CHAPTER IV
Marie Corelli's Views on Nature, Spirits, Heaven, the Principle of Duality and Hell.

The Electric Circle (the Creator), after creating the earth, caused it "to produce and multiply the wonders of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms which we call Nature." Nature is a part of the Universe. It has created. Nature is not just a material phenomenon. It is also a living spiritual organism. But its presence is invisible. "Material Nature is merely the reflex or mirror of the more strongly insistent individuality of psychic form." It is also ruled by the two Divine Laws - the physical law of uniformity and the law of compensation. It is also on its way of evolution towards God. Its progress cannot be hindered by man's sin. If man forgets his duty of spiritual attainment it suppresses him and marches forward. Nature "will not tolerate too long a burden of human iniquity. Nature destroys what it putrescens, she covers it up with fresh earth on which heal their things may find place to grow." Hence it seems that partial and complete dissolutions (Fralayas) take place in the world.

But Nature seems to have created everything for the benefit of man. It helps those who work in harmony with the universe. Corelli conceives Nature as a feminine spirit. Nature is tender. She reveals to man that his life is a blessing. A man's awakened soul realises its oneness with the spirit of Nature. Both can even converse with each other. Nature educated the boy, Manuel, in The Master Christian:

"The trees and rivers, the flowers and birds, have talked to me and explained many things." Man's thought and action has its effect on himself and on Nature. The result of an action may not be seen at once. But it is bound to be apparent in due course. Nature takes its own time to manifest its laws. It works implicitly. Its symbols are hard to read. Scientifically, Nature is conceived as "the creative and regulative physical power which is conceived of as operating in the material world and as the immediate cause of all its phenomena."

But it is no mere physical power, according to Corelli. It is also spiritual. It is bountiful in its resources. It serves the spirit in man, not only his body. It does not distinguish between man and other animals or plants or minerals. It is impartial and does its God-ordained duty, in the evolution of the universe.

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Corelli attributes one more function to Nature. She says that it records in itself every occurrence that happens in the world; and whenever it wills, it reveals them. "Nothing can be wasted, - not a breath, not a scene, not a sound: All is treasured up in Nature's storehouse, and can be eternally reproduced at Nature's will." A sinner need not feel that his sin is a guarded secret. Nature is a great and omniscient witness. It seems to be God's invisible sentinel watching over all the deeds of all human beings; "Nature is a dumb witness to many dramas, - but it may be that she has eyes and ears, and her own way of keeping records. Sometimes she gives up long-buried secrets, - sometimes she holds them fast; - biding her time until the Judgement Day, when not only the crime shall be disclosed but the cause of the crime's committer." Nature has got its own way of counting Time. It does not work according to the time-sense of man. The secret sin committed by the heroine Nina in *Vendetta* and by Claude Cazean, secretary to the Archbishop of Rouen in *The Master Christian*, led them to their revengeful deaths at the end. Evil persons sometimes confess their wickedness before their death. However, if they die unrepentant, their actions will be read out on Judgement Day. Sinners will be condemned and the good and pious will be rewarded then.

Being a Christian, Corelli could not avoid some of the Christian doctrines, although they stood in glaring contrast to her main philosophical principles. Nature seems to note, like recording angels, all the happenings in the world so that she could submit her account on Judgement Day to Christ.

Corelli believes that even atmospheric phenomena have their own records of the life of the Universe: "An eternal record of every life is written not only in sound, but in light, in colour, in tune, in mathematical proportion and harmony, and that not a word, not a thought, not an action is forgotten."

Nature like man is a living being. It is evolving towards perfection. It is also governed by the law of compensation and the physical law of uniformity. Everything in the world happens according to these laws. Corelli's reference to the Day of Judgement is a Christian idea. God is the sole witness of all the working of creation. Every soul carries within itself its past karma.

Spirits and Angels also appear in Corelli romances. They may be either pure or impure. Pure spirits and good angels seem to be identical. The departed souls of human beings are impure spirits. In the region of purgatory, the liberated soul of the heroine in A Romance of Two Worlds and Her Angel-guide,

Abu I., see myriads of spirits hastening in various directions to do their duty. They had human forms. "Some of these beings were quite tiny and delicate - some of lofty stature and glorious appearance; their forms were human, yet so refined, improved, and perfected, that they were unlike, while so like humanity."¹ They were the spirit-guardians of the inhabitants of all planets. They were purifying themselves. Their duty was to guide the newly departed souls towards God. They were expiating their own sins in thus striving to save others. They longed for the creator but, as they were yet impure, they could not approach Him.

