The Spire
Thematically regarded, *The Spire* (1964) develops naturally out of *Free Fall*. For it traces the gradual discovery by Jocelin, Dean of the Cathedral Church of Our Lady, that his life—far from being informed by the religious, as he imagines—is and has been influenced by the secular at every point, which brings him, like Sammy Mountjoy, to call out for help from another; but by the close of the novel he appears to achieve a somewhat greater degree of freedom from the self than Sammy Mountjoy has, though still testifying to the riddle of the universe, and, unlike Sammy, he passes at last into death. Structurally, however, *The Spire* is more conventional than *Free Fall*. Although it exposes us for the most part to the inner life of Jocelin, the novel is not a first-person narrative: whereas *Free Fall* (or even *Pincher Martin* in its flashbacks) violates chronology in following the recollections that present themselves to the individual consciousness of the leading character, *The Spire* progresses in a straight line, focusing on the change in Jocelin as he thrusts past one obstacle after another, becoming ever more guiltily involved, to complete the building of the spire which he believes that God initially showed him in a vision. Golding's mode in this book seems even barer, more stringently condensed, than in *Pincher Martin*—in part because he represents Jocelin's inner life less circumstantially than Martin's—though at moments *The Spire* reveals a densely ambiguous texture like *Pincher Martin's*. But *The Spire* resembles *Pincher Martin* mainly in that Golding organizes both works to some extent around a sequence of invasions of the self by an unwelcome knowledge: as the world of Martin's ego crumbles, bit by bit, when he keeps being forced to recognize the otherness of the universe, so Jocelin's illusions about the purity of his actions are undermined, little by little, by the growing awareness pressed upon him of his
guilt. Indeed, the number of such sequences in *The Spire* allies the novel with *The Inheritors* or *Lord of the Flies*, where, as we have already seen, Golding relies heavily on carefully graded series of various kinds to structure his narrative, generate its drive, and make his meaning.

In the next section of this chapter, I shall be referring to some of the forms that govern the development of *The Spire*, but I want to dwell primarily on the changes that slowly manifest themselves in Jocelin, for these seem to me the essence of the story's structure and theme. After that, I shall take up several characters and motifs employed by Golding to highlight what goes on in Jocelin. Then, to indicate Golding's verbal manner in this book, I shall examine a few of those oblique and ambiguous passages which record Jocelin's invasion by thoughts and feelings whose significance he resists recognizing. And finally I shall turn to the closing pages of *The Spire* in order to explore their meaning and comment on the story's theme.

On the simplest narrative level, Golding shapes his story through describing the construction of a spire for a church in medieval England and the realizations that it leads to in Dean Jocelin, the prime mover in the enterprise. As the novel begins, the job is getting underway, and we follow it through its increasingly threatening stages: the discovery that the ground below the crossways provides no proper foundation for such a structure; the moving of the earth in the pit beneath as the tower rises; the ringing of the stones in the church because of the added weight; the building of pinnacles and the encircling of the tower with a steel band, some 250 feet up, to contain the thrust on the pillars below; the swaying of the tower; the bending of the pillars by the crossways, which causes the master builder himself (Roger
Mason) to quit the job; the placing of the capstone and its supporting cone, which wrenches the spire from the perpendicular; and Jocelin's driving of a Holy Nail, during a wild storm, at the top of the spire to complete and preserve it. The spire built, Jocelin finds out, first, that he does not owe his preferment in the church to being a man "chosen" by God, as he has believed, but to being the nephew of the worldly Alison, mistress to the former king. Then the very quality of the vision in which he felt the spire originally revealed to him by God is called in question by Father Adam, who ministers to him in the Dean's physical and spiritual weakness. Jocelin proceeds to seek forgiveness from Father Anselm, a friend of his youth who bitterly resents Jocelin's rise in the church, and from Roger Mason, one of several persons whom Jocelin has in effect destroyed because of his obsession with the spire; but on leaving Roger's room, the Dean is set upon by the people of the town, whom he has alienated through the building of the spire. On his deathbed, after deciding that "There is no innocent work. God knows where God may be" (p. 214), Jocelin suddenly sees the spire once more as a work of God, "like the apple tree," and is overwhelmed by a sense of "terror and joy" as he expires (p. 215).

A résumé such as I have just given cannot begin to suggest the complexities that evolve from this basic narrative line, complexities so controlled by Golding that they themselves serve to shape the developing story, and here I can only indicate some of the more important ones. Thus the spire is both a physical fact in the external world and a presence within Jocelin himself, a presence that he sometimes experiences as a demonstration of his utter will and sometimes feels as realized in his very back, which slowly weakens as the building rises; the stones of the church actually sing and its
pillars really bend, but often the singing occurs inside the head of Jocelin and the supports within him are menaced as the pressure mounts; the literal spire expresses Jocelin’s extraordinary faith and absolute folly; a presence in the sky and a symbol of prayer to God, it stands over the pit at the crossways, the location of almost every evil happening in the novel; as a structure, the spire is at once a miracle and a menace; it testifies to Jocelin’s faith, and it is associated, repeatedly, with the male organ. The course of Jocelin’s experience in *The Spire* may also be viewed as a continuing assault by the secular on the self, which struggles more and more desperately to resist the awareness that invades it until it is finally overpowered. At the start of the book, the spiritually assured Jocelin welcomes the presence of Roger Mason’s workers in the church despite the chaos they bring, although he is irritated at moments by their worldliness; after he has begun to intuit dimly his own guilt, he tries to escape from the world by busying himself up in the spire, thus withdrawing as well ever more firmly from his responsibilities as dean and from his colleagues in the church; when he climbs to drive the Holy Nail, he imagines the storm as a host of devils let loose to destroy the spire, although morally speaking, Jocelin is by this time beset by a multitude of hints concerning his own sins; after the completion of the spire, as his awareness of guilt grows, Jocelin becomes increasingly humble, groping his way back into the world of men which he has forsaken and struggling to come to terms both with the knowledge of himself which has been thrust upon him and with the final manifestation of the divine. This particular line of development in *The Spire* is also dramatized by Golding through a series of visitations of Jocelin: first, by a “guardian angel” who warms him (p. 18), reinforcing Jocelin’s conviction that God approves the building of the spire;
then, by this angel alternating with the Devil, who keeps assailing Jocelin with lurid sexual visions; later, by a combination of angel and devil at one point where Jocelin realizes much of what he stands responsible for and willingly assents to his punishment, "Then his angel put away the two wings from the cloven hoof and struck him from arse to the head with a white-hot flail" (p. 181); after that, by a "dark angel" (p. 190); and finally, by "a cloud of angels flashing in the sunlight" that he sees, near the end of the book, when looking at an apple tree, the angels a miraculous transformation of its blooms (p. 196).

