the birth, ministry and death of Christ, as altogether steeped in prodigy, brimful of miracle;—and miracles do not happen," still found in Jesus the means of reconciliation between God and man. Through the "sweet reasonableness" of Christ, whose secret is renunciation, people may learn that the way to human perfection is the "substitution by which the believer, in his own person, repeats Jesus Christ's dying to sin." For Hegel, as Claude Welch notes, Christ is "the perfect embodiment of the Idea, God's actual coming to self-consciousness in man." For Charles Gore, God is revealed in Christ's person under the conditions of human nature. His knowledge had genuine limitations; He refrained from exercising the power He possessed, in order that He might be truly human. Finally, Robert Elsmere's reinterpretation of the nature of the Christ (1888) may stand as a summary of the process of erosion and revaluation that had continued for sixty years: "I can no longer believe in an incarnation and resurrection. . . . Christ is risen in our hearts, in the Christian life of charity. Miracle is a natural product of human feeling and imagination; and God was in Jesus—pre-eminently, as He is in all great souls, but not otherwise—not otherwise in kind than He is in me or you."

This atmosphere and these conclusions inevitably affected White's assessment of the nature and role of Christ. Along with other thinkers, he saw in Christ a human ideal. And if others recreated Jesus of Nazareth in accordance with their own needs and prejudices, White did the same. Characteristically, he focuses on the man who suffered and yet endured, faithful unto death. He consistently perceives Christ as the Savior who comprehends human loneliness and anguish not abstractly but in his own experience, and believes that the great value of Christianity lies
in this fact. "Bunyan," he writes, "by his treatment of the incapable, the imperfect, and even diseased, shows that he has entered into the soul of Christianity.... Christianity is distinguished by its protest against the natural tendency to idolize strength and success" (B, 160–61.) It is, he argues, a religion not for the beautiful, successful, or heroic, but for men like himself, who suffer in isolation, who see more than they can attain: commonplace individuals whose dreams and ambitions are rarely realized on earth. When he is unable to make any impression upon the congregation to whom he pours out his heart, Mark Rutherford thinks of the story of Christ:

I was much struck with the absolute loneliness of Jesus, and with His horror of that death upon the cross. He was young and full of enthusiastic hope, but when He died He had found hardly anything but misunderstanding. He had written nothing, so that He could not expect that His life would live after Him. Nevertheless His confidence in His own errand had risen so high, that He had not hesitated to proclaim Himself the Messiah.... The hold which He has upon us is easily explained, apart from the dignity of His recorded sayings and the purity of His life. There is no Saviour for us like the hero who has passed triumphantly through the distress which troubles us. Salvation is the spectacle of a victory by another over foes like our own. The story of Jesus is the story of the poor and forgotten. (A, 47)

Everyone who "has walked in sadness because his destiny has not fitted his aspirations," all who suffer in obscurity and endure through some dim hope, doing their duty without recognition, "all these turn to Jesus, and find themselves in Him" (A, 48). White values Jesus in part because, although He had higher hopes, purposes, and capacity than any other human being, and "almost no promise of anything to come of them," he died faithful to the end.
White's evaluation of Christ's life is expressed in similar terms in *Catharine Furze*. On her deathbed, Phoebe asks Catharine to read her the last three chapters of Matthew. The narrator exclaims that "when we come near death, or something which may be worse, all exhortation, theory, promise, advice, dogma fail. The one staff which, perhaps, may not break under us, is the victory achieved in the like situation by one who has preceded us; and the most desperate private experience cannot go beyond the garden of Gethsemane" (CF, 322). This narrative interpolation clarifies White's own needs and suggests that in the Passion of Christ he found both consolation and strength. In his novels, White tends to describe Jesus in secular and human terms. He perceives Christ as a young hero whose hopes and dreams are disappointed and who is misunderstood even by his disciples. Gethsemane as well as the Cross claims White's attention, and as he does in his reinterpretations of Bible stories, he enters imaginatively into the consciousness of the hero and feels what it would be like to face death and the great fear that soon "everything would be as if he had never been" (CF, 323). This imaginative vision of Christ is, if very Victorian, decidedly unorthodox. One may object that White's interpretation reflects only his own fears and needs, and tells us little about Christ. In one sense, this is true, for the "something which may be worse" than death in the passage quoted above is surely White's melancholia.

Yet the immense significance that White places on the suffering of Christ is more than egocentric projection. I have observed before that White distinguishes among various kinds of suffering. Most horrifying to him was the waste and degradation which he perceived, for instance, in the slums of Drury Lane, and which he correctly viewed as destructive of the human spirit. But I have also discussed that suffering which may be necessary in order to become fully human: from between the very horns of the wild oxen deliverance comes. White
understood what Viktor Frankl has attempted to clarify in his work *Man's Search for Meaning*: that a man who has a *why* to live for, can bear almost any *how*; that what does not kill a man may make him stronger; that suffering itself may be an achievement which cannot be taken away.\textsuperscript{11} A person can then attempt to find significance in his individual suffering. White believed that the example of Christ's passion helped in such a quest: Christ had gone before, and human distress was understood by him experientially and totally. By empathically understanding that there is no human suffering which Christ had not also endured, White discovered strength and meaning.

In the *Autobiography*, when Mary Mardon sings "He was despised" from Handel's *Messiah*, Rutherford remarks how this "tragedy of all human worth and genius" moves the listener: "Nobody would be bold enough to cry, *That too is my case*, and yet the poorest and the humblest soul has a right to the consolation that Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" \textsuperscript{(A, 91)}. The belief that human suffering can be redemptive is the idea which underlies Rutherford's Drury Lane theology. Attempting to help the downtrodden laborers toward "contentment with their lot, and even some joy in it" \textsuperscript{(A, 227)} was its central aim. I should make it clear at once that we are not dealing here with cowardly and morbid resignation, any more than the submission of Job to God was a frightened giving-in to a display of divine power. Rather, Drury Lane theology embodied what White recognized in the story of Job. Job is given no rational explanation of why man suffers, but he is offered a means of dealing with suffering. Through the vision and response of Almighty God, Job realizes meaning and discovers a reason for endurance. In his own trials, White endured, waiting for "the word that would dispel it all." The Christ who had preceded him in suffering, fearing abandonment at the very last moment, and who was yet faithful unto death, becomes for White the meaning and reason for suffering.
We can thus come closer to understanding what White terms, in various places, election not to happiness but to suffering. In the *Autobiography*, Rutherford explores the idea of election by analyzing the faithful behavior of Ellen Butts. Her husband deceives and mistreats her, and her response is neither blame nor judgment, but loving endurance. She "fully understood," says Rutherford, "what St. Paul means when he tells the Thessalonians that *because* they were called, *therefore* they were to stand fast" (A, 206). This episode further clarifies White's reinterpretation of Calvinist election. Again, he is not advocating a masochistic cult of pain. The elect, in these circumstances, do not discover their individual worth by voluntarily establishing themselves as an elite of martyrs. Ellen feels "called"; that is, she now perceives an *intention*, a meaning in the suffering she must undergo. She stands fast; through her fidelity, vitality and purpose are given to her human freedom. We find the same situation in *Clara Hopgood*. Clara looks out into the dawn and foresees her destiny. She will suffer voluntarily so that Baruch and her sister may be happy. The message, she says later, was "authentic" (CH, 286). She is called, therefore she stands fast.

I have said before that White's heroes have all gone through the agony of the "Everlasting No" and yet triumphed. Of all these, Christ remained the greatest hero and most complete example. White learned that it is necessary to go through the Valley of the Shadow in order to reach the Celestial City: the way of salvation is the way of the Cross. When he first began the long process of investigation and discovery on the path of spiritual freedom, "reaching after a meaning" constituted heresy. However ironically it was intended, the remark is true. His own personal experience undermined dogma, and melancholia and despair ensued. Yet only through confrontation with the tragic depths of life is salvation—as White came to understand the word—possible. Genuine investigation of the spirit behind the letter, of the human and suffering Christ who had been imbedded
in myth and dogma, involves recognition of the "sacred horror of existence." Salvation occurs when suffering is endured in faith. By enduring, White came close to the spiritual community he sought. In the Passion of Christ, as in the spiritual autobiographies which also gave him consolation, he found a link to that community. The pattern offered by Christ, and reproduced in the experience of those who served him, validates and gives a larger context to his own individual struggle. The Autobiography tells of White's own "Passion." I have suggested earlier that by writing it and by exploring the questions of love and suffering in his other fiction, he actively participated in a spiritual community and offered up to it his own failures, sorrows, and partial victory.

White perceives Christ, then, as the example par excellence. He is the actualization of our humanity, very man. But what of Christ as motivating power? How does White move from the vision of the example to the power to copy it? The American theologian Horace Bushnell acutely describes the difficulty: "the truth is that we consciously want something better than a model to be copied; some vehicle of God to the soul, that is able to copy God into it. Something is wanted that shall go before and beget in us the disposition to copy an example." 12

To clarify White's understanding of this "vehicle of God to the soul," it is useful to examine some additional aspects of the intellectual context in which he was reasoning. White frequently appears to embrace nineteenth-century ideas of progress without really thinking about them. For instance, in the middle of his discussion on the theology taught to Drury Lane, he remarks that "there can surely be no question that the sum of satisfaction is increasing, not merely in the gross but for each human being, as the earth from which we sprang is being worked out of the race, and a higher type is being developed" (A, 229–30). Although assumptions of this kind are scattered throughout his writings, they appear to be more in the nature
of an automatic response or a hope that a reasoned belief, for White’s experience had convinced him that at the center of human life is a basic flaw which prevents the realization of the ideal fulfillment that people can conceive.

In Christian terms, the flaw resides in the human will. Human beings cannot will fulfillment into existence by their own power; they require divine grace. The ideal fulfillment is Christ, the ideally human example of what people could be. Here White, in his reinterpretation and his efforts to make Christianity vital and accessible to a nineteenth-century public, is still essentially in the tradition of Paul, Augustine, Luther, and Bunyan. The most striking theme of White’s fiction—conversion, renewal, reconciliation—testifies to his sense that human beings live by grace and are in constant need of forgiveness. Although the machinery of nineteenth-century Calvinism had obscured this perception in his youth, the need for forgiveness and renewal continually haunted him. At this point we return to the beginning of our discussion of Hale White. I have argued that his most significant youthful experience was conversion, an experience that he instinctively knew was spurious: he felt no new life within. Although he was never to have the overwhelming, dramatic “turning about” that was held in such esteem by the congregation of Bunyan Meeting, yet he did experience, over and over again, in flashes and in transient moments, what he truly felt was the grace of God.

I began this chapter with White’s account of Caleb Morris, in whom he saw “the indwelling Christ.” This term and the surrounding remarks constitute, I believe, White’s attempt to define “grace,” the power of God in man, the “disposition to copy an example.”

White attempts to connect the “indwelling Christ” with what he perceives as freedom of being. Self-concern seems to have been absent in Morris; God’s grace manifested itself as a new life working in him and outward to the world. White notes
that real conversion is not a “selfish anxiety for the salvation of... [one’s] own soul, but a disappearance of self in love” (P, 310). White is concerned here with the central paradox of Christian thought. As the old self is invaded and broken, the genuine self emerges; one must die in order to be reborn, and the final result is one of loving relationship: “I in thee and thou in me.” “It is the Christ who has been given us,” he writes, “who is really ourselves” (GD, 41).

White’s understanding of the “indwelling Christ” tends to suggest the power of God in people much more than the power of God over them. But the disposition to follow the example, the creation of a vehicle of God to the soul, is nevertheless brought about through love. It is not enough, writes Rutherford in the Autobiography, to agree to admire Jesus; one must be possessed by his love. Drury Lane theology had Christ at its center. The members were exhorted to consider what Christ meant to Paul: “Jesus was in him;... that is to say, Jesus lived in him like a second soul, taking the place of his own soul and directing him accordingly... [M’Kay’s] object, therefore, would be to preach Christ, as before said, and to introduce into human life His unifying influence. He would try to get them to see things with the eyes of Christ, to love with His love, to judge with His judgement” (A, 172–73). The passage reinterprets Paul. Christ should be in human beings “like a second soul”; the sentence distinctly echoes Galatians 2:20: “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” We find a similar comment in a paragraph on Bunyan in Last Pages From a Journal: “His Righteousness is Christ; not merely because by that superior Righteousness he is saved, as by something external and beyond him, but because it is his, it is he, Bunyan himself. Christ is I, more than I am myself” (LP, 268; my emphasis).13

White began his quest by rejecting the false righteousness of unreal conversion, but he returned continually to the sense of renewal and freedom of being that he found in people such as
Morris and Bunyan. The "whole drift" of Paul's epistles, as White sees it in "Principles," is "to turn Christ into a second conscience" (A, 311). In the passages just quoted, we see White reaching toward a definition of the experience of new life. The indwelling Christ, as he sensed in Caleb Morris, creates "the freest of men." That freedom of being is manifested in life and in community as forgiving, sin-bearing love.

Of all the sermons he heard Morris preach, the one that lived most vividly in White's memory was a sermon on the Prodigal Son. He explores the ramifications of the parable in The Early Life, Catharine Furze, "Michael Trevanion," and his essay on Caleb Morris. In all these works, White is concerned to emphasize that, in the life of those possessed by the spirit of Christ, grace manifests itself as freedom to love, as the complete repentance and forgiveness which are possible only through love. In the story of the Prodigal Son, love is stronger than sin and death. White remarks that in Morris's retelling of the parable, there were "striking omissions": "There was no word of the orthodox machinery of forgiveness" (EL, 87). Morris reached after the spirit and intention of the story; he did not use it as a text upon which to hang the external doctrine White so despised. In all his remarks on the parable, White emphasizes not only the divine forgiveness of the father but the "magnificent repentance" of the son (MS, 168). Both characters, and the depth and significance of their human relationship, affected White powerfully. Morris pointed out, White notes, that although the parable "taught us the depth of God's love, [it] was a glorification by Jesus of human love" (LP, 245). White makes the same point more emphatically in Catharine Furze. Mr. Cardew, preaching on the Prodigal Son, observes that the story sets forth not only the magnificence of the divine nature, "but of human nature—of that nature which God assumed." The erring son, when he "came to himself" (Luke 15:17), arose and went to his father. White concludes: "'Father, I have sinned,' was as great as God
is great: it was God—God moving in us; in a sense it was far more truly God—far greater than the force which binds the planets into a system (CF, 216–17).