Corelli says that many departed souls hover in the very air that surrounds the earth.² Pure spirits have no material tinge and such spirits do not "deal in such vulgar display as the throwing about of chairs and the opening of locked side-boards."³ It is only the impure spirits that take part in seances. There are very few spirits of terror in Corelli. There appears a womanly ghost in her short story - The Withering of a Rose, - but there is no ghostly action. "The ghost of Dunscombe Hall was said only to appear when death threatened some member of the family."⁴ Beneficent spirits and angels also

¹ A Romance of Two Worlds. pp.175 and 176.
² —Ibid— p.133.
⁴ Cameos. p.287.
appear in some of her novels. Jesus Christ is seen in the form of a boy, Manuel, in *The Master Christian*. The appearance of the resurrected Christ before Barabbas and Mary Magdeline is divine. Evil spirits themselves assume charming roles as when the prince of darkness, Satan, takes the form of a charming, generous prince, Lucio, in *The Sorrows of Satan*. In the same novel, Lucio gathers a group of tiny spirits to serve as welcomers and musicians at the time of a grand party given by Tempest in honour of his bride Sibyl. The spirit of the concubine, Ziska, in the novel of her name is eager to take revenge on her betrayer, Armand Gervase. Gervase faces this vindictive wicked spirit in the shadow of the Great Pyramid. Besides these spirits, the heroine of *A Romance of Two Worlds* sees rainbow-winged creatures in her vision. It is also said that there are "spirits of music." Angels of the masculine and feminine sex seem to remember and long for the company of their earthly lovers. Hearing the entreaty cry of her man lover, Theos, the Angel Elris foregoes her angelhood and assumes the form of a young woman to join him.

Corelli's presentation of spirits and angels is also connected in some way with Christianity and Theosophy. There are

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3. A Romance of Two Worlds. p.27.
numerous references to spirits in *Isis Unveiled*. Blavatsky mentions terrestrial spirits, pure spirits and material spirits and discusses their variety and peculiarity. She refers to the spirit-world and city of spirits. She explains the phenomena of seances and says that pure spirits can never materialize themselves. Corelli's attribution of sex even to pure spirits seems to be a Christian idea. Theosophists believe in Absolute Spirit. They believe in the absorption or communion of every soul in or with Spirit.

In her description of Heaven, Corelli faces again the conflict between Christian and Theosophical views on the conception of Immortality or Moksha. According to Corelli's cosmogony, the world within the Electric Circle is God's abode.

It is Heaven. The Angel Asul, in *A Romance of Two Worlds*, gives a description of the actual life in Heaven. Life in Heaven seems to be a glorified earthly life rather than a manifestation of the Absolute. In Corelli's Heaven there are glories of natural scenery. Rare and imperishable flowers bloom there and birds of tender voice sing. There is superhuman music. Pure spirits form friendships among themselves. They remain faithful to one another. There is an ever-moving panorama, like cinematography, in which the history of all planets

is shown. All pure souls enjoy the joy of life. Sorrow does not exist there. "The joys of learning, memory, consciousness, sleep, waking and exercise shall all be thine. Sin, Sorrow, pain, disease and death thou shalt know no more." Every soul takes to some pleasant occupation, without any sign of fatigue. Light and air are their food. All these souls have desires, which God fulfils at once: "Thou shalt have fresh and glad desires to offer to God with every portion of thy existence and each one shall be granted as soon as asked." But no soul asks any displeasing thing of Him. The destined twin-souls join in Heaven and live loving one another forever. The perfect happiness of loving souls of opposite sexes is again emphasized in The Life Everlasting: "What is Heaven? A State of perfect happiness. What is happiness? The immortal union of two souls in one, creatures of God's eternal light, partaking each other's thoughts, bestowing upon each other the renewal of joy and creating loveliness in form and action by their mutual sympathy and tenderness."

This kind of Heaven seems to be nothing better than an earthly paradise. It is the kingdom of Man-God. Heaven has become the abode of superior human beings rather than of the supramental Spirit. It has lost its transcedental character.

2. Ibid. p.195.
Corelli's stress on the union of twin souls of opposite sex and her way of description seem to suggest even the existence of sex life in Heaven. This makes Heaven materialistic.