But Jocelin's gradual progress towards self-knowledge is the fundamental substance of the narrative in *The Spire*, and as such worth tracing in more detail. The first two chapters of the novel present a Jocelin extremely confident of his mission while they also contain several indications of his frailties. About the world of the church he feels almost divinely omniscient, chuckling over how well he knows the people in it, "what they are doing and will do . . . what they have done" (p. 4), although he cautions himself rather coyly to "remember that the spire isn't everything" (p. 5) and a little later proclaims his humility, "Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast kept me humble" (p. 18). In fact, of course, he readily allies himself with the divine: he overhears one deacon remarking to another, "He thinks he is a saint! A man like that!" (p. 9), though Jocelin does not realize that the men are speaking of him; he imagines that a head of him being sculptured by the dumb man, which seems primarily intended to capture his physical likeness, represents him as "an angel," if not the "Holy Spirit" (p. 20); he even identifies himself with God when addressing Roger Mason, "I shall thrust you upward by my will. It's God's will in this business" (p. 35). His certainty of being chosen to oversee the
The construction of the spire begins immediately to affect his personal relationships: when Pangall, who is in charge of keeping the church clean, weeps in telling how the builders mock his impotence, Jocelin is made impatient by the tears, his "irritation" disappearing as he ignores Pangall to look up at the "empty air" that the spire will occupy (p. 16); Father Adam he depersonalizes into a man with "no face" whom he calls "Father Anonymous" (p. 22); he dismisses a letter from Alison—an aunt who hopes to arrange for her burial in the church—because he has already gotten money from her for the spire; despite a surge of friendliness toward Father Anselm, who has quarreled with him rather nastily about the spire, the Dean exerts his authority in requiring the Sacrist to stand watch over the workmen at the crossways and thus severs "the frayed thread that bound them" together (p. 31), though after a while—when "Buoyed up by his joy" at the news that a Holy Nail is to be sent from Rome—Jocelin offers Anselm a "release . . . from this duty" (p. 44). When the Dean is annoyed at sensing opposition to the job in someone else, he suspects the other of regarding the spire as "Jocelin's Folly" (pp. 15, 31), but his assurance is scarcely shaken. If Roger shows him that a proper foundation is lacking, the Dean chides him for unwillingness "to believe in a miracle" and then accuses the master builder of temporizing in order to keep his crew together before departing to find work somewhere else (pp. 34–35). Only once in these first two chapters does the secular begin to infringe on Jocelin's awareness, in a typically oblique passage. He has been asking Roger why the workers "pick on" Pangall—whose impotence, as it later turns out, the Dean fully realizes and whose wife Jocelin has desired for years. When Roger glances at him, "Jocelin felt the fluttering of a dozen things behind his lips that he might have given sound to, if it had
not been for the dark eyes looking so directly into his. It was like standing on the edge of something” (p. 38); and the last sentence links the knowledge that Jocelin resists with the pit, which comes to figure so prominently in the story as an image of the burgeoning secular life that he wishes to repress.

In the chapters that follow, the facts and feelings which infringe on Jocelin’s consciousness multiply and become more defined, so he must struggle harder to withstand them as he pushes on with the work. The builders he continues to transform from persons into “his instruments . . . people he had to use . . . little more than apes” (p. 50), and we also learn how Jocelin has secured timbers for his spire through arranging for an almost illiterate young fellow “to be made a canon,” who then “went back to his hunting” (pp. 66–67). But he is startled to discover that Pangall’s wife and Roger Mason are irrevocably attracted to each other, caught up “in some sort of tent that shut them off from all other people, and he saw how they feared the tent, both of them, but were helpless” (p. 52). When Pangall interprets Jocelin’s gesture with a model of the spire as a jibe at the sweeper’s impotence, thus reminding the Dean of the sexual and of Goody Pangall, Jocelin yearns for “the purity of the light” but instead finds himself “looking down at the tiles of the floor with their heraldic beasts” (p. 57), and the thought bursts into his mind that the presence of Goody Pangall will keep Roger on the job. The thought is “so allaying” because it assures Jocelin that the work will go on, but “so terrible” because it places Goody Pangall within a sexual orbit, albeit Roger’s (p. 59). That night, Satan visits Jocelin for the first time, torturing him with what the Dean attempts to protect himself by thinking “a meaningless and hopeless dream” in which Jocelin lies “crucified,” jeered at, and in which Goody
is disguised as "Satan himself, rising out of the west, clad in nothing but blazing hair . . . tormenting him so that he writhed" (pp. 59–60). He tries to evade the dream by becoming "very busy" (p. 61) and by telling himself, "I am about my Father's business" (p. 62). But at times "a dark corner of his mind surprised him"—on the sight of Roger or either of the Pangalls—and he is forced to say, "There's much more to come," though he claims that the words have "no logical meaning" (p. 70). Although he is terrified at the moving of the earth in the pit—"Some form of life; that which ought not to be seen or touched, the darkness under the earth" (p. 74)—he remains determined that the construction proceed, asserting the purity of his own "faith" and "vision" when Roger argues that the building should stop (pp. 79–80). In the face of Roger's intention to leave, Jocelin discloses that he has written a letter to prevent Roger from getting work at Malmesbury (p. 82); betrays the fact that he will use Roger's attraction to Pangall's wife as a lever to keep the master builder on the job (p. 81); indeed, reveals obliquely his willingness to sacrifice even the woman whom he does not know he loves, "I would protect her if I could" (p. 81). When Roger, frightened both by the impossibility of the job and by his growing involvement with Goody Pangall, begs Jocelin to release him "for the love of God," the Dean refuses, knowing that Roger "will never be the same man again" (p. 83). At the very moment when he realizes his "decision" to thrust on with the structure, however, Jocelin feels "a kind of sick apprehension, not because the spire was in danger; but because the spire was not in danger" (p. 82)—because, in short, he vaguely intuits the guilt of behaving as he does. The immediate consequence of his decision is the scene at the crossways in which Jocelin watches the rioting workers, tormenting Pangall once more, pursue
him like a "pack" of animals and sees Goody Pangall standing in a torn dress while she and Roger wordlessly acknowledge, looking at each other across the pit, how absolutely they are bound together. Then the arms of the dumb man, who is shielding the Dean with his body, "leapt apart" (p. 85), and Jocelin collapses under the weight of the crowd, an indication of the degree to which he is burdened by his increasing awareness of the secular.