Here we have a concrete example of the “indwelling Christ.” The power of God moving in the son opens his eyes and allows him to realize both error and relationship. In another contest White exclaims, “No excuses; a noble confession and a trust in his father’s affection for him!” (MS, 168). The son confesses that he has sinned before heaven and earth and moves instinctively in love, grief, and remorse toward the parent whom he has injured. The father’s response is complete forgiveness; his love for his son cancels out the thought of punishment. Following here Morris’s enactment of the story, White imagines the father looking down the long, dusty road, wondering and waiting—“Shall I see him today?” (LP, 245). There is no word of rebuke, only an embrace. The fatted calf is killed, and the ring, a “sign of honour,” White says, is placed on the prodigal’s finger (CF, 217). In The Early Life, White stresses the magnanimity and completeness of the forgiveness that transforms the evil against itself into love: “The hardest thing in the world is to be completely generous in forgiveness. The most magnanimous of men cannot resist the temptation—but at the same time you must see, my dearest, don’t you?” (EL, 86). The same point is made in Cardew’s sermon: “it is this [forgiveness] upon which Jesus, the Son of God, has put His stamp, not the lecture, not chastisement, not expiation, but an instant unquestioning embrace, no matter what the wrong may have been” (CF, 217–18). Both Morris and White stress the ideal human relationship manifested in the parable. The first movement of the son’s repentance is toward the parent whom he has offended. Morris had remarked, “Did the prodigal son say when he came to himself, ‘I will join this or that institution’? No! but ‘I will arise and go to my father’” (LP, 248). The first movement of the father’s forgiveness is a loving embrace, a welcome back to life,
by means of his love. The relationship suggested here is brought about not by assent to propositions and articles of belief, but by total response to those to whom we are bound in love. The father is free to love without qualification; the son is free to repent without excuse. Through the power of love, the “dead son lives.”

The vital consequences of grace, then, are love and forgiveness. Through his work, White distinguishes between mere observation of the law and the responses motivated by love. I have already observed his need for that which is positive and life-affirming in faith, criticism, and art. In *Catharine Furze*, Cardew, who is modeled after Caleb Morris—at least in his eloquence and in the content of his sermons—points the distinction between love and the law in his discussion of the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18–30). Cardew remarks that the young ruler has observed the law all his life and instinctively feels it to be insufficient. Then Cardew gives his congregation the reason for this insufficiency:

To begin with it is largely negative: there are three negatives in this twentieth verse for one affirmative, and negations cannot redeem us. The law is also external. As a proof that it is ineffectual, I ask, Have you ever *rejoiced* in it? Have you ever been kindled by it? Have all its precepts ever moved you like one single item in the story of the love of Jesus? Is the man attractive to you who has kept the law and done nothing more? Would not the poor woman who anointed our Lord’s feet and wiped them with her hair be more welcome to you than the holy people who had simply never transgressed? (CF, 111–12)

Again the emphasis is upon affirmative and spontaneous human feeling. White felt all his life that he was held at a distance by people who claimed to be committed Christians. Love, says Mark Rutherford, “is simply the most precious thing in existence” (A, 111). Sadly, his early ministry was directed toward those who
“had simply never transgressed.” Love was always lacking. The language of Cardew’s sermon reveals what White was constantly seeking. The law is insufficient because one is not “kindled” by it; it is not life-giving. There is no inward “rejoicing”; it is “largely negative.” One of White’s characters remarks, “I do not much believe in duty, nor, if I read my New Testament aright, did the Apostle Paul. For Jesus he would do anything. That sacred face would have drawn me whither the Law would never have driven me” (P, 193). The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. White’s fiction dramatizes this distinction; he creates situations in which spontaneous love and forgiveness triumph over the law: “Religion,” he writes, is “the expression of our relationship to God... It is Love” (LP, 316).

Rutherford’s novels abound with characters who initially appear to be peripheral to the action and detached from the central figures, but who, at important moments in each novel, act with charity and compassion: Mrs. Bellamy, who stands in place of a mother to Catharine Furze; Mrs. Tippet, the landlady who nurses Miriam when she is ill; Mrs. Caffyn, who takes care of the pregnant Madge Hopgood; Mrs. Taylor, who nurses Mark Rutherford’s wife; Mrs. Carter, who looks after Zachariah and his wife when they are ill. All these characters, modern equivalents of the Good Samaritan, act from unselfish love. Mark Rutherford, narrating Clara Hopgood, makes the point clear: Mrs. Caffyn was “a Christian, but she was a disciple of St. James rather than of St. Paul... her belief that ‘faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone,’ was something very vivid and very practical” (CH, 120).16 These characters expect no recompense. Love for them is its own reward. As Miriam Tacchi slowly emerges from unconsciousness, she perceives that the spinster landlady whom she had despised and ignored is her nurse. Miriam cries, “What claim have I on you?” Like others of White’s characters in such situations, Miss Tippet replies by alluding to Matthew 5:46: “Hush, my dear; those days are past. You did not
love me then perhaps; but what of that? I am sure you will not mind my saying it: 'If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even publicans the same?'" (MS, 115). The charity of these characters on the periphery of the main action becomes an important ethical statement in the novels. These "unhistoric acts" (in George Eliot's phrase) are seen to count: they are decisive in the protagonists' individual histories. Indeed, these minor characters, who "lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs," are central in the web of "commonplace" virtues that texture the world of White's novels.

Similarly, various characters in the novels enact the complete forgiveness expressed by the father of the Prodigal Son. White makes this point most emphatically in the short story "Esther," by creating the opposite situation. Esther finds that she has made a tragic mistake in marriage, and her husband's coldness and complete want of sympathy make reconciliation impossible. Refusing to forgive Esther for some trifling error, the husband remarks that she need only amend her behavior. As for forgiveness, he says, "I do not quite comprehend the term." Esther writes to her mother that her impulse, whenever she has disagreed with someone, is to fly to him and "wash away differences with sheer affection" (MP, 53). But she cannot move toward her husband. The impulse dissolves before the barrier of his rigidity. Esther compares the coldness of her husband, and their want of communication, to the disagreements and reconciliations she has had with her brother: "Forgiveness is not a remission of consequences on repentance. It is simply love, a love so strong that in its heat the offence vanishes. Without love... forgiveness even of the smallest mistake is impossible" (MP, 54).

It is in _Clara Hopgood_ that we find the most complete exemplum of forgiveness. Here, in his final novel, White has excised all sentimentality; he portrays the consequences of
human emotions with a detached and magnificent clarity. Madge Hopgood, after her sexual encounter with her fiancé, Frank, finds that she does not love him and refuses to marry him. Not long after, she discovers that she is pregnant. She goes to her mother. Clearly echoing the Prodigal Son, Madge confesses her situation without explanation or excuse: “Your daughter has wrecked your peace forever!” (CH, 103). Mrs. Hopgood goes alone to her room and begins her mental struggle. She rejects the idea of punishment, yet “she felt that this sorrow was unlike other sorrows and that it could never be healed” (CH, 104). Her solitary vigil concluded, she prays, and then returns to her offending daughter: “Neither uttered a word, but Madge fell down before her, and, with a great cry, buried her face in her mother’s lap. She remained kneeling for some time waiting for a rebuke, but none came. Presently she felt smoothing hands on her head and the soft impress of lips. So was she judged” (CH, 104–05). Like the Magdalene whose namesake she is, Madge is forgiven. In the subsequent action of the novel, however, White makes it clear that the loving forgiveness he portrays requires much more than a tearful embrace or a sentimental gesture. Madge is forgiven, but the anguish and difficulty her action has created are not glossed over. Mrs. Hopgood’s forgiveness includes more than compassionate feelings toward her daughter. She takes Madge’s burden upon herself in practical terms: the family must move; Mrs. Hopgood is subjected to humiliation by a judgmental public; Clara, Madge’s sister, must go to work in a dingy London shop. The chain of events begun by Madge’s error culminates in her mother’s death. Mrs. Hopgood suffers willingly for her beloved daughter. Like Ellen Butts, she is called and stands fast. Madge is healed by the power of her mother’s love; she is, in other words, redeemed.
I suggested at the beginning of this chapter that the central theme of White's fiction is reconciliation, achieved through the activity of the "indwelling Christ." It is, of course, not quite that straightforward. The novels all have flaws either of conception or execution; the ambivalence I have already discussed in White's work sometimes causes thematic confusion; certainly some of his solutions to the problems of suffering and freedom are less acceptable or credible than others. Nevertheless, it remains true that if we look at White's fictional achievement as a whole, we see him struggling with the same material, trying again and again to penetrate the mystery imaginatively. How can we live with the "facts" and not despair? Is it possible to escape the confines of dread and self-concern and become a truly free person? What is the source, the secret of "actual joy"? In what way are divine and human love related? As he explores these questions, White continually returns to the idea that suffering and salvation are inextricably linked, that the way of salvation is the way of the Cross. The "conversions" of various characters include both renunciation and reconciliation, and in each case, human suffering is given meaning through the power of sin-bearing love.

With each novel, White reworks the real experience of conversion: "I am crucified with Christ, and yet I live, yet not I but Christ who lives in me." He tries to illuminate the meaning of this event—the death of the old self and the birth of the new—in ordinary, secular terms. We have seen that in the novels forgiveness is shown to be impossible without love. Conversion, which brings with it new life and new sight, is equally dependent on love's motivating power. Thus, in the Autobiography and Deliverance, Mark Rutherford transcends melancholia and self-hatred through the love of his wife and her child. The Revolution in Tanner's Lane (1887) emphasizes renunciation: Zachariah's
heroism is his suffering endurance. *Miriam's Schooling* (1890) requires the heroine to renounce the dream of ideal love and fulfillment. In *Catharine Furze* (1895), Catharine and Cardew are able to renounce eros through a greater love for each other. It is the final novel, *Clara Hopgood* (1896), however, which explores with ruthless clarity the ultimate human renunciation. Here White offers the vision of the "Eternal Christ" as the freest and most complete human achievement. I shall look briefly at the earlier novels before turning to White's masterpiece. First, though, some further discussion of his reinterpretation of the Atonement will help to clarify his major fictional focus.

At college, as he attempts to make sense of theological language and calcified doctrine, Mark Rutherford reaches through to the "original necessity" of Christianity, and tries to "go back to Paul and his century, . . . and connect the atonement through him with something which I felt" (A, 21). The sermon Mark delivers on this subject creates consternation among the learned professors, who feel that his interpretation departs from the "simplicity" of the Gospels. They are distressed not because Rutherford ignores or undermines the meaning of the Atonement, but because he has attempted to extend that meaning into ordinary human life. He is attracted by the intersection of this great historical act with the commonplace facts of human endeavor. The Atonement is, he feels, not a remote, finished achievement but a continuing and living possibility:

I began by saying that in this world there was no redemption for man but by blood; furthermore, the innocent had everywhere and in all time to suffer for the guilty. It had been objected that it was contrary to our notion of an all-loving Being that He should demand such a sacrifice; but, contrary or not, in this world it was true, quite apart from Jesus, that virtue was martyred every day, unknown and unconsolcd, in order that the wicked might somehow be saved. . . . The consequences of my sin, moreover, are rendered less terrible by virtues not my own. I am literally
saved from penalties because another pays the penalty for me. The atonement, and what it accomplished for man, were therefore a sublime summing up as it were of what sublime men have to do for their race; an exemplification, rather than a contradiction, of Nature herself, as we know her in our experience. (A, 22)¹⁷

Rutherford neither questions nor limits the sacrifice of Christ. He implies, I think, that if the idea is contrary to our notion of an all-loving Being, it is because our notions are sentimental. The depth and infiniteness of the love that gives its only son and accepts his sacrifice is terrifying and unimaginable. Yet it seems true to Rutherford, not because it is a fine idea, but because in a smaller way it is his own daily human experience. In Last Pages From a Journal, White gives this note on the subject: “It is a shallow notion that the suffering of another for our transgressions is injustice and a moral wrong. We are saved by the sacrifice of the Just. Never is individualism more completely mistaken than in proclaiming the horror of redemption from evil by the death of him who is not guilty” (LP, 319–20). Self-sacrificing love, which bears others’ burdens and endures their sins, is not an abstraction for White but actual human behavior, found in the midst of the “facts”: crowds, hurry, commonplaceness.

One could say that all White’s fictional characters are frustrated in some way. The cosmic straitjacket, the “rigidity of the material universe in which we are placed,” whether in the form of natural law or historical determinism or social custom, affects them spiritually or emotionally. White assumes that this “sorrow of life” is a donné; it is the understood context of his imaginative world. The question then becomes: what are the possibilities for freedom and “actual joy” within these limitations? His characters do find answers to this question, although many of their triumphs are muted or somehow qualified.

Mark Rutherford, for example, discovers various paths of deliverance. He transforms his egocentric perspective and
endeavors to focus his attention on "what is outside self, and yet is truly self." As we have seen, this self-transcendence is achieved by means of nature, the stars, living in the present, ceasing the "trick of contrast" (A, 259), and most completely through the love of his wife, Ellen. The love of woman is, Mark exclaims, "a revelation of the relationship in which God stands to him—of what ought to be, in fact" (A, 253). In Ellen he saw "the Divine Nature itself, and that her passion was a stream straight from the Highest. The love of woman is, . . . a living witness never failing of an actuality in God which otherwise we should never know." Thus human love both gives Rutherford back the self from which he had been alienated, and reveals the potential relationship of the self to God. When genuine reconciliation occurs, he experiences freedom from egocentric suffering and limiting self-definition. Momentarily, melancholia and separation are forgotten in the presence of "actual joy." The triumph of Rutherford’s deliverance is nevertheless heavily qualified by his sudden death and Shapcott’s abrupt and painful epilogue. Mark’s heart attack is occasioned by the stress of his job; his effects are sent home to his widow “in a brown paper parcel, carriage unpaid” (A, 272).

In *The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane*, Zachariah’s determination to endure a life in which he expects nothing but misery is celebrated as the heroism peculiar to the modern world. For much of the novel, renunciation appears as the central human virtue. Zachariah’s “turning about” or rebirth is a gradual process. It begins in the workhouse to which he is taken during the illness that follows the failure of the Blanketeer march. As John Lucas notes, “Hale White is one of many Victorian novelists who use breakdown as a very proper means of symbolizing a crisis in consciousness.” As Zachariah awakens from his delirium, he sees the “radiant, healthy, impetuous” Mrs. Carter, who takes him into her home and nurses him back to health (RTL, 208). His recovery is gradual and is effected by his regenerative
relationship with the natural world, and by the inspiring example of his martyred friend Caillaud, who is the representative of the "Sacrifice of the Just" in the novel. Caillaud lives on in Zachariah, who survives to enact Caillaud's radical ideas and to marry his daughter. The little Pauline, Zachariah's own daughter, becomes the real instrument of his salvation. After his wife's death, left alone with "a bitter sense of wrong," he withdraws into himself. Love for his child dissolves "some heavy obstruction in his brain and about his heart," and Zachariah rejoices to find that "he had not stiffened into death." At the bedside of his daughter, "the tears came, and he thanked God, not only for her but for his tears" (RTL, 281). Human love is again the means of reconciling man and God.

In the second half of the novel, George Allen takes Zachariah's place as the hero who suffers but endures. George, nearly destroyed by his unhappy marriage, is saved by Zachariah's counsel and his gift of Thomas à Kempis' _The Imitation of Christ_. As George reads "He that can best tell how to suffer will best keep himself in peace," and "He to whom the Eternal Word speaketh is delivered from a world of unnecessary conceptions," in him as in Maggie Tulliver begins the birth "of what philosophers call the _idea_, that Incarnation which has ever been our Redemption" (RTL, 341-42). His former blind endurance is now informed with a meaning. He survives: a central, directing, indwelling example creates in him the reason and capacity for faith.