The Jewish and Christian conceptions of Heaven differ slightly from one another. Both insist on the survival of the totality of human personality after death. Their Heaven consists of the warmth, the fullness and the vivacity of earthly life. Both believe in the resurrection of physical and spiritual dual bodies. Hence the inhabitants of Heaven possess sensational, emotional, and visual organs. The main difference between the Jewish and Christian Heaven is that the former is more materialistic and the latter more spiritual. "Trinitarianism regards God not as a monad, but as a perfect society, and finds in the nature of Godhead itself heavenly archetype of the family and of the State." The Beatific vision—seeing God face to face—seems to be the essential bliss in Heaven. The beings there follow certain occupations in their worship of God—"All occupations of every sort, being undertaken for the glory of God." In the Kingdom of God there is administration. There is greater scope for artistic faculties. Architecture, poetry, music and the other arts and crafts flourish there. The denizens of Heaven cultivate the knowledge of philosophy and

science. According to Jesus's teaching, man seems to have outgrown there his lower animal propensities such as the appetite of sex and the desire of eating and drinking. But the descriptions of the life after death by Christ and the first Christians are "pictorial, vivid, almost sensuous, employing largely the current apocalyptic imagery." This Heaven is supposed to be the highest state of perfection, the state of immortality and eternity.

Corelli followed this idea of Heaven. She also conceived it as the Kingdom of God and as the place of immortality and eternity. In Indian mythology there are some worlds like Chandraloka and Satyaloka, which resemble the Christian idea of Heaven. Corelli did not go into the details of Eastern and Christian theology. She formulated an arbitrary amalgam of Christian and theosophical beliefs. But the conflict between the Christian and non-Christian doctrines in her system as presented in her novels is frequently too glaring to escape notice.

Corelli finds different kinds of duality both in the physical and moral world of the universe. This is another of her cardinal metaphysical ideas. Life is a struggle for existence and it seems to progress through the conflict of dualities. In this world, a principle is known by the existence of another principle which is contrary to it. While explaining her 'theory of twin-souls,' Corelli refers also to the existence

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2. Ibid. p. 833.
of duality in other things. Nothing in the universe is single: "Cold and heat, storm and sunshine, good and evil, joy and sorrow - all go in pairs."\(^1\) This duality in the universe is again emphasised in *The Life Everlasting*: "There is no single thing in the universe. The very microbes of disease or health go in pairs. Light and darkness, - the up and the down, - the right and the left, - the storm and the calm, - the male and the female."\(^2\) Creation itself is secondary. It is materialised spirit. God alone is beyond duality. The principle of duality holds good even at the intellectual level, as Indian philosophers have pointed out. "Elements of duality and externality persist at the intellectual level, however much we may try to overcome them. In knowledge and morality we have the subject-object relation."\(^3\) But there is knowledge higher than the intellectual. In the spiritual vision of yogi, duality and plurality seem to end in one Light - God. God is the origin and the end of all creation. He seems to include everything. But He cannot be described in definite terms. He is transcendental. All the various things of the universe exist and fulfil certain specific duties. They have no independent existence. They are dependent on God and they are God's creation.

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There is a good deal of prominence given to this idea of duality, an essentially Indian elaboration, in *Isis Unveiled*. Corelli, in all probability, was influenced by the exposition in this book. Good is known because there is the existence of its contrary principle, evil. "Light would be incomprehensible without darkness, to make it manifest by contrast; good would be no good without evil to show the priceless nature of the boon; and so personal virtue could claim no merit, unless it had passed through the furnace of temptation." Corelli is vague in her appropriation of these ideas and gives lists of the dualities in the physical and moral world without elucidating their nature and specific function.

The duality of good and evil is seen in the moral world of humanity. The ideal of man's life is to become one with God. To achieve this end, he has to overcome the tangle of good and evil. He should follow the path of good because God is good. Man should accept the path of Light. His return from the plurality of the universe to the Oneness of God includes the pleasures of organic and mental desires and at the same time transcends them. For every thing is God's creation. The worldly life is a stepping stone to the spiritual life. Perfection of life is possible only in God. "The perfect ideal of our life

is found only in the Eternal Reality. The law of morality is an invitation to become perfect, 'even as our heavenly Father is perfect.' Man's soul is always in pursuit of this ideal. When man transcends his narrow individuality and identifies himself with the One, he experiences the bliss of being good.

Evil seems to spring from matter and good from spirit. But matter itself is not the principle of evil. For "God ordains nothing that is not for good." Matter is a principle necessary for the evolution of the human soul. It works as the sheath for the soul and as the abode of animal life.