Now Jocelin seeks to lose himself in the constructing of the spire, cultivating his "indifference" to the people around him (p. 93), but the "high laugh" that repeatedly breaks from him marks the strain he is under (p. 88). If he stands in the crossways and gazes up at the tower, the brightness compels him to look down at the floor with its filth, which makes him think vexedly of Pangall (who has disappeared) and also contains "a twig . . . with a rotting berry" that triggers "a whole train of memories and worries and associations" in the Dean's mind (pp. 89-90)—though not until much later does Jocelin fully realize that Pangall lies murdered in the pit "with a sliver of mistletoe between his ribs" (p. 204). He is "irked" by Goody Pangall, though he professes to feel "nothing about her but compassion" for the "shame" he attributes to her at being deserted by her husband (p. 94). But she actually avoids him because she senses, and has always sensed, his physical attraction to her, as is clear when she replies to his "My child, you are very dear to me" with "Not you too!" (p. 95). Driven by his "incomprehension" of these words, Jocelin determines to "Work! Work!" and escapes once more to the spire (p. 95). But even while he tries to concentrate on it, kneeling aloft in the tower, "unlooked-for things came with the spire," and he can only think dumbly, "Have mercy. Or teach me"—"But there was no answer" (p. 100). At the news that Goody is preg-
nant, "A great anger swamped Jocelin" and then "tears streamed" from his eyes, but he retains self-control enough to offer fraudulent thanks to God, "these are tears of joy because Thou hast remembered Thy handmaiden" (p. 105).

Engaging himself again in overseeing the construction of the spire, Jocelin treats Roger more outrageously than ever. He is so "impaled on his will" (p. 109) that he rejects a new plea for "mercy" from Roger (p. 110), and he then lectures the master builder, with apparent humility, on the fact that they are both like "mayfly," transitory and ignorant beings, but the source of what he preaches is his "will" to complete the spire (p. 111). When Roger describes his fears for the structure so graphically that the Dean is compelled to live through in his imagination the fall of the spire, Jocelin persists in regarding this as a plot on Roger's part to stop the building and goes on to declare that both of them have been chosen for the work, that the spire is not his own "Folly" but "God's," from Whom "comes the command to do what makes no sense at all"—yet these words issue from the "Voice of the devouring Will, my master" (p. 116), which Jocelin refers to as if it were divine, though the phrasing suggests that this "Will" is in truth his own. He even tries to pressure Roger by adverting to the master builder's moral terror at submitting to the charms of Goody Pangall, to which Roger responds by calling Jocelin "The devil himself" (pp. 117-18). Appropriately enough, the Dean shortly finds Roger and Goody together in the spire, and as a result of this proof that they have made love,

. . . the memories came storming in—a green girl running in the close and slowing decorously for my Lord the Dean, my Reverend Father, the shy smile and the singing of the child's game, noticed, approved, and at last looked
for, yes looked for, expected, cherished, a warmth round the heart, an unworldly delight, the arranged marriage with the lame man, the wimpled hair, the tent. . . . (p. 121)

The associations indicate that the Dean can still manage to consider his own relationship with Goody Pangall in the past as uncontaminated by any sexual attraction, but the mention of "the arranged marriage" with the impotent Pangall betrays for the first time how Jocelin has sought practically to preserve her for himself.

Rededicating himself to "Work! Work! Work!" (p. 122), he attempts to put to rest the images of Goody Pangall that haunt him by writing to arrange for her to be taken into a religious house at Stilbury. And then he becomes conscious that the tower itself sways in the air, a reflection for the reader of Jocelin's moral vacillation. For on learning the terms of the abbess, his "first thought" is "that Stilbury was too near," an indication that he would resist the attractions of Goody, but his "second thought," "more confused," is that "Stilbury was quite far enough," which expresses his desire to hold on to Goody if he can (p. 129). Shortly, however, she is discovered with Roger by the master builder's wife, and, when Jocelin comes on the scene to tell her of his plan with money in his hand, the pregnant Goody suspects him of intending sexual advances, goes into labor, and dies—though Jocelin cherishes the illusion that she has thought him simply an "accuser" from "the church" (p. 131).

After the death of Goody Pangall, Jocelin is invaded more and more powerfully by an awareness of the secular, which forces him at times to see himself with gradually increasing clarity, although he remains committed to finishing the spire. Conscious now and then "of a feeling rising in him
... like a level of dark water" (p. 133), Jocelin can "try"— if he closes his mind to the "golden maze" that he associates with Goody—"to examine the extraordinary tides of feeling that were swallowing him up" (p. 141). But the "propositions" that he articulates are formulas which do not take full account of his personal involvement, and "the spire in his head prevented him from coming to a conclusion" about them (p. 141). Once, when he is remembering his earlier years as if they were "another life," he suddenly thinks "There was God!" and then asks himself (as I understand the passage) whether that thought is "included" in his present existence—"But there was no answer. . . . And then the spire put the thoughts out of his head" (p. 142). After Roger has quit the job and Jocelin's "will," declaring itself among "flames of love" for the workers, has "promised them more money" to complete the task (pp. 146-47), the Dean one day finds himself alone in the spire and confronts, in a metal sheet, a true reflection of his physical self: "He knelt and peered in at the wild halo of hair, the skinny arms and legs that stuck out of a girt and dirty robe" (p. 149). He begins to relate this reflection to the terrible events that have transpired since he saw the rioting workers, Goody Pangall, and Roger together at the crossways, but he still clings to the purity of his original vision concerning the spire: "Well, Jocelin, this is where we have come. It began when we were knocked down, I think. . . . We can remember what happened since then, but what happened before is some sort of dream. Except for the vision" (p. 150). When a commission of the church arrives to judge whether the Dean, who has been so obsessed with the spire, is fit to retain his position, Jocelin freely admits that the others think him mad, confessing "Perhaps I am" (p. 163), and also affirms, "All I know is, I looked for men of faith to be with me; and there was none"
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(p. 159). While struggling to explain himself to the commission, nevertheless, Jocelin cannot elude the encroachment of the secular, referring obliquely both to Goody Pangall (ironically, the commission believes that the “she” he speaks of is “Our Lady”) and to the dead Pangall, “built in” under the crossways (p. 159). And when at last he drives the Holy Nail to complete the spire, a deed which he has hoped will free him, images of Goody rush in on his exhausted self: he thinks of her first as a child whom he has “stood looking down on . . . loving her innocence and beauty”; but then he envisions her as a naked female presence (undisguised, for the first time in the novel) to whom he makes love—though Jocelin still places the latter vision in the “uncountry” of his mind, where the two act with “no sin,” thus still shielding himself to some degree from acknowledging the reality of her attraction for him (p. 171).