White criticizes, we recall, the accounts of conversion experiences related by the elect in Bunyan Meeting. They were "very often inaccurately picturesque, and . . . [were] framed after the model of the journey to Damascus" (EL, 57). Yet in his secular reinterpretation of the old self and the birth of the new, White himself evokes the original model as the metaphor for his characters' experience. In _Miriam's Schooling_ and _Catharine_
Furze, he recreates the feeling and spirit of this central Christian experience and makes the original live once more.

After Miriam's unfortunate love affair, she, like Zachariah, becomes ill, and survives only because of Miss Tippett's compassionate care. When she recovers, Miriam journeys to Stonehenge. That mysterious monument created in White himself "perfectly worthless depression begotten by the idea of the transitory passage of the generations across the planet." Similarly, Miriam is "oppressed with a sense of her own nothingness" (MS, 116). But at Stonehenge, without apparent cause, her movement toward new life begins, with a sudden desire to become a nurse. With characteristic narrative reticence, White refuses to offer a psychological explanation for her change of heart. Instead, he appeals to the Pauline archetype of her experience:

it may be urged that no sufficient cause is shown for Miriam's determination. What had she undergone? A little poverty, a little love affair, a little sickness. But what brought Paul to the disciples at Damascus? A light in the sky and a vision. . . . Paul had that in him which could be altered by the pathetic words of the Crucified One, "I am He whom thou persecutest." . . . There are some mortals on this earth to whom nothing more than a certain summer morning very early, or a certain chance idea in a lane ages ago, or a certain glance from a fellow-creature dead for years, has been the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, or the Descent of the Holy Ghost. (MS, 118–19)

Lucas suggests that in her movement from "egoism to altruism" Miriam "is the clearest example of Hale White's debt to George Eliot." I would add, more specifically, that Miriam resembles Maggie Tulliver. Both heroines are characterized by frustrated intelligence and idealistic yearnings, passionate energy and unconventional attitudes; both are nearly overwhelmed by
the "oppressive narrowness"\textsuperscript{22} of a nineteenth-century rural environment. Miriam, like Maggie, throws herself into renunciation with dramatic intensity. When the initial ardor cools, Maggie is sustained by the "path of martyrdom and endurance,"\textsuperscript{23} but Miriam soon discovers that she is inadequate as a nursing sister. She is dismissed: the glorious prospect of immediate self-transformation fades, and the hard, slow process of renewal begins. In Miriam's subsequent history we see what might have happened to Maggie if she had not been swept away in the flood. George Eliot allows Maggie the transcendent vision of her final moments and death in the arms of her brother, and there ends the question of how to bear the cross. But Miriam is required to endure and struggle for an answer: we have already examined her melancholia, her unhappy marriage, and her gradual movement out of despair. The ending of the novel shows Miriam strengthened in self-knowledge and a recognition of her husband's virtues. This conclusion is not, however, entirely satisfactory. Miriam's "schooling" is too harsh; we rebel at the extent of her compromise, at the weariness of her resignation, at the destruction of her rebellious youthful energy.

In previous chapters I discussed Catharine Furze's melancholia and passion. She is, I suggested, emotionally in exile. The narrator tells us that she was born too late to have been molded by the faith of her ancestors, and too soon to be influenced by the new education of the later nineteenth century. She falls in love with Cardew inevitably, for it is he who provides her with a spiritual home. Catharine's renunciation of Cardew—she turns away from him at the crucial moment by the river, through a power "not her own"—is followed by illness and, finally, death. When Catharine rejects him, Cardew himself experiences the sudden and inexplicable "turning about" that transforms vision and behavior: "As he went along something came to him—the same Something which had so often restrained Catharine. It smote him as the light from heaven smote Saul of
Tarsus journeying to Damascus. His eyes were opened; he crept into an outhouse in the fields, and there alone in an agony he prayed” (CF, 342). Cardew’s enlightenment includes a new recognition of his wife’s virtues and a renewed sense of his duty to her. The pattern is: vision, renunciation, recognition, reconciliation. Here again, the activity of the “indwelling Christ” is realized through the power of human love. Cardew’s regeneration occurs not because he turns away from Catharine, but as a result of his love for her. Although their passion is never consummated, its power transforms Cardew’s life. He changes, not as a result of some new theory or principle, but through love. The vision of Catharine’s face “controlled and moulded him with an all-pervading power more subtle and penetrating than that which could have been exercised by theology or ethics” (CF, 366). Shortly before her death, Catharine and Cardew meet once more. He wishes to tell her that she has saved him; she smiles and responds, “You have saved me.”

The narrator leaves us in no doubt as to how we are to interpret this exchange: “By their love for each other they were both saved. The disguises are manifold which the Immortal Son assumes in the work of our redemption” (CF, 365). This gloss on the final dialogue is, however, not entirely consistent with the action and feeling of the novel as a whole. Cardew is saved, certainly: his entire life is redeemed by Catharine’s self-sacrificing love. He becomes a kind and loving husband and a better minister. His intellectual pride dissolves, and his sermons are now “of the simplest kind—exhortations to pity, consideration, gentleness, and counsels as to the common duties of life” (CF, 365–66). Catharine’s love has opened to him the heart of the gospel.

Catharine’s salvation is more problematic. I believe we are meant to see that loving Cardew has given her being a center, has both evoked and focused her diffuse moral and intellectual energies. Thus, renouncing Cardew is the free act issuing from
her love. What began as eros develops into sin-bearing love, which seeks not its own. But though we recognize all this, we may still feel uncomfortable. We cannot neglect the fact that Catharine dies, not because of consumption, but because she has lost the will to live, and lost it because her passion for Cardew cannot be fulfilled. Thus the erotic dimension of the novel complicates, and to some extent qualifies, the effectiveness of the central, informing idea. We understand what White wanted to achieve; he did not quite accomplish it.

In *Clara Hopgood*, though, the suggestion of underlying defeat is absent. When White's final novel was published in 1896, many critics condemned it, mainly because of its controversial subject matter. White took the criticism in stride but did eventually respond to the charges of immorality brought against the book. His remarks are characteristic; they also suggest a context in which to read the novel. "The accusation is another proof that, even in a country which calls the New Testament a sacred book and professes to read it, the distinction between real and sham morality is almost unknown."²⁴ Later readers, however, have fewer prejudices to overcome in reading the novel, and their responses have generally been favorable. Irwin Stock, for example, remarks in his thoughtful analysis that *Clara Hopgood* "has a character often associated with a master's late works, the character of an ultimate distillation."²⁵ More recently, John Lucas has described it as White's "finest" novel, although he considers it "very nearly a darkly pessimistic" one, whose tone is "problematic, agonized . . . open."²⁶ I see the novel as the culmination of White's intellectual quest and his greatest imaginative achievement. It is intellectually dense, yet it is not a novel of "ideas." Rather, here all White's small currents, explored in his previous fiction, flow home to the sea. Much of the material of other novels, especially *Catharine Furze* and *Miriam's Schooling*, is reworked with greater intellectual clarity and aesthetic integrity. The quality of the prose and the compact
FREEDOM

but subtle structure of the novel reveal White at his purest and most austere.

The introductory action of the novel is a chess game played by the two sisters, Madge and Clara Hopgood. The opening dialogue effectively suggests the different natures of the sisters and also serves to introduce the principal theme and method of the novel. Madge declares that she is unable to play chess well because she does not possess the "gift" or "instinct" that makes a good player. Clara responds that her sister is over-fond of the word *instinct* and points out that Madge is poor at the game because she refuses to anticipate logically her opponent's next move. It appears that Madge is characterized by instinct; Clara by rational insight. The two attitudes express dominant and often conflicting aspects of White's own character. As we have seen, the claims of principle and reasonable dogma were often in conflict in him with the prompting of the "inner light." Both attitudes are examined in the novel, and neither is dismissed. Nor are they united in a false synthesis. Rather, they are held in delicate equipoise, for each has valid claims. Here White imaginatively examines the meaning of what he calls the "yes and no" (RTL, 327); here we find him reaching through to the significance of a world "transcendent both in glory and horror," a world "infinite both ways" (CH, 110). The sisters' conversation moves on to the subject of love, the central concern of the novel. From this point onward, White explores the nature and meaning of different kinds of human love from a variety of shifting perspectives. With subtlety and complexity, he presents eros, maternal and filial affection, charity, and finally, sin-bearing love. In the initial conversation, Madge affirms her belief in love at first sight, and Clara argues that her whole "strength of... soul" should be directed toward understanding *why* she loves (CH, 34). Whereas Madge thinks Romeo and Juliet are appropriate examples, Clara thinks one ought to discover "what is the true law of... [one's] own nature" (CH, 35). The novel is largely
concerned with Clara’s gradual discovery of that law and the final fulfillment of her nature.

One other episode early in the novel foreshadows and conceptualizes Clara’s later actions. In White’s novels a small story-within-a-story, often a tale told by one of the characters, sometimes functions as a symbolic adumbration of the main action. These “seeds” seem to contain the potential for the whole novel. In the *Autobiography*, for example, Miss Arbour’s story serves quite obviously as a comment on Rutherford’s marital decisions. More elusively, it adds another dimension to the larger questions of exile and community and the significance of human relationships. Similarly, in *Catharine Furze*, the story of Charmides, the cultivated Roman who falls in love with a Christian slave and finally chooses Christian martyrdom, foreshadows Catharine’s death and her final assumption of Cardew’s religious frame of reference. It functions more subtly, however, as a reference point for the reader’s experience of the conclusion: Charmides is faithful to the end, yet his whole case and claim to martyrdom are considered “dubious” by religious authority. The inset story indirectly adds several nuances to the novel’s questioning of the relationship between erotic and self-sacrificing love.

In *Clara Hopgood*, the tale-within-a-tale involves a man whose daughter suffers from kleptomania. In moments of mental disorder, the child steals things but later recalls nothing of her actions. Clara recounts the tale to her family. One day the daughter is caught with a stolen handkerchief. Her father, who has always attempted to make light of her ailment, fearing that calling attention to it might intensify the affliction, confesses to the theft and takes the blame himself. He goes to prison, but lives to see his daughter happily married and cured of her illness. The child never learns of her father’s sacrifice; his written confession is discovered only after her death. The story provokes a discussion about self-sacrifice. Clara wonders whether the
father's lie to save his daughter might be considered a sin. Madge vehemently declares that lying is not sinful if it is "to save anybody whom you love" (CH, 57). Clara, however, thinks one should not abrogate a rule by some special pleading. Without the rule, how can one know "what is right and what is not" (CH, 58)? As to whether they themselves would be capable of such a sacrifice, Mrs. Hopgood remarks that such a question can only be answered under the stress of the trial itself. The "emergency brings the insight and the power necessary to deal with it" (CH, 57).

Clearly the story and the conversation surrounding it are dense with hints and possibilities. At this point in the novel there have in fact already been a few other foreshadowings of the impending action; the story is a culmination of these. In the preceding chapter, Madge's suitor, Frank, had introduced Saint Paul into the conversation—and into the consciousness of the reader—by singing fragments of a new oratorio, "St. Paul." In spite of Madge's objections that "Jewish history is not a musical subject" (CH, 48), Frank sings "Be not afraid" and "Be thou faithful unto death." These phrases resonate more deeply as the novel unfolds. In this scene also, Clara remarks that if she were famous, she would "sacrifice all the adoration of the world for the love of a brother—if I had one—or a sister, who perhaps had never heard what it was which had made me renowned" (CH, 44). The impact of these hints is cumulative; and they are eventually perceived as connecting threads in the tapestry of the whole. Clara will sacrifice everything for a loved one who never learns what she has done. She will be faithful unto death and discover the courage for her conviction only, as Mrs. Hopgood had predicted, within the event itself.

It is not my purpose to offer a complete analysis of the novel but to concentrate on its central act and idea as White's most perfect fictional moment and the imaginative realization of his religious quest. I shall briefly summarize the action leading up
to that moment. Following her instinct, Madge falls in love with
Frank Palmer, the attractive son of a friend of her late father.
Though during the courtship she begins to doubt their
compatibility, she becomes engaged to him. Frank is charming,
pleasant, and shallow; he gleans bits of ideas from others but
earns none of his conclusions. He is much struck by “profundity”
(which he cannot distinguish from sentimentality) and is fond
of music, especially that of Beethoven. The narrator remarks that
while Frank “went into raptures over the slow movement in
the C minor Symphony, . . . no C minor slow movement
was discernible in his character” (CH, 47). White adds
another dimension to Frank’s character, however, by giving him
painful knowledge of his deficiencies: “although he knew
what he saw to be flimsy and shallow, he could do nothing
to deepen it, absolutely nothing! . . . It was his own inner being
from which he revolted, from limitations which are worse than
crimes, for who, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his
stature?” (CH, 149). Madge and Frank are strongly attracted to
each other, and Madge is able to deceive herself for a long while
because of her sexual response to Frank. Whenever she glimpses
what is clear to the mother and sister—that Frank is an echo and
not an authentic voice—she forces herself to recall his virtue,
charm, and devotion. The doubt cannot be entirely washed
away: “it was a little sharp rock based beneath the ocean’s
depths, and when the water ran low its dark point reappeared.”
But she partly succeeds in pouring a “self-raised tide” over the
doubt because “there was fire in her blood,” and “Frank’s arm
around her made the world well nigh disappear; her surrender
was entire, and if Sinai had thundered in her ears she would
not have heard” (CH, 88). It is in fact because Madge feels guilty
about her judgment of Frank and wishes to make amends for
her treacherous thoughts that she makes love with him. The
sexual act takes place in a barn during a thunderstorm and is
represented as irrevocable. Madge is a changed being, and
nothing will now be as it was. White communicates all this in a characteristic symbolic gesture: "Did you hear," said Clara to her mother at breakfast, "that the lightning struck one of the elms in the avenue at Mrs. Martin’s yesterday and splintered it to the ground?" (CH, 97). Immediately after this episode, Madge sends Frank away. Her feelings are now clear to her. She soon discovers that she is pregnant, but because she does not love the father of her child, she refuses to marry him. Having fallen in love through instinct and spontaneous response, she is led by these same qualities to stand firm in her refusal to marry: intuitively she understands that to marry for conventional and expedient reasons would be more sinful than her original error. The family moves to London, where Clara meets and falls in love with Baruch Cohen.

Clara becomes enamored of Baruch in the sound, rational way she espoused early in the story, yet at the moment when an answering look to Baruch’s tentative question would secure her a loving husband and a useful, joyful future, she refrains: "Something fell and flashed before her like lightning from a cloud overhead, divinely beautiful, but divinely terrible" (CH, 265). The narrator does not reveal at this point what she has "seen." Only later does it become apparent that she has recognized the potential for a relationship between Baruch and her sister. A man of Baruch’s philosophy and temperament would be unaffected by conventional responses to Madge’s history; an illegitimate child would create no problems for him. Some kind of call has come to Clara; and, more completely than any of her fictional predecessors, she “stands fast.” Clara arranges for her sister and Baruch to be together as much as possible. One day she sees the two alone, now obviously beginning to care for one another. "The message then was authentic," she says to herself: "I thought I could not have misunderstood it" (CH, 286). Significantly, Madge had used similar words when she refused to marry Frank: "It is not the first time in my life that the truth
has been revealed to me suddenly, supernaturally, . . . and I know the revelation is authentic’’ (CH, 99–100). Both sisters receive an “authentic message”: but while Madge’s revelation is an intuitive response to a present difficulty, without any consideration of the consequences of her decision, Clara has foreseen the future.