"The millions of atoms and electrons which compose the ever-lasting elements of Spirit and Matter are dual, of two kinds, those which preserve their state of equilibrium, and those whose work is to disintegrate, in order to build up again." The state of preservation and disintegration applies only to imperfect souls and objects of the universe. Evil enters man when he thinks himself self-sufficient and supreme. It is the denial of God. The egoist errs and sins, Sin is the product of shallow insight and selfishness. But the sinner has no escape. The Law of Compensation works on him. His soul wriggles in flesh from one birth after the other. Evil is not permanent.

It will be extinguished or turned into good at the end. This

bears a striking resemblance to Milton's view expressed in Comus:

"But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness, when at last,
Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change,
Self-fed and self-consumed....."¹

"Love begets faith. Doubt breeds Evil and Evil knows no God. Evil wreaks punishment upon itself. Evil destroys itself. That is the Law. Goodness seems to suffer, but it does not. Evil seems to prosper, but it does not."² The seeming prosperity of the sinner is ephemeral. But goodness knows no fall. The spiritual victory is immortal. The objects of the world became the gateways to God in the eyes of the victorious man. But they do not become God Himself as the materialist tends to believe. Pure love is selfless. It is divine. It is immeasurable. It makes all souls feel that they are one. But man often thinks of it in terms of lust. The result is evil. "Man wilfully corrupts the Divine part in him by his own wickedness. He must be forced to cleanse again and yet again in the fierce flames of such remorse and such despair as are rightly termed

¹ Comus - by Milton. Lines 593-597.
² The Soul of Lilith. p.135.
the quenchless fires of Hell.\textsuperscript{1} The transmigration of the human soul is actuated by this purpose. When man transgresses the Divine laws, miseries and disasters happen in the world.

Sometimes it seems as though the good man suffers more than the wicked one. But this is not actually so. The virtuous man suffers in order to overcome the lower impulses of the body. His mind is turned towards the Good. He sacrifices material comforts and selfish desires for the attainment of Good. "Suffering is the condition of progress. Struggle is the law of existence and sacrifice the principle of evolution\textsuperscript{2} according to the Indian sages. The materialist delights merely in his earthly pleasures. But the good and the pleasant are not always the same. Pleasure lies often in the fulfilment of natural impulses and good in their restraint. Man is free in his will. Till he realizes the highest good, he does not clearly understand what is good and what is evil. His spiritual bent leads him to Divinity and his materialistic inclination to gross animal life. His character is his destiny. God is good evil exists till man's attainment of Truth. Then it dissolves itself or turns itself into good.

Corelli's views regarding Matter and Spirit and her doctrine of the evolution of the soul are non-Christian. They are

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  \item The Sorrows of Satan. p.253.
  \item Indian Philosophy. Vol.1, by Radhakrishnan. p.244.
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theosophical and Eastern. According to the Church "the source of evil lies not in matter, but in voluntary action, in the apostasy of spiritual beings from God." This leads directly to Satan and the fallen angels and to hell as their abode. Corelli did not quite accept this. Blavatsky has discussed elaborately the problem of good and evil and the doctrine of the soul in *Isis Unveiled*. She regards evil as essential for the progress of good. Man has to purify his 'material' soul till it reaches perfection. "In human nature, evil denotes the antagonism of matter to the spiritual, and each is accordingly purified thereby. In the cosmos, the equilibrium must be preserved; the operation of the two contraries produces harmony, like the centripetal and centrifugal forces, and each is necessary to the other." Corelli did not accept the Christian conception of Hell, because she believed in the immortality and the evolution of every human soul. God is the beginning and the consummation. The human soul may drop back into the lower species of animal or worm and it may even lose forever its divine faculty. Its fate will, then, be that of the 'non-human' soul. Hence, in Corelli's cosmos, there is no furnace - like Hell, like the one imagined by Dante, below the earth. The soul of Lilith searches all the corners of the universe and informs

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the sceptic, Bl-Bant, that there is no place of punishment, of
torture, of darkness of horror and despair in God's creation.