But this “new knowledge” with which Jocelin has been visited is by no means the final stage in his self-discovery. During a talk with Alison he learns that, far from being chosen by God for advancement in the church, he has been chosen by his aunt, who has suggested to the former king, after a sexual encounter, that he forward the career of her nephew as a kind of joke. Alison even questions the gift of the Holy Nail, hinting that the person who sent it to Jocelin wanted to avoid giving hard cash. Yet she is frightened at his reaction to what she has said and so agrees with him that the continued “haunting” of Jocelin by Goody Pangall must be “witchcraft” (pp. 179–80)—though Jocelin himself, on his aunt’s departure, feels that “There’s a pattern” in whatever has happened and that “There’s more to be destroyed” (p. 180). His prediction is fulfilled in part as he is led once more to the crossways, where he abases himself spiritually as well as physically, again obliquely acknowledging the murder of
Pangall, and is "struck . . . with a white-hot flail" by his dark angel (p. 181). But he has yet to learn that his initial vision itself of the spire is suspect. The record of the experience—set down some years earlier—that he has Father Adam read aloud is full of phrases about Jocelin's "certainty and abnegation," "my nothingness in this scheme," "my new-found humility and new-found knowledge" (pp. 185–86), but the vision seems to have had its origin in a mere "feeling" that "rose from my heart" (p. 184), and Father Adam maintains that Jocelin's prayer for the spire is no more than a prayer of the second level ("where we are given an encouragement, a feeling, an emotion"—but not, presumably, accorded a real vision): "Your prayer was a good prayer certainly; but not very" (p. 190). Nevertheless, even though Jocelin alludes to his involvement with Goody Pangall—"It must be witchcraft; otherwise how could she and he come so flatly between me and heaven?"—Father Adam first prays for him, then "smiled" at Jocelin, apparently forgiving him for his humanity; and "at once" Jocelin sees Father Adam as a distinctive person to whom he cries out, "Help me," his call releasing in Jocelin "an infinite sea of grief which . . . overflowed liberally at his eyes" (p. 189).

Now he can set about making his peace with the world to which he has returned. Although an interview with Father Anselm brings him to realize that the man whom he used to think his friend has always been rather contemptuous of Jocelin's feelings, envies his rise in the church, and indeed regards him as a Satan who has led the chapter spiritually astray, Jocelin begs Anselm to "Forgive me for being what I am," but Anselm simply departs when asked whether he does really "feel" forgiveness (p. 195). After experiencing the miraculous vision of an apple tree on his way to confront Roger Mason, who hates the Dean for oppressing him during
The building of the spire, Jocelin strips off his religious attire to kneel before Roger, presenting himself as an erring human who acknowledges most of his guilt—"Once you said I was the devil himself. It isn’t true. I’m a fool. . . . I’m a building with a vast cellarage where the rats live. . . . I injure everyone I touch, particularly those I love. Now I’ve come in pain and shame, to ask you to forgive me" (p. 202)—and Roger embraces him. But Roger’s forgiveness is short-lived, for there is still a "formless" mass in Jocelin’s head that he seeks to express, a residue of guilt which, as he articulates it, turns Roger against him once more. One part of this "formless thing" is the muddle that now, for Jocelin, characterizes the spire itself:

"You see it may be what we were meant to do, the two of us. . . . So I gave it my body. What holds it up, Roger? I? The Nail? Does she, or do you? Or is it poor Pangall, crouched beneath the crossways, with a sliver of mistletoe between his ribs?" (p. 204)

When Jocelin follows up the reference to Pangall (whom Roger has killed) by saying, "So there’s still something you can do, Roger my son," the master builder interprets him as threatening blackmail. What Jocelin actually wants from Roger, however, is a perverse assurance about the nature of Goody Pangall, another part of "the formless thing in his head." For if Roger can testify that Goody "knew" of or "even consented to" the murder of her husband, that would prove her a witch and thus enable Jocelin still to ward off the realization that the attraction he has felt for her is sheerly secular in origin, the desire of a mere man for a woman (p. 205). Although he evades complete knowledge of himself, one measure of Jocelin’s spiritual effort here is
the fact that "something out of my control" (p. 204) has made him ask for this assurance about Goody from Roger, which indicates that he is devoting his energies to seeing himself as clearly as he may; and he goes on to admit, before Roger throws him out, that "I sacrificed her too. Deliberately" to the constructing of the spire, that, by later appearing at her door, "I killed her as surely as if I'd cut her throat" (p. 206). On his way back to the church, however, he is hunted down by the people of the town just as Pangall (for whose shame and death Jocelin bears a share of the responsibility) was hunted down by the workers, and the weight of the world smashes down on his back, this time unprotected by the arms of the dumb man.