Clara’s vision at the crucial moment is characteristically expressive of her nature: in chess, she can see “two moves ahead.” Early in the novel, the narrator describes the two sisters and carefully draws attention to Clara’s eyes. Her sight is particularly strong: “Over and over again she had detected, along the stretch of the Eastthorpe road, approaching visitors, and had named them when her companions could see nothing but specks” (CH, 3). Moreover, sometimes these “excellent . . . optical instruments” changed and became “instruments of expression, transmissive of radiance to such a degree that the light which was reflected from them seemed insufficient to account for it” (CH, 3–4). Madge, like her namesake, loves much and loves a truth beyond herself, but Clara’s name connotes both clarity of vision and radiance. What exactly Clara foresees we are left to infer from her actions, but evidently she envisions self-denial of a radical kind.

Clara’s initial conversation with Baruch in chapter 22 prepares us for understanding her self-denial. Although, Baruch argues, “huge volumes of human energy are apparently annihilated, . . . there is another side. . . . The universe is so wonderful, so intricate, that it is impossible to trace the transformation of its forces, and when they seem to disappear the disappearance may be an illusion. Moreover, ‘waste’ is a word which is applicable only to finite resources. If the resources are infinite it has no meaning” (CH, 212). Clara loves both Baruch and her sister. Her vision of the transformation of one form of love by another to engender another still is “divinely beautiful”; but insofar as it involves recognition of the
suffering such transformations require, it is also "divinely terrible." Clara's final commitment to her vision, to what Madge, in fact, defines as a belief in God—"absolute loyalty to a principle we know to have authority" (CH, 271)—is not achieved without a struggle.

The narrator describes Clara's conflict and its final resolution in restrained and radiant prose. Characteristically, White begins not with the turmoil in the mind of his heroine but with the surrounding landscape. His method here echoes the dawn scene in Miriam's Schooling, but with greater beauty and effect. Clara awakens early one day and watches alone as night changes into morning. Her vision is framed by the casement window of her bedroom: "Below her, on the left, the church was just discernible, and on the right, the broad chalk uplands leaned to the south, and were waving with green barley and wheat. Underneath her lay the cottage garden, with its row of beehives in the north-east corner. sheltered from the cold winds by the thick hedge" (CH, 283). As Clara stares into the diminishing spring rain the narrator carefully, patiently describes each beautiful detail of the earth she is moving to renounce. The scene before her is one of vital process: the spring deepens into summer; the fading night gives way to dawn. These natural transformations also delicately symbolize the great change occurring in Clara's heart. Passion—for Baruch, for the earth, for life itself—is gradually dying, being reborn as selfless love. Clara watches as the sun approaches the horizon, follows with her eyes the "most delicate tints of rose-colour" and the diminishing blue over the cloud-bank:

she was moved even to tears by the beauty of the scene, but she was stirred by something more than beauty, just as he who was in the Spirit and beheld a throne and One sitting thereon, saw something more than loveliness, although He was radiant with the colour of jasper and there was a rainbow round about Him
like an emerald to look upon. In a few moments the highest top of the cloud-rampart was kindled, and the whole wavy outline became a fringe of flame. In a few moments more the fire just at one point became blinding, and in another second the sun emerged, the first arrowy shaft passed into her chamber, the first shadow was cast, and it was day. She put her hands to her face; the tears fell faster, but she wiped them away and her great purpose was fixed. She crept back into bed, her agitation ceased, a strange and almost supernatural peace overshadowed her and she fell asleep not to wake till the sound of the scythe had ceased in the meadow just beyond the rick-yard that came up to one side of the cottage, and the mowers were at their breakfast. (CH, 284-85)

The process of Clara's deepening understanding of what she is called upon to do parallels the coming of the dawn: as the light "kindles," "flames," becomes "blinding," so too does her insight. White indicates the apocalyptic quality of Clara's vision by comparing it directly to that of God (Revelation 4:2-4). She is "stirred by something more than beauty" and "sees more than loveliness" as she penetrates for a moment to the Alpha and Omega of the beauty before her and apprehends the Creator of a world "infinite both ways" and "transcendent both in glory and horror" (CH, 110). The allusion also recalls Madge's objection to oratorios; Frank's singing "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:11) has now a richer resonance. The less obvious biblical allusion in this scene is surely to Gethsemane. Clara's vigil is solitary; while others sleep on unknowing, she confronts alone the "beauty" and "terror" of her impending fate. Without self-deception she accepts the call: again, the elect are called not to happiness but to suffering. Her clear-eyed vision of her destiny recalls the human agony of Christ. This is White's secular, completely human, and "commonplace" reinterpretation of the "Sacrifice of the Just": "remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will,
but thine, be done." Clara’s struggle is never analyzed by the narrator. We see through her into the dawn, apprehending the inner conflict and transformation by means of the description of external nature, through echoes and allusions. But at the end of the scene, "her great purpose was fixed."

Earlier in the novel, several of the characters have paid a visit to Mazzini, the Italian patriot, then hiding in London. Clara has always shown herself to be acutely interested in political justice, and now she goes to Mazzini and offers him her services as a spy. Her action is neither abrupt nor vainglorious. Rather, it is the natural outcome of her decision to renounce ordinary happiness. Structurally, the novel has been moving subtly but relentlessly toward this moment. Clara goes to Italy and Baruch and Madge marry.

Eighteen months later the happily married couple learns from Mazzini that Clara is dead:

All efforts to obtain information from Mazzini were in vain, but one day when her name was mentioned he said to Madge,—

"The theologians represent the Crucifixion as the most sublime fact in the world’s history. It was sublime, but let us reverence also the Eternal Christ who is for ever being crucified for our salvation."

"Father," said a younger Clara to Baruch some ten years later as she sat on his knee, "I had an Aunt Clara, once, hadn’t I?"

"Yes, my child."

"Didn’t she go to Italy and die there?"

"Yes."

"Why did she go?"

"Because she wanted to free the poor people of Italy who were slaves." (CH, 298)

These are the final lines of the novel. The conclusion is profoundly ironic and is, as Irwin Stock says, "the saddest of Hale White’s endings." At the same time, it is perhaps the most perfect of them all, and in a strange way the most triumphant.
The inset story of the father who silently and lovingly conceals his daughter's crime and takes her guilt upon himself has been reenacted, with greater consequences, through Clara. Stock suggests that while Clara "lies in the earth," Baruch, whom she loved, "calmly repeats that error behind which her love and her sacrifice will now be concealed forever." The "obliteration of the act" which most completely expresses her nature is "a second death, and it is a kind of death which, for Hale White, . . . always added a special horror to the first." It is true that Clara's "second death" through Baruch's misunderstanding and complacency fills the reader with horror. But one also feels awe; for Clara, in her dawn vigil, foresaw this end and yet went forward. In this terrible "Sacrifice of the Just" White concretely realizes the meaning of the "Eternal Christ." The "facts" which Mark Rutherford preached in the Autobiography as an idea are imaginatively fulfilled in Clara Hopgood: "quite apart from Jesus, . . . virtue [is] martyred every day, unknown and unconsolable, in order that the wicked might somehow be saved. . . . I am literally saved from penalties because another pays the penalty for me" (A, 22).

Stock is right: the ending is sad. Neither Madge nor Baruch ever comprehends what Clara has done. Yet there is, as White might say, "another side." On the other side, there is Clara's achievement. She embodies, and her action celebrates, the potential for full humanity. She is free: free to love without self-concern, and, after her initial struggle, without anxiety. That freedom is expressed in her life through suffering, sin-bearing love. Thus the irony of the concluding passage of the novel encompasses more than Baruch's complacent misunderstanding. Although Clara goes to Italy to "free the poor people. . . . who were slaves," her sacrifice has both a larger intention and a greater effect. For those she really frees remain in England. Clara frees the sister she loves from the consequences of her error. Madge is freed not only from her former bondage to the old
life and its penalties; she is freed by a love larger than her own into a new life, both literally and figuratively.

I have argued that in his fiction White explores, and struggles toward, personal freedom. In his final novel that quest is imaginatively concluded. White clarifies to himself in his creative work what he could never fully realize in his own life. Freedom in the novel is expressed as the love that is perfect service. Clara sacrifices herself not for love of God in the abstract, but for love of her sister. This is White's point: unselfish love actively pursued in the human sphere is love of God. Love—the indwelling Christ—creates the disposition to follow the divine example. Clara gives up all to follow the example of ideal human love; the greatness of her action lies in her willingness to pay the price of that love.

As several commentators have suggested, Clara Hopgood is White's greatest tribute to Spinoza: Baruch Cohen is not only the philosopher's namesake but his voice. Throughout the novel, he expresses many of Spinoza's central ideas. But while Baruch is a good and wise man, he takes second place to Clara, for it is in her self-sacrifice that the primary focus and unifying power of the work lies. In White's finest literary achievement, he gives Spinoza his due; but also, and more important, he celebrates his own Protestant heritage. The most significant action of the novel—Clara's sacrifice—stems from a reinterpretation of that faith.

III

Clara Hopgood, then, was the fictional culmination of White's search for freedom. But what of his life? His final novel was published in 1896. Not until 1907, when White was seventy-five, did he meet Dorothy Horace Smith, then thirty. She eventually became his second wife. Dorothy had been anxious to meet the author of The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford
ever since she read it in 1904; they finally met through Miss Partridge, who had recommended Dorothy’s first novel, Miss Mona, to White. White found much to criticize in the work but still wished to meet the author. At his invitation, Dorothy paid a visit to Groombridge, Kent—White’s final home—and was met by him at the train station. Shortly after this first meeting, both felt that something singular had occurred. In Dorothy’s record of the meeting, she writes that it was like “being with a boy, he is so eager, shy and tender; his feelings so fresh and acute, as if he feels a thing now for the very first time” (GD, 1). Some emotions were being felt by White for the first time. In the unpublished “Dorothy Book,” he wrote: “When I first saw Dorothy I loved her. This love has never for a moment faded, but has grown stronger as I have come to know her better.” And, in the “1910 Manuscript”: “I first saw Dorothy at Groombridge when I was not 76 years old. . . . Directly I saw Dorothy I felt that, although it was late, she was destined to be the fulfilment of my life. The conviction was as unhesitating as that which follows an axiom. Something was wrought in me instantaneously. It was spiritual regeneration answering to what is known as conversion in the language of religion.” It is both characteristic and revealing that White should turn to the language of religion and the experience of conversion in particular in his attempt to explain the nature of his affection. His love for Dorothy was the happiest and most complete of all his conversions. The “spiritual regeneration” he had ceased to hope for was finally achieved through her love.

The primary published source of information about their relationship and life together is the Groombridge Diary (1924), begun by Dorothy in April 1908 and concluded with her husband’s death in 1913. Other unpublished papers—White’s “Dorothy Book,” the “1910 Manuscript,” his letters to her parents, and Dorothy’s own manuscript diary—not only add greatly to our understanding but also allow us to see what a
remarkable person Dorothy was. In temperament, she was almost White’s opposite. She was spontaneous and naturally cheerful. White describes her as having an extraordinary ‘‘genius . . . for living.’’ A close relative wrote that, in addition to ‘‘an indestructible innocence and faith in human nature,’’ she possessed ‘‘a bubbling sense of fun.’’ In large measure, however, the bond that began at their first meeting and grew stronger until White’s death was based on their profound similarities. White remarked to her that ‘‘he was sometimes quite awestruck and frightened at our likeness to one another’’ (GD, 113). When he sent her a copy of his book on Bunyan, he said she would find in it ‘‘some sort of explanation’’ for their ‘‘strange affinity’’ (GD, 2). It is difficult to describe the quality of this affinity, but it can be glimpsed in their letters, conversation, and written work. Both were ‘‘serious’’ in that their chief delight was talking to each other without hesitation or reserve about spiritual matters. Both were deeply concerned with religion, and their spiritual lives, in spite of their different backgrounds and creeds, were congruous. Thus White felt that he had ‘‘always believed with her and always worshipped with her.’’ The language in which he describes his relationship with Dorothy is most often that of liberation and renewal. In laughing conversation he declared that he did not just fall in love with Dorothy: ‘‘I flew to you’’ (GD, 124). To her parents, he wrote that he was ‘‘more thankful for her than for any other blessing’’ of his long life, and to his ‘‘Dorothy Book’’ he confided that ‘‘she has regenerated me.’’

Both Dorothy’s and Hale’s accounts of their various conversations are moving. The isolation that White so often felt because he was unable to communicate his deepest concerns vanished in Dorothy’s presence. ‘‘To my Dorothy alone I am always myself,’’ he writes, ‘‘never for a moment unnatural.’’ In spite of White’s periods of depression, many of which resulted from his fear that the miraculous gift had come too late, the most
striking note in the *Groombridge Diary* and the "Dorothy Book" is one of great joy. White writes of her beauty and brilliance: "By 'brilliant' . . . I mean the literal use, shining, endowed with light to guide." Dorothy constantly notes her husband's originality and the justice of his perceptions. Perhaps more unexpectedly: "How good he was. . . . how good to me always." "We not only love one another," she writes, "we need one another; there is a spiritual and intellectual need." Both felt that they had at last found home.

In spite of their love for each other, they naturally encountered some difficulties. In addition to the obvious anguish of "what might have been" had he found Dorothy as a young man, it becomes clear from their letters that White was also often struggling with opposing tendencies in himself. He wanted to have Dorothy with him always, but he feared that she would feel oppressed by his love and his demands. His greatest anxiety was that her love would turn to pity and that she would stay with him out of a sense of duty. At times he convinced himself that it could only be painful to Dorothy to remain near him when he was so much older than she, and often ill. He would then attempt to send her away, after giving her gloomy lectures "about the sadness of my life here, the impossible union of youth and joy with old age and misery—a perfectly dreadful kind of talk" (*GD*, 333). In spite of the barriers White sometimes erected between them, Dorothy persevered in loving him and continued to be herself: "I don't believe," she writes, "any two people ever did love one another so much before, or fight so obstinately. I'm in the right, and I won't give in. I want him to live" (*GD*, 142).

White cannot have been, in these moods, an easy person to love, yet Dorothy consistently responded to him with affectionate understanding. The *Groombridge Diary* tactfully glides over her own distress and omits mention of the difficulties of her position; it also submerges the sense of urgency apparent in the manuscript notebooks and unpublished letters, where we
see her commitment to love well what she must soon leave. The letters he wrote to her in the years before their marriage are often, as she notes, "(tainted) with hypochondria," full of self-mistrust and anxious fears (GD, 156). In addition to trying to "make him understand how much his love had done for me, how much he had enriched me every way," she also strove to talk to White about books and music, people and ideas, religion and philosophy. In her Diary, a constant refrain is their "self-forgetful" talk (GD, 208). Dorothy from the beginning could recognize and penetrate White's defenses. Mark Rutherford's description of Baruch's love for Clara in *Clara Hopgood* might well be applied to Dorothy's feelings for White. Clara "had never received any such recognition as that which had now been offered to her; her own self had never been returned to her with such honour" (CH, 233–34). Dorothy gave White back the "self" that had so often been lost in self-hatred and melancholia. "He made me promise to write this in my book," she writes, "that I have changed a human soul." 