"In God's design I find no evil, no punishment, no death. If
there are such things, they must be in your world, alone, they
must be Man's work and Man's imagining."¹ Hell is in the pricking
conscience of the degraded soul. "The mental sickness
and confusion of a wilfully degraded existence are worse tortures
than are contained in the priestly notions of Hell."² Corelli
wrote a novel³ on the Prince of Darkness - Satan, and
what she presents there is entirely a new conception of the
fallen Angel. It is a completely non-Christian portrayal. Instead
of becoming a tempting Devil, Satan has become a generous
and sympathetic philosopher. He is a repenting soul. He
is confident of his own Release. But it will come only when
all human souls have attained communion with God. "When this
planet is destroyed as a bubble broken in the air, the souls of
men and women live on, ... as all my worshipers live on through a myriad worlds, a myriad phases, till they
learn to shape their destinies for Heaven! And I with them
live on in many shapes, in many ways! When they return to
God cleansed and perfect, so shall I return! - but not till

¹ The Soul of Lilith, pp.131 and 132.
² The Sorrows of Satan, p.114.
³ The Sorrows of Satan.
then! The Satan of Corelli's imagination respects pure souls like Stevie Clare, the woman novelist. He accepts God's omnipotency. It is the law of compensation that works on him. He even says once that he is not as bad as the worst man living.

He may tempt human beings, but he does not pursue anybody for sin. Corelli gives a list of Satan's sorrows, which are really the worries of a great moral philosopher: "The foul and filthy crimes of men, the base deceits and cruelties of women, the ruthless, murderous ingratitude of children, the scorn of good, the martyrdom of intellect, the selfishness, the avarice, the sensuality of human life, the hideous blasphemy and sin of the creature to the Creator - these are my endless sorrows!"

What a difference between Corelli's Satan and the Satan of the ecclesiastical imagination! In Corelli, there is no Prince of Darkness buried in ice at the bottom of the Inferno. There is no hissing Serpent or floating Leviathan, such as is imagined in Paradise Lost. The New Testament itself gives a lurid picture of Hell. In Hell the worm "dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." St. Matthew says: "In the end of the world the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous and shall cast them into the furnace of

1a. Ibid. p.350.
2. Ibid. p.350.
fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 

According to the doctrine of the evolution of the human soul, even a retrograde soul can unite with God through conscious effort at purification.

For this departure from the orthodox Christian view, in her conception of Hell, Corelli relied on the authority of Isis Unveiled. She is also indebted in several ways to the same source for her portrait of Satan. Blavatsky has discussed in Isis Unveiled the notion of Hell and of the Devil as obtaining beings in different nations. She comes to the conclusion that the Christian Church is mistaken in its acceptance of the doctrine of original sin and of Christ's sacrifice for the redemption of the world. She says that the whole myth of Satan and Hell is grossly conceived to suit the ends of sacerdotalism:

"The only characteristic difference between modern Christianity and the old heathen faiths is the belief of the former in the personal devil and in hell." She quotes Max Müller to strengthen her statement: "The Aryan nations had no devil. Plato, though of a sombre character, was a very respectable personage; and Loki, the Scandinavian J, though a mischievous person, was not a fiend. The German Goddess, Hell, too, like Proserpine, had once seen better days. Thus, when the German's were"

indoctrinated with the idea of a real devil, the Semitic Seth, Satan of Diabolus, they treated him in the most good-humoured way. It is only in later paranas (epics) in India, that the grotesqueness of hell and its horrors are described. But there is no evil spirit even there. There is an impartial judge, Yamadharma. Blavatsky then proceeds to remark that there is no such region of eternal damnation as Hell which was imagined by the Church: "The Gehenna of the New Testament was a locality outside the walls of Jerusalem; and in mentioning it, Jesus used but an ordinary metaphor. Whence then came the dreary dogma of hell, that Archimedean lever of Christian theology, with which they have succeeded to hold in subjection the numberless millions of Christians for nineteen centuries? Assuredly not from the Jewish Scriptures, and we appeal for corroboration to any well-informed Hebrew scholar." Hence it is the later Christian theologians that alone are responsible for the creation of Hell. "The Christian were the first to make the existence of Satan a dogma of the Church. And once that she had established it, she had to struggle for over 1,700 years for the repression of a mysterious force which it was her policy to make appear of diabolical origin."  

1. Isis Unveiled. Vol.II. by Blavatsky. p.11.  
2. —Ibid— p.11.  
almost seems to be the basis on which the Church reared all its dogmas: "We have Satan presented to us as the prop and mainstay of Sacerdotalism - an Atlas, holding the Christian heaven and cosmos upon his shoulders. If he falls, in their conception all is lost, and chaos must come again." Corelli formed her new ideas of Hell and Satan on the basis of such passages as these in *Isis Unveiled* and they fit in with her doctrine of the evolution of the soul.

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