In the closing chapter of *The Spire*, Jocelin lies suspended between life and death, periodically aware of the secular, his body, and his guilt as well as of the spiritual, judging himself and others, yet remaining confronted with the riddle of himself and the universe, a riddle not to be resolved by the understanding of a limited human being. Informed that Roger has attempted suicide (because he fears specifically the revelation of Pangall's death, I assume, though Roger also knows himself to be a ruined man professionally—and he has been broken morally by his relation with Goody Pangall), Jocelin "felt the weight" of his responsibility for the master builder, for the others whom he has wronged, and for the spire; yet he also thinks, "I can't even feel for them. Or for myself" (p. 212)—ambiguous words which, even if they suggest that in his exhausted state Jocelin lacks compassion for others, also declare that he has no pity for himself. While he is compelled to realize that the "witchcraft" of Goody Pangall still haunts him, he nevertheless tries to ease the "anxious" Father Adam, to whom he "desired to give . . . something," by allowing the Father to believe that Joce-
lin’s mention of a pagan Berenice (with hair as beautiful as Goody’s) is a reference to a Christian saint (p. 213). He can see the whole world as inhabited by people stripped down to their physical selves who yet, in their arrogance as humans, “pace or prance in sheets of woven stuff”; and, though he judges them by thinking, “How proud their hope of hell is,” he also judges himself in recognizing that “There is no innocent work. God knows where God may be” (p. 214). Then, before being granted his final vision of the spire prior to dying, Jocelin can acknowledge it to be “a stone hammer” on which he has expended “four people” (p. 214).

To rehearse the development of Jocelin so elaborately as I have is to indicate, I trust, how prevailingly *The Spire* concentrates on his inner life and perhaps to suggest that many of Golding’s characters here live less in their own right than as adumbrations of the Dean. Thus he is juxtaposed on the one hand to the petty, legalistic, unforgiving Father Anselm and on the other to the naïve but forgiving Father Adam. Goody Pangall keeps betraying by her avoidance of Jocelin an intuition of that sexual drive in him which he masks as a spiritual concern for her. Pangall himself is paralleled to the Dean in that both are regarded by the workers as foolish persons who may keep off bad luck (pp. 38, 145), both are impotent in their different ways, and both are hunted down by a riotous crowd. The commission of the church which relieves the Dean of his duties serves to set off the simplicity of Jocelin and to place him in a relatively winning light, for, though it views some of his statements with favor, it appears narrowly moralistic in deciding against him because he has not always considered the workers to be wicked men and because he has long since abandoned confessing to Father Anselm. Incidentally, the sudden arrival of the commission
as the obsessed Jocelin searches for the Holy Nail, "racing" to drive it in before "the Devil" can destroy the spire (p. 154), seems to me an instance of the risk Golding runs in focusing our attention so continually on the workings of Jocelin's mind, since our translation into the outer world is shockingly abrupt and its figures are pale in comparison with the presences that haunt Jocelin. Probably the most fully developed of the major characters, other than the Dean, is Roger Mason, who at many moments emerges as a person with a life of his own, yet even he is used by Golding to highlight certain features of Jocelin. The master builder testifies repeatedly to the folly of building the spire, a fact which Jocelin often wishes to gloss over; Roger is quite aware of Goody Pangall's attraction for him and strives to resist it, whereas Jocelin's struggle to resist Goody's attractions takes a different form; Roger, in his guilt, seeks to hide the death of Pangall from the world, while Jocelin, guilty in his own way of killing Pangall, would conceal the death from himself; and as Roger remains a limited human to the end, marked by his responsibility for Pangall's death, so Jocelin remains subject to the lingering illusion—generated by the self as a fraudulent protector of its innocence—of Goody Pangall's "witchcraft."

If Roger Mason is, aside from the Dean, Golding's most rounded character in *The Spire*, the most purely symbolic is surely the dumb man, who is to be associated in various ways with the physical self that Jocelin keeps straining to repress. This powerfully masculine figure is described in greater physical detail than any other character in the novel (pp. 18–19), and, as we have already noted, he is engaged in sculpturing four heads of Jocelin to be set in the spire, heads which appear to reproduce the Dean's features accurately, but which Jocelin converts into expressions of his own spir-
It is the dumb man who takes Jocelin to the crossways to see the earth moving in the pit, that image—for the Dean—of a "form of life . . . which ought not to be seen or touched" (p. 74). (Significantly, the stone heads are at first thrown into the pit, then later removed—after the riot at the crossways—as Jocelin persists in trying to repress the dawning awareness of his guilt.) And it is the dumb man who attempts to shield the Dean's body from the crowd of workers, but whose "arms leapt apart" under the weight of this assault by the physical world on Jocelin (p. 90). When Jocelin tells the workmen, after the pillars in the church have begun to bend, that he intends ultimately to preach from a pulpit built in the crossways, they think the person who would do so "a fool," "But the dumb man came to Jocelin, humming and nodding and tapping himself on the chest" (pp. 148-49). The sentence allies the two men and suggests that Jocelin is as trapped within his physical self as the dumb man is, a fact which renders the Dean, too, essentially inarticulate so long as he represses the consciousness of his secular self. The "naked" Goody Pangall who invades the "uncountry" of Jocelin's mind, after he has driven the Holy Nail, is described as "humming from an empty mouth" (p. 178), a phrase that links her to the dumb man and the physical actuality with which he is associated. Farther on in the novel, the dumb man leads Jocelin to the crossways once more to show him the "rubble" within the pillars which the Dean has always imagined to be perfect because they were erected by the "giants" who first built the church (p. 181). Finally, as Jocelin lies on his deathbed acknowledging what he has been and is, he himself summons the dumb man to sculpture a figure, "without ornament," of his wasted body for the tomb (p. 211). Thus the dumb man is employed at point after
point in the story to chart Jocelin's resistance to and developing acknowledgment of his physical self.