White recognized and honored Dorothy's uniqueness as well. In 1910, Dorothy wrote to him that until she met him, she "never lived at all; I only waited." Life began when she was thirty years old, "oh my love, and then it burst up in a rainbow fountain. The spring of that fountain is eternal: it can never be exhausted." White valued especially Dorothy's "perfect freedom" (GD, 305). In her he perceived the freedom of being that includes freedom to love. To Miss Partridge, he wrote of Dorothy's "spiritual eagerness, coupled with an intense love of life and its pleasures" (L, 266). Her unexpected spontaneity delighted him: "she continually, almost every time I meet her, breaks down some limit and totally upsets some classification which I had assigned to her" (L, 272–73).

The question of their marriage is a topic the biographer approaches with some hesitation, since it is clear from Dorothy's erasures and marginal comments that she wished to remain
reticent about this area of her life. We cannot and perhaps should not know all their struggles and trials. Such information as we have, however, evokes only compassion and admiration, as we become aware both of the tragic dimensions of the relationship and the love and courage with which the two confronted their difficulties. Dorothy initially spent part of each week at Groombridge, an arrangement that was not wholly satisfactory. Marriage had been discussed early in their relationship. The most obvious obstacle to their union was, of course, the difference in their ages. Although in many areas of their communion time was, as White remarked, a “delusion,” in some things it was a hateful reality. Depression overwhelmed him when he experienced the “almost unbearable longing to have you always with me, a feeling I ought to have had you long ago, the irreversible doom of age” (GD, 79). White’s sensitivity to the judgment of friends and relatives is also apparent in the letters and diaries. Both were quite aware of what the conventional view of their relationship would be. Other obscure difficulties are alluded to. White writes in the “Dorothy Book” that “we should certainly have married if we had not discovered reasons which prevented us. What those reasons are it is unnecessary to state. It is sufficient to say that we both of us took the best medical advice. It was not opposed to marriage, but it was sufficient to determine us instantly against it.” Nonetheless, what Dorothy calls a “to and fro debate” about marriage continued until the autumn of 1908, when a serious medical obstacle arose: White became gravely ill and was required to undergo a “difficult and painful operation.”

During his long convalescence, he and Dorothy continued to feel that marriage was out of the question, although they considered their bond a unique and sacred one. On April 11, 1910, White wrote in the “Dorothy Book”: “D. and I are wife and husband as intimately and strictly as it is possible to be, if the relationship involves no ecclesiastical or legal sanction or
bodily union. The love is perhaps the closer because it is love and nothing else." But two months later, when the question of marriage again presented itself, Dorothy wrote that "our course was perfectly plain. Three and a half years of close and closer understanding had made it so." On April 8, 1911, they married.

After Dorothy came to live at the cottage as a permanent resident, White's general health improved and many of his "hypochondriacal fears" vanished.

Two statements in the Groombridge Diary illuminate particularly the quality of White's love for Dorothy and suggest why she seemed to him the fulfillment of his long quest. One day they were discussing Caleb Morris. Dorothy writes: "I do not quite know how to put it and yet put it somehow I must, for with emotion he told me that what he saw through Caleb Morris as a young man and had been looking for during these 50 years, he has seen again through me." Further, he "spoke of the 'hunger and thirst and need' of his life, an 'infinite need' which neither his books, not his friends, nor his religion had ever satisfied. I was to remember that I had satisfied that need." (GD, 124).

I think these remarks are of singular importance. Caleb Morris represented for White the end of exile, reconciliation, the spiritual home for which he hungered. What he had seen in Morris was perfect freedom, a freedom of being that grew out of a felt sense of the indwelling Christ. In his sermons and through his presence, Morris had manifested the freedom to love without self-concern. We have seen that both within himself and in relation to the external world White experienced a sense of loss, of incompleteness, a lack at the center. In his youth he had glimpsed in a Welsh preacher a particular quality of loving freedom; he searched for this quality in his life; he tried to locate, imaginatively in his fiction, the quality of love he sensed was possible to humankind. This "hunger and thirst and need" of his life he discovered again in Dorothy. As her love ignited his
own, her own freedom of being released his imprisoned spirit.

White often tried to define the quality of love that Dorothy's "perfect freedom" made possible. I have noted the comparison of his affection to the experience of conversion. This parallel can be extended. In a letter to Dorothy (December 1909), he wrote: "I am sure there is no love worth the name without the love of that which is beyond the person loved. This sounds paradoxical, but it is true, and I must try not so much to love you directly as to love this something above both you and me" (GD, 297). He loves not only the creature but the Creator in her. The divine informs and transfigures the human: eros is completed and extended by selfless love. "My love of God," he writes, "I speak it with reverence, is the love of Dorothy" (GD, 147). White came to realize in his own life what he had confronted and created in his novels—that another's happiness and not his own should be at the center of his concern. This understanding smote him, he says, with the force of a revelation: the "simple discovery" came "like a flash—'not yours but hers'" (GD, 338).

We have seen how, in White's novels, divine love is experienced and comprehended through its manifestation in the human sphere. In the Autobiography, Rutherford's deliverance is begun because of Ellen's love for him. This human love he understands to be grace:

the love of woman to man [is] a revelation of the relationship in which God stands to him—of what ought to be, in fact. In the love of a woman to the man who is of no account God has provided us with a true testimony of what is in His own heart. I often felt this when looking at myself and at Ellen. "What is there in me?" I have said, "is she not the victim of some self-created deception?" and I was wretched till I considered that in her I saw the Divine Nature itself, and that her passion was a stream straight from the Highest. The love of a woman is, in other words, a living witness
never failing of an actuality in God which otherwise we should never know. (A, 252-53)

These comments appear to have been prophetic, for White experienced the same kind of self-distrust with Dorothy that Rutherford felt with Ellen. White was often terrified that she loved not him but a being her own imagination had created, and he feared that deeper knowledge of him would dispel the image and cancel her affection. Slowly White accepted that “God still works miracles” (GD, 126). He came to see that he had not deserved Dorothy’s love; it was a gracious gift. In October 1908, White wrote to her:

I ask no longer why you love me. The only reason is what our forefathers would have called “the grace of God.” It is remarkable how many of the doctrines of St. Paul’s theology have their counterparts in daily human life. St. Paul is always insisting that we are loved by God for no merit of our own. God’s love through my Dorothy does not ask for desert, makes no conditions. “If I love thee what is that to thee?” —a great saying. I shall think of you as my “wild bird,” a lovely image. I have something of the wild creature in myself, constrained, chained by circumstances, but freed since I knew you. (GD, 117-18)

“Freed since I knew you.” The freedom into which White entered through loving Dorothy and being recognized and valued by her did not effect an instant transformation of his character, although the expansion of his nature and the change in his perspective were considerable. Dorothy comments on this change in her husband. Speaking of his tendency to inflict upon others the wretchedness he often felt, she writes: “I said: ‘You sometimes feel wretched.’ He said ‘yes’; he was making up the fire. I said: ‘And you feel as if you must make other people wretched.’ ‘Yes,’ he said bitterly, ‘it’s damnable,’ and gave the fire a savage poke” (GD, 393). White’s propensity for
self-conscious anxiety, melancholia, and self-hatred is by now familiar. Dorothy withstood this instinct in him and remained completely herself, preserved her own freedom of being. She never deceived him. She writes, "I never swerved, not even to please him; in fact I couldn't swerve, and having got accustomed to this quality in me, he reposed in it" (GD, 467). Dorothy's love, her inability to be anything but herself, her fine moral sense and scrupulous honesty, finally became a resting place for White. She provided security against his destructive urges. She was steadfast, and the knowledge of her "unswerving" nature initiated a transformation in him. Dorothy writes:

I have clung passionately, obstinately, to exuberant joy and health and happiness all through these three years; and I suppose the whole time, though I did not realize it (except bit by bit, slowly, unconsciously, and as it were with resolutely shut eyes), the whole time he was instinctively at war with me trying to wreck his happiness and my own. As by degrees his nature has straightened out—here and there it was very much curled up, fold within fold—this instinct has become plainer to himself. (GD, 393–94; my emphasis)

This extraordinary passage illuminates a great deal about Hale White and the final stage in his quest for wholeness and freedom. His nature was "curled up," "fold within fold." This description of a nature turned in upon itself is also remarkably similar to the classic Protestant description of sin. The self, although its norm is love, is in actual experience betrayed into self-centered concern. Dorothy's remark recalls Luther's image of the meaning of sin: "incurvitum in se," curved in upon itself. In the experience of conversion, the self is broken, "crucified" so that it can be reoriented. This transformation is accomplished through the power of love, through grace. The new orientation involves new life. White slowly discovered that
Dorothy’s happiness ought to be the center of his concern; and, as she observes, “by degrees his nature . . . straightened out.”

In his final years, White made several remarks about how this renewal and new life was experienced. He wrote to Miss Partridge about the education he was receiving through his wife: “I am beginning to learn. It is a wonderful thing to be under the tuition of life rather than of learning and to be perpetually surprised by strange reversals of customs, doctrines, conventions and creeds” (L, 284–85). Dorothy, like Caleb Morris, “has not taken her Christ from a book. . . . and yet I never heard of anybody to whom he is so constantly present. His living presence seems to be the substance of her religion.”

In other words, her Christ was indwelling and transformed her life so that she acted not by the law but through spontaneous love. In one letter White tells Dorothy that he loves her because she can dispense with duty, because she acts naturally and lovingly without self-conscious thought (GD, 409). One could say that the power of grace in Dorothy evoked the true self of Hale White. As his nature slowly “straightened out,” through love and tentatively, he came into the freedom of being he had sought. The quality of this last rebirth is indicated in a passage in the “1910 Manuscript”:

My creed, it is true, so far as it was defined, did not change, but . . . the whole of life was altered. Men and women now look differently; the world looks differently. My judgements are not what they would have been without Dorothy. They are regulated on a different principle. We have not made inquiry of one another as to what is usually called religion. If anybody were to question me it would be found that I should express myself much the same as I did ten years ago, and yet Dorothy’s influence has been so great that, when I am most myself, it is her language I use and I kneel by her side. We belong to the same Church of Christ.

And it was as if the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.
NOTES

PROLOGUE

1. Mark Rutherford, *Last Pages From a Journal With Other Papers*, ed. Dorothy V. White (London: Oxford University Press, 1915), p. 289. This work will be cited throughout as LP.

CHAPTER ONE


6. In his reminiscences of Bedford, C. F. Farrar remarks that Rutherford's account of Sundays "wakes memories of my own childhood." He also remembers the story of the boy: "I presume it was a book in vogue in Bedford for the inculcation of early piety, for I well remember it, with its horrifying illustration of the incident." *Old Bedford* (Bedford: F. R. Hockliffe, 1926), pp. 261–62.


9. Farrar, facing p. 177. The Old Meeting remained unchanged until 1849, when it was demolished and rebuilt at a cost of £2000 (Tibbutt, pp. 60–61). Although Bunyan himself was a Baptist, the Old Meeting, where he preached from 1656 onward, was Independent. Valentine Cunningham notes that the joint Baptist and Congregational membership of Bunyan Meeting combined various modes of Baptism (*Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975], p. 39). See also Chadwick, 1:412, on the frequent exchanges in worship between the two denominations. Although I disagree with Cunningham's interpretation of White's response to his religious background and situation, some of my remarks in this chapter are indebted to his painstaking scholarship.

10. Maclean, p. 54n.


12. Tibbutt, pp. 51, 56. Dorothy White remarks that "his father was superintendent, and it was his father who revolutionized the system of the children's Sunday School by releasing the children from attendance at the long . . . service in church, and giving them a suitable service of their own" (GD, 315).

14. See Maclean, p. 35; Tibbutt, p. 42; Brown, p. 422.
17. Ibid., p. 588.
23. Cunningham, p. 249.
25. The universities were slow to open their doors to Dissenters: the B.A. degree was opened to Nonconformists in 1854 at Oxford and the M.A. in 1856 at Cambridge; by 1871 the ancient universities were open to Nonconformists in all things except fellowships, college headships, and professorships of divinity. (See Henry W. Clark, *History of English Nonconformity* [New York: Russell & Russell, 1965], pp. 406–08). Cunningham points out (p. 20) that it was not, however, until 1915 at Cambridge, and 1920 at Oxford, that the B.D. and D.D. were opened to non-Anglicans.
29. Owen Chadwick claims that Independent students were widely read, that Congregationalists were far in advance of Methodists in perceiving the spiritual upheaval ahead, and that the instructed Independent ministry "could not avoid the intellectual doubts of the fifties" (*The Victorian Church*, 1:406). Tudur Jones (p. 256) qualifies this assessment, arguing that, while the elite were troubled by
historical criticism, in general “the reaction of the Congregationalists to the Higher Criticism was mainly negative” until the 1880s.


32. William White, Sr., To Think or Not to Think? (London: Robert Theobald; Bedford: John G. Nall, 1852), p. 8.

33. Letter to the editor of The Nonconformist, signed by Robert M. Theobald, William Hale White and Frederic M. White, March 31, 1852. Also published as an Appendix of To Think or Not to Think?

34. Ibid. Cf. EL, 64; To Think or Not to Think?, p. 11.

35. See To Think or Not to Think?, p. 14., Cf. Maclean, p. 78.

36. Letter to the editor of The Nonconformist. White quotes the same remark in EL (64) with minor changes.

38. *To Think or Not to Think?*, p. 4, Cf. EL, 65–66, and the letter to *The Nonconformist*.

39. Ibid., p. 7.

40. Letter to *The Nonconformist; To Think or Not to Think?*, pp. 11–12; EL, 66.

41. DNB; Maclean, p. 85, citing *The Norfolk News*, March 14, 1874, comments, "He had been forced to leave Bedford because of some vague charges of lack of orthodoxy made against him by his enemies."


43. Letter to *The Nonconformist*.

44. Letter to *The Nonconformist; To Think or Not to Think?*, p. 15; EL, 68.

45. *To Think or Not to Think?*, p. 12.

46. Ibid., p. 28.


48. *To Think or Not to Think?*, p. 11.

49. Ibid., p. 15.


51. *To Think or Not to Think?*, pp. 12–13.

52. Ibid., p. 13.

53. Robert Theobald’s *Letter to the Council and Subscribers of New College* (October 1852), p. 3.

54. *To Think or Not to Think?*, p. 12.

55. *The People*, p. 151.

56. *To Think or Not to Think?*, p. 14.

57. Theobald’s *Letter to the Council and Subscribers*, p. 2.

58. See Theobald’s *Letter*, pp. 5–6.

59. From J. D. Morell’s *Philosophy of Religion*, quoted by William White in *To Think or Not to Think?*, p. 16. White cites examples of statements in the periodical, apparently approved by the editors, which deal directly with the question of the inspiration of Scripture. Some appear to be more advanced than the heretical views of the three students. See pp. 16–21.