As the other characters in *The Spire* function primarily to illuminate Jocelin, so do the motifs which Golding creates in his narrative. We have already noticed the multiple meanings relevant to Jocelin that accrue as Golding elaborates on the spire, and my many references to the crossways indicate that it is a similarly complex vehicle for representing the muddled condition of Jocelin. But the only motif that I shall isolate here is the bough of mistletoe that appears in the story both as the literal instrument of Pangall's death and as an image of the burgeoning awareness in Jocelin of the secular. (Quite aside from the novel, mistletoe has a rich range of implications: it is sacred, protects one against witchcraft, promotes fertility, and is associated with sacrificial killing.) On its first manifestation in the book, mistletoe is not even named. Standing in the crossways shortly after the riot of the workers there and the disappearance of Pangall, Jocelin looks at the filth on the floor about "a clear space . . . where the paving was replaced over the pit," immediately wonders testily "Where is Pangall," and sees "a twig lying across his shoe, with a rotting berry that clung obscenely to the leather," which he tries to shake from his foot (pp. 89-90). The phrasing itself here is portentous; moreover, the sight of the twig releases "a whole train of memories and worries and associations" which Jocelin at this moment can think "altogether random," although they include a "vision of the spire warping and branching and sprouting" that fills him with "terror" (p. 90). Much later, as the pressure mounts on him after Goody Pangall's death, Roger's defection from the job, and the temporary desertion by the workers to participate in the pagan ceremonies of Midsummer Night, Jocelin stares down from the spire "to a pit
dug at the crossways like a grave made ready for some notable,” remembers seeing there the “twig with a brown, obscene berry” that “lay against his foot,” and whispers “Mistletoe!” (p. 151)—but cannot yet allow himself to realize that the grave is Pangall’s and that his death is a fact for which the Dean himself must share responsibility. In trying to explain himself to the commission, Jocelin first mentions “the mistletoe berry” without elucidating further (p. 160), then settles on the plant as an image of the “complications” with which his “work” of completing the spire is beset: “A single green shoot at first, then clinging tendrils, then branches, then at last a riotous confusion—” (p. 162). And this is the image that he comes back to, while talking with Father Adam, in his stumbling efforts to describe his own guilty involvement in the whole project, which includes “More than you can ever know. Because I don’t really know myself. Reservations, connivances. The work before everything. And woven through it, a golden thread—No. Growth of a plant with strange flowers and fruit, complex, twining, engulfing, destroying, strangling” (p. 187)—though Jocelin’s refusal to pursue the image of the “golden thread” shows him still repressing his thoughts of Goody Pangall. As for the literal mistletoe, he can identify it explicitly with Pangall’s death—for us and for himself—only in his final scene with Roger, where Jocelin struggles once more to articulate the “formless” mass in his mind as he advances toward self-knowledge (p. 204).

Clearly Golding orders the references to mistletoe—as he manages the other motifs in The Spire, or the motifs in his earlier books, for that matter—in such a way that they gradually accumulate meaning as well as narrative pressure. The same sort of meticulous gradation, as I have already argued,
characterizes the invasions of Jocelin by the secular that recur throughout the story. But I turn to three of these invasions now in order primarily to demonstrate what seems to me the most typical mode of Golding's prose in this novel. Despite the fact that many of Dean Jocelin's thoughts and expressions are religiously oriented, Golding does not create in his writing here anything like the religious aura that we saw him achieve at times in *Free Fall* through a variety of Biblical echoes. And, while Jocelin's resistance to the assaults of the world may remind us of Pincher Martin's to the assaults of the other on his ego, the Dean's inner life is rendered in much less detail than Martin's: which is to say that the oblique significances of Jocelin's thoughts are more easily grasped by the reader, that the controlling ambiguity of the spiritual and the secular is more sharply defined, that the prose of *The Spire* is essentially barer in mode than the prose of *Pincher Martin*.

The first passage describes Jocelin's reaction just after he has initially become aware of the mutual attraction binding Goody Pangall to Roger Mason and imagined them enclosed in a "tent that shut them off from all other people" (p. 52). The Dean responds by passing moral judgment on the world around him, but the imagery reveals that he is more deeply implicated with Goody Pangall than he yet realizes:

> Then an anger rose out of some pit inside Jocelin. He had glimpses in his head of a face that drooped daily for his blessing, heard the secure sound of her singing in Pangall's kingdom. He lifted his chin, and the word burst out over it from an obscure place of indignation and hurt.

> "No!"

All at once it seemed to him that the renewing life of the world was a filthy thing, a rising tide of muck, so that
he gasped for air, saw the gap in the north transept and hurried through it into what daylight there was. Immediately he heard the distant jeering of men, workmen; and, at that temperature of feeling, understood what an alehouse joke it must seem to see the dean himself come hurrying out of a hole with his folly [a model of the spire] held in both hands. (p. 53)

The “face that drooped daily for his blessing” belongs to Goody Pangall, Jocelin thus testifying that in his view their relationship is purely spiritual. Yet a further irony lurks in his reference to the “sound of her singing” as “secure,” for, as it later turns out, Jocelin has indeed tried to secure her from the world and for himself through marrying her to the impotent Pangall. The “indignation and hurt” that erupt in Jocelin’s “No!” may express his moral outrage at the attachment between Goody and Roger, but they betray as well his personal jealousy of Roger, emerging as they do from “some pit inside Jocelin,” the phrase allying their source with the actual pit beneath the crossways, which is for the Dean the location of all sorts of strange and unmanageable life. While he regards this “life of the world” as “a filthy thing” and tries to escape it, at his present “temperature of feeling” he can even understand that the workers interpret his posture with the model of the spire in sexual terms—though of course their idea seems blasphemous to the Dean.

In the course of the second passage, Jocelin comes a good deal closer to recognizing his guilt, yet he still resists acknowledging it completely, protecting himself, as it were, by referring at the close of the passage to a religious song, though its words have a secular relevance for the reader. Jocelin is striving to pray after being terrified at the sight of Goody Pangall in labor and after clutching once more at the
notion that she has thought him merely her spiritual “accus­ser,” though he has also admitted to God that he “con­­sented” to the involvement of Roger and Goody in order to further the building of the spire, but his efforts at prayer are in vain.

Then he forgot his knees, his hunger, forgot everything in a tumult of glimpses that presented themselves to him as if they were connected, though they had neither order nor logic. There was the arranged marriage and the swallow’s nest. There was hair and blood, and a lame man with a broom limping through the crossways. He made no sense of these things, but endured them with moanings and shudderings. Yet like a birth itself, words came that seemed to fit the totality of his life, his sins, and his forced cruelty, and above all the dreadful glow of his dedicated will. They were words that the choir boys sang sometimes at Easter, quaint words; but now the only words that meant anything.

This have I done for my true love. (p. 132)

The “glimpses” that invade Jocelin, of course, define the “logic” of his responsibility, though he cannot yet permit himself to comprehend how they are “connected.” The “marriage” that he himself “arranged” to wall off Goody from the world has led to her physical surrender to Roger in the “swallow’s nest,” to the “blood” of the terrifying childbirth (as well as to Goody’s subsequent death), and even to the death of the “lame” Pangall, who presents himself to the Dean’s memory at this moment simply as a living figure standing over the place where he is in fact buried. If Jocelin can make “no sense of these things,” nevertheless “words” do indeed come “like a birth itself”: a spiritual “birth” in that
he feels them somehow expressive of the guilt which he has begun to realize, but "birth" also alludes to the secular, to the process of physical life itself which Jocelin regards with such horror that he keeps trying to deny his own participation in it. So by the conclusion of the passage Jocelin's acknowledgment of all he has done remains incomplete, poised on the ambiguity of a religious song with secular implications: for the Dean, "my true love" apparently yet signifies his dedication to God, while for the reader the phrase underlines the nature of Jocelin's attraction to Goody Pangall.5

In the final episode to be considered, a new piece of worldly knowledge thrusts itself on Jocelin's consciousness, further clarifying his guilt for him, but he is primarily invaded here by a spiritual compulsion to atone for his sins as he understands them. He has just been proposing to Alison that his continuing vision of Goody Pangall "must be witchcraft"—though also declaring, rather illogically, that the vision "is a logical part of all that went before" (p. 179)—when he is taken to the crossways by the dumb man, who has "chiselled a little hole in the stone" of one pillar:

Jocelin understood what he had to do. He took the chisel with its burred-over head out of the hole, lifted up an iron probe and thrust it in. It sank in, in, through the stone skin, grated and pierced in among the rubble with which the giants who had been on the earth in those days had filled the heart of the pillar.

Then all things came together. His spirit threw itself down an interior gulf, down, throw away, offer, destroy utterly, build me in with the rest of them; and as he did this he threw his physical body down too, knees, face, chest, smashing on the stone.
Then his angel put away the two wings from the cloven hoof and struck him from arse to the head with a white-hot flail. (p. 181)

The discovery of corruption in the earlier builders, who have "filled the heart of the pillar" with "rubble," suddenly illuminates for Jocelin the corruption in his own heart which has informed the construction of the spire. In abasing himself after "all things came together," he seeks to abandon the spiritual arrogance that has marked him and welcomes, appropriately enough, the punishment of "his physical body" as well—though he cannot yet articulate specifically the death of Pangall (to which he refers obliquely in the phrase "build me in with the rest of them") and though he will remain haunted by what he thinks the "witchcraft" of Goody Pangall until the end of The Spire.

The prose in which Golding represents Jocelin's sight of an apple tree, while on his way to ask Roger Mason's forgiveness, and the dying man's ultimate vision of the spire is similarly condensed, combining in its own way the spiritual with the secular, and relatively unadorned in comparison with, say, Sammy Mountjoy's visions in Free Fall. But I turn to those passages now because they are crucial to our understanding of the condition that Jocelin finally achieves and so to the meaning of The Spire. The apple tree is essentially a counterpart to the mistletoe, that image, for Jocelin, of the terrifyingly pagan life force which has engendered all the complications in the building of the spire. Just before he sees the tree, he has felt for the first time the beauty of the physical world, sensing "a freshness about the air that stirred the grief in his chest," and, when he looks up, the apple tree
with its blossoms appears to him—significantly—as initially divine:

There was a cloud of angels flashing in the sunlight, they were pink and gold and white; and they were uttering this sweet scent for joy of the light and the air. They brought with them a scatter of clear leaves, and among the leaves a long, black springing thing. His head swam with the angels, and suddenly he understood there was more to the apple tree than one branch. It was there beyond the wall, bursting up with cloud and scatter, laying hold of the earth and the air, a fountain, a marvel, an apple tree... (p. 196)

Divine as the tree is for Jocelin, he also sees it as including the secular: the "long, black springing thing" is an image of nature's potency; the fact that "he understood there was more to the apple tree than one branch" makes the tree a living whole for him; and it lays "hold" of both "earth" and "air." In short, the apple tree manifests a miraculous totality.

Towards the end of the novel, as we have already observed, the wasted Jocelin has progressed about as far as he can in judging human existence and acknowledging his own guilt: "There is no innocent work. God knows where God may be." When Father Adam declares his intention "to help" the dying man "into heaven," Jocelin's thought evidences the humility that he has attained, "And what is heaven to me unless I go in holding him by one hand and her by the other?" (p. 214)—unless, that is, he can feel that the Roger Mason and Goody Pangall whom he has destroyed are themselves forgiven and that he in turn is for-
given by them. On glancing up, Jocelin at first sees two eyes
gazing back at him “which looked in, an eye for an eye, one
eye for each eye” (pp. 214–15), but this perception—along
with its allusion to a revengeful Jehovah—is transformed as
“The two eyes slid together” to become a “window, bright
and open,” which reveals the spire against the sky:

Round the division was the blue of the sky. The division
was still and silent, but rushing upward to some point at
the sky’s end, and with a silent cry. It was slim as a girl,
translucent. It had grown from some seed of rose-coloured
substance that glittered like a waterfall, an upward water­
fall. The substance was one thing, which broke all the way
to infinity in cascades of exultation that nothing could
trammel. (p. 215)

In the vision here accorded Jocelin, the spire, like the apple
tree, unites the earth with the sky, is represented in imagery
which combines the secular with the holy, appears to him as
a substantial miracle. Overwhelmed by a mixture of “terror”
and joyful “astonishment” at this transmutation of the evils
that have gone into the construction of the spire, Jocelin
exclaims, “Now—I know nothing at all,” the sentence at
once attesting to the personal humility which he has
achieved and declaring all that a limited human can in the
face of transcendent power. And when he is urged by Father
Adam to perform some “gesture of assent,” Jocelin can do no
more than think, as he expires, “It’s like the apple tree!” (p.
215)—words which identify the spire with the miraculous
transformation of the natural, even if they also call up
echoes of man’s fall in Eden.