60. Stone, p. 38.

61. See Theobald’s *Letter to the Council and Subscribers of New College*, p. 5.

62. Unpublished letter, March 6, 1852, Bedford Public Library Collection. It is interesting to see that White was still involved in painting at this time.
64. Valentine Cunningham observes that the students "did know that a creed was embodied in the college's trust deed, and had admitted this in a letter to the *Nonconformist*" (p. 274 and n. 3). As Cunningham notes, the Bedford Public Library Collection includes a copy of the Schedule of Faith for Tutors and Students at New College, in the hand of Robert Theobald. But in the students' letter to *The Nonconformist*, the remark that they knew of an existing college creed is made in the context of a request for a copy of that document, so that they might know on what grounds their views on inspiration were judged unacceptable. The students claimed to have received no response to this and their other two requests. Nor is it clear when the Bedford Public Library copy was written out. Moreover, the creed certainly contains no allusion to the inspiration of Scripture.
65. EL reproduces the letters from Maurice and Kingsley; Martineau's letter is in the Colbeck Collection of the University of British Columbia. White also received supportive letters from Samuel Edgar of Kimbolton, Thomas Lynch of London, J. T. Dobney of Oxford, H. Kiddle of Crondall, the Colenutts of Ryde, Caleb Morris, William Chignell, and others. Wilfred Stone reminds readers that at this time William White was respected and admired by the Bedford Russells, "the richest family in England," and was friendly with John Bright and G. J. Holyoake. See Stone, p. 41 and n.
72. Cunningham notes that "when Arnold was Oxford's Professor of Poetry and bringing out *Culture and Anarchy*, Dissenters were still excluded from fellowships and from university government" (p. 21).
by his second son." Bedford Public Library Collection. Stephen quotes Mill "on the Calvinistic theory . . . crushing out any of the human faculties, capacities, and susceptibilities."

74. Cunningham, p. 64.
75. Ibid., p. 253.


78. Lucas, p. 77.
79. Ibid.

80. The disclaimer appeared in a letter to the editor of The British Weekly, July 30, 1896, p. 232, signed "Reuben Shapcott."

81. Valentine Cunningham plausibly suggests that Mrs. Broad is "made the target for White’s resentment against his mother" (p. 275).

82. Lucas justly observes that White’s potentially fine study of marriage is flawed by the characterization of Priscilla. Her "vapid stupidity" threatens to make her ridiculous and the "marriage a farce" (p.98).

83. Writing of Binney in 1874, White spoke of how he and hundreds of other young men were "impelled . . . to walk across London every Sunday in all weathers to the Weigh House Chapel five and twenty years ago," impelled "to almost passionate enthusiasm. It was simply the power which he possessed . . . to identify the Bible with genuine human experience. Abraham, Paul, and other Biblical heroes, whom he was never weary of depicting, were made to stand in our place, and their experience became our own. That was the meaning of his almost miraculous influence." (The Norfolk News, March 14, 1874; quoted by Maclean, p. 192.)

84. Cunningham, p. 275: "Personal resentments appear to have generated the picture of the Broads." For the argument concerning White’s general misrepresentation of Nonconformity, see pp. 259–77. There was, incidentally, a minister named John Broad in Hitchin, Bedfordshire. Tibbutt notes (p. 62) that he was present at the opening of the rebuilt Bunyan Meeting in 1850. The name may have stuck in White’s memory.

85. On Hillyard, see Tibbutt, pp. 42–52.
88. Brown, p. 424. Compare Tibbutt, p. 53, and the "Act Book" of Bunyan Meeting, quoted by Cunningham (p. 271), which stresses his lack of "imagination and humour" and the "somewhat heavy" nature of his preaching.
89. Unpublished letter, April 8, 1853, Bedford Public Library Collection.
90. William White's name "appeared on the list of the Board of Trustees until his death" (Maclean, p. 97, n. 2).
91. Maclean, p. 97, n. 2.
92. *To Think or Not to Think?*, p. 27.
93. Jones, p. 246, alluding to Miall's *The British Churches in Relation to the British People*.
94. Ibid., p. 248, describing "What Is the Spiritual State of Our Churches?"
95. Dale, pp. 590–92; cf. Sellers, pp. 20–26, for the impact of evangelicalism and later the Tractarian movement on Calvinist doctrine and church order.
96. Jones, p. 244. Cunningham details the ways in which Nonconformity was vital and progressive in the Victorian period. See pp. 249–77.
97. Dorothy V. White deciphers the "D——" of the *Autobiography* as Ditchling (GD, 463n). See Maclean, pp. 140–41, on the Ipswich, Ditchling, and London pulpits. Although he preached in Unitarian pulpits himself and went to hear William Chignell preach as a Unitarian minister, White was never tempted to join what Cunningham (p. 39) calls a "last halt on the way to a region beyond Christianity." White's son Jack remarked that "in conversation with me on the subject," his father "impressed upon me the illogicality" of the Unitarian position ("William Hale White: 'Mark Rutherford,' 1831–1913, Notes by His Second Son." Unpublished pamphlet, Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. Misc. c. 445).
98. "He said he had never changed anybody," Dorothy writes (GD, 114).
99. From one of White's unpublished "three small notebooks," in the Colbeck Collection, UBC. The entry appears to be a draft of EL. The image (from *Paradise Lost*, II, 405) was a powerful one for him; it occurs throughout his work.
CHAPTER TWO

3. Dr. W. Hale-White, unpublished "Notes about W. Hale White (Mark Rutherford)" ["Notes By His Eldest Son"], Bedford Public Library Collection.
4. "Notes by His Second Son."
5. Dorothy White corroborates the general truth of this account in The Groombridge Diary. After leaving New College, she writes, Hale "went for six months to Portsmouth, apparently for no particular purpose; then, for something to do, took a mastership, after two days left the school with 'the horrors.' . . ." (GD, 71-72). See also GD, 336-37: "The other day he told me about his experience as a schoolmaster at Stoke Newington. . . . He said that was the first attack of the malady which has since pursued him all through life."
6. See the preface to EL by his son, William Hale-White.
7. Rutherford's experience is similar to that of other Victorian protagonists. David Copperfield, for example, also left alone in an attic room, experiences the same intensification of visual perception and the same distortion of time and space: "I thought of the oddest things. Of the shape of the room, of the cracks in the ceiling, of the paper on the wall, of the flaws in the window-glass making ripples and dimples on the prospect, of the washing-stand being rickety on its three legs" (David Copperfield, ed. Nina Burgis [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981], p. 38). Suffering also alters the experience of time in his memory: Copperfield's five days of anguished solitude occupy "the place of years in my remembrance" (p. 51). Similarly, Dorothea Brooke found that her honeymoon in Rome "remained through her after-years," and that in "certain states of dull forlornness . . . all her life [she] continued to see the vastness of St. Peter's, the huge bronze canopy . . . and the red drapery which was being hung for Christmas spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina" (Middlemarch, p. 144).

10. Ibid., pp. 87, 88, 91.
11. Ibid., pp. 89–90.

16. In a later chapter I shall comment upon the possible sexual dimension of the idée fixe.
18. Compare Judas the Obscure, The Wessex Edition (London: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 31–32: "Somebody might have come along that way who would have asked him his trouble... But nobody did come, because nobody does."

19. Pilgrim's Progress, p. 98.
20. "Saul," in Miriam's Schooling and Other Papers, p. 34.
21. Lucas, p. 82.
22. Ibid., pp. 79, 82.
27. For White's discussion of the temptations in the wilderness, see his essay "Some Notes on Milton," in P, 110–24.
28. Johnson's doubts of his salvation are well known. When John Ryland reminded him, near death, that we have "great hopes given us," Johnson replied, "Yes, we have hopes given us, but they are conditional, and I know not how far I have fulfilled those conditions." George Birbeck Hill, ed., Johnsonian Miscellanies, 2 vols. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), 2:156.

30. Ibid., pp. 76, 146.


33. See also GD, 58.

34. Unpublished letter to Jack White, July 1, 1887, Bedford Public Library Collection. Compare, among other examples, "but I must wait and be still," in an unpublished letter to Jack White, May 11, 1884; "There is nothing to be done but to wait and be silent," in a letter to Miss Partridge (L, 266); "I must wait like a beleaguered garrison and hope for relief" (GD, 75).

35. "Notes by His Second Son."

36. Maclean, p. 276: "No man could say more truly: 'I wait on God.'"

---

**CHAPTER THREE**

1. See "A Letter from the Authoress of 'Judith Crowhurst'": "When I got home I transferred my emotion to my deserted heroine, and tears blotted the paper" (MP, 141).


4. White appears to have disliked Lewes. Lady Robert Cecil noted that "the influence of G. H. Lewes upon George Eliot's career seemed to
him as unaccountable as it was unfortunate. What was the attraction? 'A literary man! A London literary man!' "Lady Robert Cecil, "Mark Rutherford, The Nation & The Athenaeum, October 27, 1923, p. 151.


7. See "George Eliot as I Knew Her," in LP, 134. Compare "Confessions of a Self-Tormentor": "Some years afterwards I wrote to her asking her if she could get work for a starving man whom she had known in other days" (MP, 121). This episode can also be viewed as one of White's sporadic attempts to affiliate himself with the literati. In 1879, he maneuvered a meeting with Browning by sending him a portrait of John Bunyan. White thought this an appropriate gift because of Browning's allusion to Bunyan in "Ned Bratts," which White admired. He visited Browning on May 15, 1879, and again on June 25, 1881. His notes concerning these occasions, and Browning's letters to him, are in the Colbeck Collection, UBC.


9. I shall return to these stories in chapter 4, where they illuminate White's marital experience.

10. "Notes by His Second Son."

11. "Notes by His Eldest Son."


13. His son writes, "He told me how he admired Dumas' plots, that he could never satisfactorily form a plot himself" ("Notes by His Eldest Son"). Compare "A Letter from the Authoress of 'Judith Crowhurst'": "My tale was a youthful blunder. It was not really a tale. I introduced, in order to provide interest, all sorts of accessories—aunts, parsons, gamekeepers, nurses, a fire and some hairbreadth escapes, but they were none of them essential and they were all manufactured" (MP, 140).

14. "Notes by His Second Son."

15. See Dorothy White's preface to Last Pages From a Journal.

17. Although White disliked Arnold's arrogance and his facile analyses of Nonconformity, he admired much of his poetry and urged Dorothy to read "The Buried Life," "Dover Beach," and "Thyrsis." See GD, 88, 177, 168–69.


20. "Notes by His Second Son."

21. Ibid.

22. "Notes on the Book of Job," A, 286. Compare Mark Rutherford's thoughts: "I was much overworked. It was not the work itself which was such a trial, but the time it consumed. . . . Day after day sped swiftly by, made up of nothing but this infernal drudgery, and I said to myself—Is this life?" (A, 257).


25. He testified to his affection in A Letter Written on the Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Street (1877).


27. There is a similar passage in the essay "Talking About Our Troubles" (P, 66–67).


29. In her book Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), Elizabeth Bruss illuminates Bunyan with a remark that equally describes Hale White: "Bunyan's religious convictions do not artificially circumscribe his identity; rather, they seem to provide the only possible foundation for attaining it. By joining himself with Job and David, Bunyan can experience himself as a martyr rather than as a vague and wounded consciousness" (p. 53).

30. Bruss, p. 34.
34. White’s statement is qualified also by our knowledge that he published *More Pages From a Journal*, which contains seven short stories, after Dorothy was with him. He left her LP, to “destroy or publish just as you think fit” (GD, 12).
35. “‘Notes by His Eldest Son.’”
36. “‘Notes by His Second Son.’”
37. Stone, p. 124, n. 9.
38. Similarly, “according to Molly, if they are mentioned, he turns his back and says ‘I acknowledge no books’” (GD, 36n).
42. Unpublished letter to Holyoake, January 20, 1882, Bedford Public Library Collection. White’s first real essay was addressed to Holyoake: *An Argument for an Extension of the Franchise: A Letter addressed to George Jacob Holyoake* (1866).
43. Letter to Holyoake, January 20, 1882.
44. Quoted by Stone, p. 124; and Stock, p. 80. The letter is in the Houghton Library of Harvard University: Howells Collection, MS. Am. 800.20.
45. The book to which he refers is *A Description of the Wordsworth & Coleridge Manuscripts in the Possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman*. It is very much worth the postage.
46. Only in *Clara Hopgood* does White indirectly offer a fairer self-judgment. Baruch Cohen suggests that the neglected author Morris Robinson was “original and reflective” but “had no particular talent.” His “excellence lay in criticism and observation, often profound, on what came to him every day” (CH, 210). Morris Robinson not only has the same initials as Mark Rutherford; Robinson’s book *After Office Hours*, from which Clara quotes, contains extracts from White’s “Black Notebook.” Some of these were published with revisions in MP. See pp. 220, 223, 252, for notes similar to those in CH, 176–78.


CHAPTER FOUR

1. "Unworldly" is the adjective Jack White uses to describe the group of friends who frequented Mrs. Street’s house, and later White’s own home. "Notes by His Second Son."
2. Ibid.
3. "Notes by His Eldest Son."
4. Ibid.
5. "Notes by His Second Son."
6. "Notes by His Eldest Son."
7. Unpublished letter to Mrs. Colenutt; quoted by Maclean, p. 253. This letter is not now in any of the public collections.
8. "Notes by His Second Son."
9. Ibid.
10. Unpublished letter to Willie, July 28, 1884, Bedford Public Library Collection. Compare White’s letter of the same date to Miss Partridge, announcing the engagement: "As for myself, . . . I am struck dumb with my own ignorance of myself" (L, 26).
11. For critical discussions of White’s marriage and its relationship to his fiction, see Maclean, especially pp. 266–71; Stock, especially pp. 35ff.; Stone, especially pp. 184–99. Of these, Stock’s argument is the most helpful. He suggests that there are two kinds of unhappy marriages in the fiction and locates the source of the first in White’s father’s marriage (a cold and unfeeling partner) and the source of the second in White’s own (a self-centered partner who eventually comes to value the human qualities in his/her neglected spouse). There is also a fine discussion of marriage in White’s novels as "consolation against or refuge from the limitations of the community" in Lucas, pp. 95–110.

13. Lucas mentions this scene, where Mrs. Coleman looks in a lighted window from the street and sees her husband and Pauline in earnest conversation: "The sudden switch of point of view—for we customarily see her through Zachariah's eyes—allows us to understand a good deal about Mrs. Coleman's sense of exclusion from her husband's life" (p. 97).

14. "Notes by His Second Son."

15. Mark Rutherford goes to Wollaston's shortly thereafter and falls in love with Theresa. He is distressed to find that "in the very height of my love for Theresa, my love for Mary continued unabated" (A, 132).

16. "Notes by His Second Son."

17. See preface to *LP*, iii, n. 2. The story was revised in 1908 (*LP*, 138n.). The Colbeck collection, UBC, has a corrected manuscript of the story in White's hand, with "[circa 1880]" beside the title.

18. Stone also recognizes the autobiographical and symbolic nature of the story. He argues that White here acts out his "aggressive impulses," which "in the dream... [were] consummated in murder, thus releasing the pressure [of frustration] and making room for healthier feelings" (p. 190).

19. See *David Copperfield*, chapter 58. One may also hear the echo, in all these examples, of David's Aunt Betsey: "Blind, Trot, Blind."