In thus emphasizing the miraculousness of the apple tree
and of the spire as finally represented, I by no means wish to
minimize the muddle which Jocelin experiences right up to the moment of dying. He is thoroughly bewildered at finding the "terror and joy" inseparably "mixed" within him. His last words, relating the spire to the apple tree, he cannot utter for Fath r Adam, and in any case they are for Jocelin "words of magic and incomprehension." Then, as if to underline the muddle of the human situation, Golding writes in the closing paragraph of the novel that the attentive Father Adam "could hear nothing," but "saw a tremor of the lips that might be interpreted as a cry of: God! God! God!," and so "laid the Host on the dead man's tongue" (p. 215). Despite his insistence on this muddle, however, I think that Golding presents us in the closing pages of The Spire with a Jocelin whom we are to estimate rather differently than we do Sammy Mountjoy at the conclusion of Free Fall. For one thing, Sammy's decisive experience of the divine occurs halfway through the book and leaves him puzzled to the end, whereas Jocelin's truly miraculous visions, though they leave him confused, occur at the end of the story as the culmination of his progress towards acknowledging his guilt and attempting to lose himself: the spiritual development of Jocelin through The Spire, then, describes an arc quite unlike Sammy's course in Free Fall. The other crucial distinction, of course, is that Sammy remains alive at the conclusion of Free Fall, burdened with his awareness of his secular self, whereas Jocelin dies at the conclusion of The Spire; and, if one may project beyond Jocelin's death the spiritual advance that he has made through the pages of the story, one may imagine him as freed at last even from his lingering illusion about Goody Pangall's "witchcraft" and as finding himself forgiven.

But to talk in this way about what may happen after Jocelin's death is to speculate about matters which the novel
does not treat directly. What lies beyond question is the fact that in *The Spire* Golding represents the condition of living man to be as fundamentally limited as it was in *Free Fall*, as riddling to a sheerly human consciousness. Within the world of men as they are, the highest ideal that an enlightened Jocelyn yearns to realize envisions no more than the interrelationship of the divine and the secular, "If I could go back, I would take God as lying between people and to be found there" (p. 212), an ideal that recalls the ethic of a "vital morality" informed by "love" which Sammy Mountjoy proposes in *Free Fall*. All of which is to say that in *The Spire*, as in *Free Fall*, Golding defines the condition of man as he sees it with rigorous honesty: he affirms the actuality of the divine in both novels, but the characters who experience it are not thereby enabled to transcend their secular selves—and so continue to reflect the limitations of us all.


2. Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor attribute the killing of Pangall to the workmen rather than to Roger, and this interpretation may well be correct. I have assumed Roger himself to be the guilty party because his response to Jocelin's mention of the dead Pangall is so marked—as if the master builder fears a specifically personal disclosure (pp. 212-13). Although the details of the killing are obscured by Golding, certainly we are to imagine that Roger shares in the guilt for the deed—even if it is actually committed by his men—as fundamentally as does Jocelin in his own way.

3. My claim about the appearance of the commission is made more inclusively by Samuel Hynes, who finds that the results of Golding's concentration on the spire and Jocelin's mind are "a diminished sense of the actuality of the novel's physical world," a thinning of the other characters, and a paucity of "strong scenes," with "potentially powerful" ones being "treated sketchily" (*William Golding*, p. 45).

4. Oldsey and Weintraub misunderstand the significance of the dumb
man—and apparently the moral situation of Jocelin himself—in suggesting a relationship between Jocelin's preparations for his tomb and those of the speaker in Browning's "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church" (The Art of William Golding, pp. 141-42). Jocelin is humbly abandoning the world and accepting the corruption of his physical self, whereas the Bishop is arrogantly clinging to the world in his concern for the ornamentation of his tomb and indulging himself in every sensuous pleasure that offers itself to him or to his imagination.

5. Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor develop the ironies that inhere in Jocelin's quotation of the song: "... the words of the Easter carol refer directly to the betrayal of Christ, who sacrificed himself for love of fallen man, while Jocelin has both sacrificed others and exploited their fall 'in the dreadful glow of his dedicated will.' Deeper still, and still hidden from Jocelin, the words carry a hint of the secret of his true feelings for this girl—a hinted betrayal not only of her, and of God, but of himself" (William Golding, p. 217).

6. Although he sketches Jocelin's advance toward self-knowledge, James Baker seems to me much too committed in his chapter on The Spire to placing the novel ultimately within a classical rather than a Christian context. He argues that the book is essentially a "tragedy," with Jocelin inhabiting "an Euripidean universe which is as ambiguous as his own soul" (William Golding, p. 71); that Jocelin "lives to discover the folly of his Christian illusions" (p. 71), his "uniquely Christian innocence" constituting his "tragic flaw" (p. 83); and that the "cosmos" shown Jocelin at the end of the story is "as unfathomable and mysterious as the one revealed to the heroes of Greek tragedy" (p. 72)—though Baker later acknowledges, in a sentence which strikes me as defining the mysteriousness of that cosmos in a different and truer fashion, that "No man could find the words to tell us what it is to see God" (p. 87). The critic keeps minimizing, I think, the fact that the self-awareness and humility towards which Jocelin moves are orthodox Christian virtues, demanding to be viewed as such in a novel so religiously oriented as The Spire, and that the universe revealed to Jocelin at the close of the book is "unfathomable" precisely because it evidences the miraculous, because it includes a Christian dimension. I am not thus hoping to claim, in opposition to Baker, that Golding is a doctrinal novelist, for, in examining both Free Fall and The Spire, I have been trying to insist that the experience of the divine by no means solves the problems of the central characters. Yet I believe that Golding does dramatize a view of man more conventionally Christian and human in one fundamental way than Baker will allow. In com-
menting on the "story" of man that the novelist tells in several of his works, Baker writes: "Into what kind of world do we awake if we survive spiritual adolescence and live on to look about us with a disillusioned eye? This is the fateful question which emerges from Golding's fiction. . . . Golding himself must finally admit us into the reality beyond innocence and ignorance" (p. 95). But the "reality beyond innocence"—the reality of fallen man who cannot escape his human condition so long as he lives—is exactly the subject of Golding's novels, and the "ignorance" against which Baker protests is exactly the mark of our limitations as secular beings, and so of Golding's candor as novelist.