20. For example, Miss Arbour and Esther leave their husbands (but are unable to remarry); George Allen's wife dies and he goes to America.


22. See also chapter 2 above.


24. In his provocative reading of this scene, John Lucas suggests that the stripping of the lily symbolizes Catharine's "desire to give herself to Cardew" (p. 109), but this is surely too strong.

25. Ibid., p. 102.

26. MS. "Groombridge Diary," vol. 1, Colbeck Collection, UBC.

27. Note, for example, the emphases in his remarks to his eldest son: "there are many things in which I am far more strict than church-going people. I cannot tolerate deceit, sensuality, filthy conduct, harshness, or brutality. I insist on perfect truthfulness, perfect tenderness, perfect purity, perfect kindness and perfect reverence for the great God who


29. The letter appointing White to the position of Third Class Clerk in the Accountant General’s Department, dated December 23, 1858, is in the Bedford Public Library Collection.

30. When he retired he received a special commendatory letter from the Lords of the Admiralty, a laudation he esteemed sufficiently to keep and later show to Dorothy. "He is actually the least bit proud of it. To see him proud is a funny sight, as funny as it is rare! He even allowed that it was a most unusual thing for the Lords to step out of their way to praise a subordinate" (GD, 352). He left the letter to his eldest son in his will, to be preserved as a family heirloom. Both William and Jack Hale-White refer to the letter and to their father's pride in it. Partially reproduced in GD, 352n., it is now in the Bedford Public Library Collection.

31. Unpublished extracts from Mrs. William White’s diaries, in "Notes by His Eldest Son." Mrs. White records hearing her son preach several times in 1859. See also Maclean, pp. 154–55.


33. Cf. CH, 257.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. The exact date of composition of the "Black Notebook" is not clear. There are some dated entries from 1888 to 1901.


3. Ibid., p. xv.


5. Ibid.


8. Ibid., p. 165.
10. Ibid.
12. Compare LP, 286: "There is one thought which never fails, a rock which amidst all doubt is never shaken, and it is our own weakness; our powerlessness to comprehend, although we may apprehend, the infinity of God. It swallows up death and every earth-begotten limit." White's essay on Job foreshadows modern biblical interpretation. See, for example, Bernhard H. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1957), pp. 484-97, for a reading that is similar in several points to White's.
14. See also LP, 256-57.
18. The "White Notebook," Colbeck Collection, UBC.
19. Ibid.
20. The last date before this entry is February 1894.
21. Compare Clara Hopgood: "she thought to herself how strange the world is—so transcendent both in glory and horror; a world capable of such scenes as those before her, and a world in which such suffering as hers could be; a world infinite both ways" (p. 110).

CHAPTER SIX

1. White speaks of his paper on sunspots in L, 71. For comments on the stars, see pp. 105, 131, 327, 366, 387.
errors, see *A Description of the Wordsworth & Coleridge Manuscripts in the Possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman*, p. 43.

4. "The Black Notebook." (The text is Amos 5:8.)

5. The revised translations for succeeding editions of the *Ethic* were done with the help of Amelia Hutchison Stirling. Her letters to White concerning translations and corrections are in the Bedford Public Library Collection.


7. For references to Virgil, see L. 1:46, 152–53, 157, 169.

8. *Ethic*, p. xxv.

9. Ibid., p. xxvi.

10. Coleridge, George Eliot, G. H. Lewes, J. A. Froude, Arnold, and others were inspired by Spinoza's *amor intellectualis Dei*. Basil Willey calls Spinoza "the first great saint of modern rationalism" (*More Nineteenth-Century Studies*, p. 117).


12. Preface to the *Ethic* (1883), p. vii. Compare William Hale White, trans., *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione of Benedict de Spinoza* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895), pp. xxii–xxiii: "Positive ideas, which the imagination cannot paint, are expressed negatively, and hence it is concluded that they are not positive, but mere negations. Such positives, for example, are 'infinite,' 'increate,' 'independent,' 'immortal' and 'incorporeal.' The distinction between picture and thought is one on which Spinoza earnestly insists, not only in the *Treatise* but in the *Ethic.*"


15. Ibid., p. xxxviii.


17. Ibid., p. xiv.


20. Ibid.
24. Ethic, part II, proposition 13. Compare preface to the *Tractatus*: "The idea is the mental correlate of the external object; or, rather, the idea and the object are the same thing conceived under two different attributes. Soul and body are not utterly diverse entities, but the same thing, the soul being the idea of the body" (p. ix).
27. Ibid., p. xxix.
28. Ibid., p. xxxi.
29. Ibid., p. xxxiii.
30. Ibid., p. xxxviii.
31. Ibid., p. xxxiii.
32. Ibid., p. xxxvi.
33. Ibid., p. xxxviii.
34. Ibid., pp. xxx–xxx1.
35. Stone, p. 104.
36. Compare Preface to the *Ethic* (1894), p. lxxviii: "Is pain also nothing positive, mere privation? Is the mystery of agony solved by the theory that to God material was not wanting to create those who suffer?"
38. Ibid., p. liv.
39. Ibid., p. c.
40. Preface to the *Ethic* (1894), p. xcivii; my emphasis.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**

1. R. Tudur Jones confirms White's view of Morris's power as a speaker. He remarks that around 1830 a change came over Congregational preaching: "The precursor of the new style was Caleb Morris, minister at Fetter Lane from 1827. He was followed by the better-known Thomas Binney. . . . Both adopted an unaffected style of preaching which made an immediate appeal to the younger members of the audiences and particularly to the theological students who flocked to hear them" (p. 220). James Grant, in *The Metropolitan Pulpit*, 2
vols. (London: George Virtue, 1839), also comments on Morris's eloquence, observing that Morris's congregation was "distinguished for their intelligence" (2:199), and that while in his sermons Morris was partial to "the syllogistic form of reasoning" (2:200), he was a great speaker. "As an expositor of Scripture," Grant ranks Morris "very high among the ministers of London" (2:202).

2. Grant states (2:202) that doctrinally Morris was a Moderate Calvinist, but did not dwell on "controversial matters." He was, according to Grant, "an original thinker, . . . and one who fearlessly . . . [gave] expression to his views."

3. Claude Welch remarks that the "characteristic focus of this concern for the humanity of Jesus . . . was typical of the nineteenth century: it was peculiarly the self-consciousness and the knowledge of Jesus that provided the test questions." (Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, 1799-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 1:233.

7. Welch, 1:103.
10. Dorothy White tells us that her husband had hanging above his bed a picture of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (GD, 208).
13. Compare White's comments on Luther: "Luther's religion, . . . like Bunyan's, is really Christianity: it is the worship not of an abstraction, but of Jesus. . . . It must not be mere admiration, but a passionate
devotion which grafts Him on us, so that in Him and by Him we live” (B, 114-15).

14. White stresses the difference between Morris’s spoken and written sermons. White thought his own attempts to reproduce this eloquence in print failed sadly: “These are but black cinders. They were once aglow, white with fire” (LP, 247). Of the sermon on the Prodigal Son, White remarks: “I can feel even now the force which streamed from him that night, and swept me with it, as if I were a leaf on a river in flood” (LP, 245).

15. “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:24).

16. The allusion is to James 2:17.

17. In the unpublished “Dorothy Book,” White comments on Dorothy’s lesson for her Bible class, November 28, 1909, concerning the events commemorated in Advent. He writes: “It is not only a history of a series of events once transacted and now ended: it is a history enacting at the present moment: it is not only this, but a history within ourselves. Advent comes to me, the Messiah is born for me: He lives for me; is crucified[,] rises and is glorified in me.”

18. Lucas, p. 100. I view the “crisis” as the shattering of the old self and the beginning of new life.

19. Other characters in White’s fiction are also helped by Thomas à Kempis. Dorothy records that on May 22, 1908, White gave her her own personal copy of The Imitation as a gift (GD, 31).


23. Ibid., p. 257.


27. White himself visited Mazzini (see GD, 299). Jack White also describes "two little notes of invitation" written to his father "by Mazzini in his small and delicate hand" ("Notes by His Second Son").

28. The major flaw in the novel is Baruch's behavior, which is insufficiently accounted for. His apparent fickleness in transferring his affections from Clara to Madge with such rapidity is disturbing.


30. Linda Hughes, in her interesting essay "Madge and Clara Hopgood: William Hale White's Spinozan sisters," *Victorian Studies* 18 (1974): 57–75, goes so far as to claim that the three principles from Spinoza's *Ethic* that White believed had had a fundamental influence on his life—the concept of the union of body and mind, the concept of the control of the passions through "adequate" ideas, and the doctrine of immortality—"provide the key to understanding Clara and Madge" (p. 57). Hughes argues that Clara, by rejecting impulse in favor of a "clear and active intellect," and in her "rigorous adherence to a moral code," is the "most consistent spokesman for the Spinozan values" (pp. 66, 65) in the novel. Certainly Clara can be seen as embodying some of Spinoza's values. But the primary springs of her action lie elsewhere. In general, as John Lucas says, the novel is "wonderfully fleshed out; and it hardly ever lends itself to the kind of schematizing analysis that mars Linda Hughes's . . . study" (p. 110).

31. It is suggestive in this connection that, although exact dates are not given, the "Black Notebook" entries indicate that White was reading Luther between 1894 and 1898. *Clara Hopgood* was published in 1896.

32. MS. "Groombridge Diary," vol. I. After reading the *Autobiography*, Dorothy made inquiries about the author. Having met White's daughter Molly at Miss Partridge's home, Dorothy sent her a copy of *Miss Mona*, "hoping that it might fall into her father's hands." It was Miss Partridge, however, who was responsible for bringing the book to White's attention.

33. See L, 254. For White's reviews of Dorothy's novels, see *The Nation* 3 (July 11, 1908): 519–20 (*Miss Mona*), and *The Nation* 5 (July 10, 1909): 532–34 (*Frank Burnett*). Among White's unpublished papers in the Bedford Public Library Collection are his clippings of some of Dorothy White's earlier ephemeral pieces.

34. The "1910 Manuscript" (a fragmentary account of White's relationship with Dorothy) is in the Colbeck Collection. The "Dorothy
"Book" was a parallel to her Diary ("Hale's Book"): in April 1908, Hale and Dorothy "decided each to keep a book in which we shall write down extracts from each other's letters" (GD, 82n.). The MS. Diary adds "with any comments that suggest themselves. The books shall be diaries about one another." The "Dorothy Book" is in the Colbeck Collection, UBC. Dorothy "edited" the MS. Diary and the "1910 Manuscript" in later years; many pages and passages are inked out, often with explanatory notes by her. She destroyed the last five pages of the "1910 Manuscript," adding two pages in her autograph. As White's manuscript was written at a time when "difficulties" arose to prevent their marriage, it seems likely that the destroyed section refers to that subject.

35. The "1910 Manuscript."
36. Obituary of Mrs. Hale White in The Times, July 28, 1967, by her nephew, Mr. Simon Nowell-Smith. He adds that one of her favorite words was jolly. Dorothy was also renowned as a cricketeer, "a demon over-arm bowler in an era of lobs and long skirts."
37. "The Dorothy Book."
38. Unpublished letter to Mrs. Horace Smith, December 25, 1909, Colbeck Collection, UBC.
39. MS. "Groombridge Diary," vol. II.
41. From Dorothy's marginal remarks in the "1910 Manuscript."
42. MS. "Groombridge Diary," vol. I.
43. Some omissions from the published Groombridge Diary are still preserved (in spite of heavy cancellations) in the MS. Diary. Doubtless for reasons of decorum, Dorothy left out most allusions to their physical intimacy. The MS., however, contains frequent references to kisses and embraces, terms of endearment, playfulness. These allusions give a solidity and homey genuineness to the relationship that the published version fails to convey. Even in the MS., though, some reading between the lines is necessary to guess Dorothy's feelings in relation to White's grown-up children. The few references delicately imply that she keenly felt the potential awkwardness of her position and was grateful when the extent of her commitment to White, and his to her, was recognized.
44. MS. "Groombridge Diary," vol. I.
45. Ibid.
46. The "Dorothy Book."

47. He goes on: "It is hateful to add, and yet there are people in the world who make it necessary, that our lives have been without stain. We neither of us could have said this if intercourse without marriage had been permitted." On September 2, 1908, White wrote to Mr. Horace Smith that a nominal marriage would be "unnatural and unendurable" to both of them, and that not marrying was for him "the greatest piece of self-denial which in the course of a long life not unfruitful in trials of endurance, I have had to make" (unpublished letter, Colbeck Collection, UBC). In a letter to Miss Partridge, July 19, 1908, White wrote: "That there is but little chance of marriage is a great trial, but the reasons against it seem insuperable to both of us, and they are not all summed up in the fact that I am seventy-six" (L, 264).

48. On October 21, 1908, he wrote to Mr. Horace Smith that his trouble was "enlargement of the prostate gland," and that the "only effectual remedy" was a dangerous operation, which itself would be no guarantee that "the disease would not recur" (unpublished letter, Colbeck Collection, UBC). In spite of the risk, the operation took place on November 19, 1908.

49. On May 6, 1908, White gave Dorothy—with her parents' permission—a gold ring, which she wore on her right hand until her marriage, when she transferred it to her left (GD, 22n.). The MS. says that, in a church, "he put the ring on and we knelt and said the Lord's Prayer together" (vol. 1).

50. Dorothy's "Additional Notes to the Dorothy Book," Colbeck Collection, UBC.

51. "Lectures on Romans," ed. Hilton C. Oswald, in The Works of Martin Luther (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1972), 25:291: "our nature has been so deeply curved in upon itself because of the viciousness of original sin that it not only turns the finest gifts of God in upon itself, . . . it even uses God Himself to achieve these aims."

52. The "Dorothy Book."
I. PUBLISHED WORKS BY
WILLIAM HALE WHITE

A. BOOKS

Listed in chronological order. Works published under the pseudonym Mark Rutherford are marked with an asterisk.


*The Early Life of Mark Rutherford By Himself.* London: Oxford University Press, 1913.


B. UNCOLLECTED PIECES

THE ATHENAEUM

Note on the use of the term *affect* in his translation of Spinoza's *Ethic.* No. 2922 (October 27, 1883), p. 534.


“Dr. John Chapman.” No. 3502 (December 8, 1894), pp. 790–91.


“Tolstoi’s Astronomy.” No. 3870 (December 28, 1901), p. 879.

“Edward Fitzgerald on Carlyle’s and Tennyson’s Astronomy.” No. 3881 (March 15, 1902), p. 338


OTHER JOURNALS


**II. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS BY WHITE AND HIS ASSOCIATES**

The three major collections of Hale White materials are: (A) The Colbeck Collection, University of British Columbia; (B) The Bedford Public Library Collection; (C) The Bodleian Library Collection.

A. The Colbeck Collection, UBC, includes: the "Black" and "White" Notebooks; the "Dorothy Book"; the "1910 Manuscript"; three small notebooks; a short story, a few poems and short prose pieces; drafts of published pieces; autograph letters to and from William Hale White (e.g., to Sophie Partridge, Mable Marsh, E. H. Coleridge, Mr. and Mrs. Horace Smith; from Caleb Morris, Ruskin, Browning, Swinburne); the MS "Groombridge Diary" ('Hale's Book') by Dorothy Vernon White.

B. The Bedford Public Library Collection includes: Dr. W. Hale-White's *Notes about W. Hale White (Mark Rutherford) by His Eldest Son; Comments Made upon Sir James Fitzjames Stephen's Book "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, "* by William Hale White (Mark Rutherford), annotated by his second son (typescript); materials pertaining to the New College heresy, e.g., William White's *To Think or Not to Think?*, a copy of William Hale White's letter to Dr. Harris, Principal of New College, a copy of the *Schedule of Faith for Tutors and Students of New College*, various letters; letters to and from William Hale White (e.g., from Philip Webb, J. Hutchison Stirling; to E. Louisa
Tennyson); scrapbooks belonging to Hale White, containing newspaper clippings and some of Dorothy White's periodical pieces; William Hale White: "Mark Rutherford" 1831–1913: Extracts from Letters written to his second son and his second son's wife (typescript); White's A Letter Written on the Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Street (1877).


III. OTHER WORKS CITED

(in alphabetical order)


Annual Report of the Council of New College, 1852. (Bedford Public Library Collection.)


White, William. *To Think or Not to Think?*. London: Robert Theobald, Paternoster Row; Bedford: John G. Nall, 1852. (Bedford Public Library Collection.)


**IV. BIBLIOGRAPHIES**


INDEX

Literary works are listed under the author's name.

Allen, Peter, 115
Arnold, Matthew, 39–40, 112, 190, 201–02, 228, 233, 234
Arthur, Harriet. See White, Mrs. Harriet
Augustine, Saint, 240
Bedford, 5, 9, 19, 55, 232
Bible, 20, 30, 189, 233
and idea of divine inspiration, 24, 25, 29, 35, 93.
See also WHW, Thought and Attitudes: feeling for Bible
Biblical Review, 30
Binney, Thomas, 12, 20, 26, +7, 50–51, 55, 59, 158, 285n.83
Bookman, 76
Boswell, James, 87
Brown, James Baldwin, 12, 20
Brown, John, 52–53
Browning, Robert. 290n.7
Bruss, Elizabeth, 122
Bulkley, Peter, 37, ±1, 180, 191
75, 79, 204, 217; White’s study of, 10, 38, 39, 79, 119, 121, 127, 196, 200, 235, 269
Bunyan Meeting
history of, 10, 280n.9; size of, 11; mentioned, 18, 19, 26, ±1, 47, 52, 60, 70, 81, 185, 193, 232, 240. See also WHW,
Biography: childhood, conversion
Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 112, 165, 190, 217
Calvin, John, 42, 217
Calvinism, 11–12, 20–22, 187, 193, 240. See also Moderate Calvinism; Puritanism; WHW, Thought and Attitudes: response to and reinterpretation of Calvinism
Camus, Albert, 123
Carlyle, Thomas, 8, 69, 84, 121, 173, 201, 212
Cecil, Lady Robert, 104, 289n.4
Chapman, John, 99, 115, 133, 170, 290n.5
Cheshunt College, 14, 19, 21, 24, 32, 36, 41
Chignell, Mary Ann. See White, Mrs. William
Chignell, William, 63, 286n.97
Colchester, 11
Colenutt, Sarah, 19, 63, 82, 104, 125, 127, 136, 147, 168, 169, 177
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 23, 30, 70, 84, 212, 233
Congregationalism, 11–12. See also Puritanism; Calvinism
Cromwell, Oliver, 10, 15
Cunningham, Valentine, 123, 280n.9, 284n.64, 284n.72; on The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane, 44–45, 52, 286nn.88, 96
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dale, R. W.</td>
<td>11-12, 20, 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaney, Paul</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickens, Charles</td>
<td>154, 170, 172, 173, 175, 287n.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissent. See Nonconformity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditchling, Sussex</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliot, George</td>
<td>119, 133, 169, 190; <em>Middlemarch</em> mentioned or quoted, 34, 69, 95, 115, 130, 141, 246, 287n.7: <em>The Mill on the Floss</em> mentioned or quoted, 95, 252, 253-54; as model for WHW's heroines, 154-55; relationship with WHW, 95-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelicalism</td>
<td>11-12, 47, 50, 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans, Marian. See Eliot, George</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairbairn, A. M.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fetter's Lane Chapel, London</td>
<td>59, 231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankl, Viktor</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friar Street Chapel, Ipswich</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galileo</td>
<td>84-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gore, Charles</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosse, Edmund</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groombridge, Kent</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gusdorf, George</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hale-White, John (author's second son)</td>
<td>90, 103, 119, 124, 135-36, 138, 145, 152, 286n.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hale-White, Mary T. (author's daughter)</td>
<td>104, 124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hale-White, Sir William (author's eldest son)</td>
<td>62, 104, 119, 134, 136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halle, Sir Charles</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardy, Thomas</td>
<td>77, 108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Harper's New Monthly Magazine</em>, 126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harpur Charity</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris, John</td>
<td>24, 25, 30, 31-32, 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hegel, G. W. F.</td>
<td>233, 234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillyard, Samuel II</td>
<td>47, 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holyoake, George Jacob</td>
<td>3, 104, 125, 126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopkins, Gerald Manley</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horace Smith, Dorothy. See White, Mrs. Dorothy Vernon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howells, William Dean</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughes, Linda</td>
<td>301n.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutton, Richard H.</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James, John Angell</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay, William</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan of Arc</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job, 18-19, 194-96, 200, 213, 227, 237</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Samuel 5, 85-86, 121, 132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, R. Tudur</td>
<td>13, 58, 281n.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jowett, Benjamin</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jukes, John</td>
<td>11, 41, 47, 48, 52, 53-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kant, Emmanuel</td>
<td>196, 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kempis, Thomas &amp;agr.</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King's Weigh House Chapel, London</td>
<td>26, 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewes, George Henry</td>
<td>98, 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Portland Street Unitarian Chapel, London</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucas, John</td>
<td>46, 80-81, 160, 162, 251, 253, 256, 285n.82,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDEX

293nn.11, 13, 294n.24
Luther, Martin, 42, 203, 217, 240, 276-77, 299n.13

Lux Mundi, 233

Maccall, William, 28, 29, 98
Maclean, Catherine M., 62, 90, 293n.11
Maurice, F. D., 233
Mazzini, Giuseppe, 265
Miall, Edward, 57
Mill, John Stewart, 40, 69
Milton, John, 39, 41, 42, 85

Moderate Calvinism, 11-12, 23-44. See also Calvinism: Puritanism
Morley, John, 201
Morris, Caleb, 59, 133, 244-45; and the "indwelling Christ." 240-44. 273; influence on WHW. 231-32; as a preacher. 158, 242-i4, 273-74. 300n.14
Morris, John, 123

New College, London, 5, 24, 273, 30, 34, 55, 56, 63, 169, 185, 232
Niebuhr, Richard R., 69-70
Nonconformist, 57, 284n.64
Nonconformity, 27-28, 34, 39; decay of, 57-60; and respectability, 28, 46. See also WHW, Thought and Attitudes: experience of Nonconformity, response to and reinterpretation of Calvinism
Nowell-Smith, Simon, 295n.28

Partridge, Sophie, 6, 82, 99, 104, 114, 177, 233, 268, 271, 277
Paul, Saint
and conversion, 21, 22, 241, 253, 254-55; and Romans, 91-92; and Spinoza, 288; and Thessalonians, 238; mentioned, 38, 240, 242, 245, 259, 264, 275

People, 28, 29, 98
Puritanism, 14-15, 17, 19-20, 22, 37-38, 180, 200, 201-02. See also Calvinism; Moderate Calvinism; WHW, Thought and Attitudes: response to and reinterpretation of Calvinism

Renan, Ernest, 233-34
Romanticism, 22, 32, 179, 197
Ruskin, John, 10, 104, 170, 173
Russell, Lord John, 52, 56

Shakespeare, William, 217
Sidgwick, Henry, 114-15
Smith, John E., 181-82
Spenser, Edmund, 85, 87
Spinoza, Benedict de, 106, 112, 208, 216-30, 267

Stephens, James Fitzjames, 39
Stirling, J. Hutchison, 104, 125
Stock, Irwin, 256, 265, 266, 293n.11

Stoke Newington, 7, 64, 70, 81, 92, 93
Stone, Wilfred, 31, 225, 226, 284n.65, 289n.3, 293n.11, 294n.18
Street, Elizabeth, 119, 133
White, William Hale:

Biography:
ancestry, 55–56; birth, 9;
childhood, 7–19; hatred of Sundays, 7–10; escape from drowning, 89–90; conversion, 5, 10–19; desire to be a painter, 13; attends Cheshunt College, 19–24; transfers to New College, London, 24; 

Character:
alienation, 3, 19, 36–37, 59–60, 79, 80–81, 112–16, 120, 128, 134–35, 151–52,
INDEX

163, 254, 273-74; attraction to courage and heroism, 3-4, 33-34, 85, 90, 137, 144, 184; desire for recognition and praise, 96, 124, 125-27;
egotism, 92-114, 136, 143, 146-48, 148-52, 169, 213;
guilt and self-judgment, 3-4, 19, 86-87, 93, 100-105, 136, 137, 146, 151, 175-76; hatred of hypocrisy, 13, 16, 17-18, 32, 35, 138, 164-65, 185, 201, 217;
love of veracity, 18-19, 35-36, 61-90, 170, 208, 226, 236; melancholia as "bottomless Abyss," 60, 65, 69, 70, 73, 74, 89, 110;
melancholia, deliverance from, 84-86, 90, 210, 211, 214, 221-22; melancholia and Dorothy Horace Smith, 82-84, 269-73; melancholia as idée fixe, 65, 73, 75, 76, 78, 166, 221-22; melancholia in WHW's fiction, 64-79; search for a "perfect friend," 32, 97, 120, 124, 226; self-hatred, 19, 94-99, 112, 151, 208; seriousness, 115, 269; "strategems of defense" against despair, 108, 172-73, 185

Thought and Attitudes:

Works:

*Argument for an Extension of the Franchise, An*, 177, 292n.42

“Atonement,” 100, 101-02

*Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, The*, 49–50, 111, 113, 155, 164, 176, 208, 239, 267; autobiographical nature of, 2, 5–6, 116–24; and Chapman years, 93–95, 98; conversion and heresy in, 10, 14, 16, 30–32; deliverance in, 86–87, 209, 248; and immortality, 105–06; melancholia in, 64–69; narrative art of, 7, 31–32, 127–30, 161–62, 258; publication of, 110, 116; religious faith explored in, 180, 182, 188–89, 199–200, 235, 237, 238, 266, 274–75; and Sundays, 7, 8, 9–10; and theme of marital discontent, 137, 139, 142, 143–47, 152

“Belief, Unbelief, and Superstition,” 22

“Black Notebook,” 181, 204, 292n.46, 295n.1

“Byron, Goethe, and Mr. Matthew Arnold,” 112

“Caleb Morris,” 242

*Catharine Furze*, 110, 137, 175, 188, 236, 244–45, 256, 258; death and parting in, 105–06, 107–10; and “inner light,” 196, 198; melancholia in, 73, 77–78, 91–92; and Nonconformity, 45; Prodigal son in, 242–44; sexuality in, 158, 159–64; theme of conversion in, 249, 252, 254–56; theme of marital discontent in, 137, 138, 139, 143, 147

*Clara Hopgood*, 139, 211, 245, 258–59, 271; and alienation, 80–81, 113–14; condemned by critics, 256; and “inner light,” 198–99; sexuality in, 260–61, 264; theme of self-sacrificing love in, 238, 246–47, 249, 256–67; and voice of Spinoza, 267; and WHW’s pseudonym, 292n.46

“Conscience,” 198

“Confessions of a Self-Tormentor,” 95–97, 98, 100

*Mark Rutherford’s Deliverance*, 6, 125, 165–66, 215–16, 250–51; relation to the *Autobiography*, 128–30; struggle for personal faith in, 22, 179, 182, 241; theme of marital discontent in, 133, 139, 143
Description of the Wordsworth & Coleridge Manuscripts in the Possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman, A, 12

Early Life of Mark Rutherford, The, 6–7, 63–64, 97, 134, 242, 243; conversion and heresy in, 5, 9, 15–18, 25, 34

"Dream of Two Dimensions, A," 100, 101, 125, 139, 143, 148–53, 157

"Epoch, An," 214

"Esther," 143, 197–98, 246

"Fire at Mildeep Manor, The," 100, 101

"Flatland," 148

"George Eliot As I Knew Her," 98, 191

"How Can We Tell?" 84–85

"Ixion," 192–94, 197, 204

"James Forbes," 100, 101

John Bunyan, 127

Last Pages From a Journal, 91, 148, 180, 207, 231, 241, 250

"Letters From My Aunt Eleanor," 3, 139

"Letter From the Authoress of 'Judith Crowhurst,' A," 115, 288n.1, 290n.13

Letter Written on the Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Street, A, 291n.25

"Letter to the Rambler, A," 100–101

"Love of Woman, The," 112

"Marcus Antoninus," 183–85, 192


Miriam's Schooling, 248, 252–54, 256, 263; and astronomy, 210–12; melancholia in, 73, 76–77; sexuality in, 157–58; and theme of marital discontent, 143, 148

More Pages From a Journal, 187, 191, 213, 292n.34

"Mrs. Fairfax," 121, 139, 154

"Notes on the Book of Job," 117–18, 194–96, 197

Pages From a Journal, 222

"Peter Bulkley," 38

Preface to Selections from Dr. Johnson's "Rambler," 132

Prefaces to Spinoza's Ethic (1883, 1894), 193, 216, 218, 219, 223

"Principles," 187, 242

Revolution in Tanner's Lane, The, 44–45, 46, 88, 107, 109, 110, 155, 156–57, 248; Calvinism explored in, 38, 41, 42, 185–86; and the "commonplace," 130–32; conversion and heresy in, 16–17, 55–57; hypocrisy in, 48, 49, 50; melancholia in, 71, 73–76; Nonconformist clergy in, 46–57; and theme of conversion, 251–52; and theme of marital discontent, 139, 140–42, 153

"Saul," 79–80, 158–59

"Spinoza," 222

"Supplementary Note on the
Devil, " 228
"Sweetness of a Man's Friend, The," 100, 101, 110, 139, 143, 147, 168
"Talking About Our Troubles," 72
Translation of Spinoza's
Tractatus de Intellectus
Emendatione, 216-17
"Two Martyrs," 76
"Visit to Carlyle in 1868, A," 84
"White Notebook," 203-04
Writing and Creativity:
anonymity and diffidence as author. 6-7. 121-30, 292n.46;
autobiographical nature of his work. 1, 6-7, 52, 57, 80-81, 100-105, 139-40, 288n.1;
inability to create plots, 7, 106-07, 290n.13; literary judgments, 71, 189-91; reasons for writing. 1, 41, 71, 118-24, 119, 120-21; style and creative methods, 1, 45, 84, 130-32, 148, 256-57, 258-59, 261, 263
Whitefield, George, 19
Whitman, Walt, 217
Willey, Basil, 62
Wordsworth, William, 21-22, 23, 36, 72, 84, 121, 131, 180, 208