CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION.

Marie Corelli was not an original thinker, but she was keenly interested in metaphysical speculation. A consideration of her metaphysical beliefs reveals the fact that she tried to weave the strands of Christian and Eastern philosophy together and attempted to form a Christian creed of her own. Corelli's endeavour to reconcile Christian and non-Christian doctrines was ingenious and new. But it failed to attract the large majority of people.

Corelli was a critic of the degeneracy of contemporary society. She denounces the evil consequences of industrialism, lack of self-control, immorality and religious hypocrisy. There is biting satire in all her attacks on decadent society. It is, of course, possible that she might have had an eye on the sale of her books when she lingered over elaborate description of this degeneracy and tried to give attractive pictures of it in words. She found 'a curious touch of fantastic buffonery' in the life of her days. Men and women seemed to her poseurs and hypocrites. "We are," she said "a marvellous and motley crowd at this huge gathering called life, dear gossips all! - gossips in society and out of society - a motley, lying, hypocritical crack-brained crowd!" She exposed the perverted

She disliked the newly risen aristocracy of industrialists as they were devoid of the hereditary chivalric qualities of ancient aristocratic families. She ridiculed the American misses of railway and other industrial 'kings' who were after the titles of British lords for the sake of being called 'my lady' and 'your grace'. She did not condone the fallen aristocrats though she was an admirer of their ancestry and chivalric life. "When I was 'green' and new to society," she said, "I used to think somewhat what of dukes and earls, I had a foolish notion that the wearers of great historic names must somehow look as if they inwardly felt the distinction of race and ancestry. Now that I know many of these titled folk, I have discovered my mistake. The nobles who were formerly the protectors of their sovereign and country, danced a naked dance and had become loathsome personages. They delighted in using slang words loudly like their grooms, for that was considered to be 'in the swim' and 'up-to-date'. The clubs, hotels and parks were safe retreats for their free enjoyment. Even the royal court of the time was not pure. It was rather a shocking and disgusting fetting rendezvous for select harlots and smelling dogs of royal blood. The very woman who presented the Earl's daughter Sibyl in The Sorrows of Satan before the court had two illegitimate sons, unknown to her lawful husband.

The pleasure-parties of the swagger-sets 'at home' were a frequent phenomenon. The restless trousered and petticoated bipeds loitered aimlessly at garden parties. The 'dashing dames' and 'gambling countesses' attended those parties with their rustling dresses, sprinkled with artificial pungent perfumes. The innocent, dreamy Peras in The Soul of Lilith becomes disgusted when he sees the affected nature of Lady Melthope at her brilliant 'crushes'. His brother El-Nami consoles him saying: "You mustn't expect any one to be sincere in society." No body felt old in these days. Women 'painted and powdered' with 'false hair and dyed eyebrows,' and tried to look like a 'paid courtesan.' The elderly matron, 'skipping forward on high heels' pretended juvenile airs and graces to conceal the 'too obvious paunch and overlapping bosom.' The beaux of seventy exhibited their youthful desires and pursued the heels of 'young married women.' Like Joyce's Dublin in Ulysses, London emitted a rotten smell.

Corelli's moral conceptions were Victorian. She judged her age by Victorian ethics. She liked refinement in conversation, and disliked the 'unaffected,' 'frank' and 'simple' nature of the new generation of her time. "Fidelity in wives, manly principle in husbands," she said "are 'little

Corelli was a romantic. She was an idealist. She was dissatisfied with the life of her day. Pining for a better world and a better life, she inclined towards the Spirit. Her innate predilection was for the Victorian age. She liked chivalric noble life. Her men wore moustaches. She was generous towards the underprivileged populace. She hated education without religion. She was more a Victorian in her conception of woman and her duties. In her later days, she saw the sudden development of the modern girl competing with man in all spheres of life. The novelist, being herself a woman gives prominent portraits of women in various relationships, in her novels. She herself was an intellectual and she participated throughout her life in literary and religious controversies. But she never forgot her womanhood. Her compassion for the poor, her love for children, her graceful welcome for guests, her hysterical temperament and her life-long dream of an ideal husband clearly show that she was a womanly woman to the core.

The Victorian lady observed her wifely duties and maintained the respectability of her family. She was submissive to her husband because he was the wage-earner. But that does not

mean that she was down-trodden. Morals are not fixed stones. They change with the spirit of the age. The Victorian woman was powerful in her house; she played an important role in shaping the mind of her husband and of the other members of her family. She was one of "those majestic and bonneted old ladies, whose very kindness could be more terrifying than the wrath of those who now fill their arm-chairs." She fostered the refinement and delicacies of life. The young lady was conscious of her dignity and her tone towards her brother was more censorious than submissive. She was moral and religious; she was the torch-bearer of Victorian piety. Corelli was brought up on these, or similar conceptions of womanhood and she maintained them throughout her life.

Corelli criticised severely the social 'crushes' and exposed the immortality of the 'beauties' of society behind their social decorum. She commends modest, morally good, sweet-tempered girls and women. In her preface to Jane she says: "I believe, I am justified in the hope that sweetness, integrity and humility are still considered admirable qualities in woman, despite her recent 'free fight' with the police and her combats against existing law and order." She says in the same context that the new woman is blind to her own self-interest and advantage in being 'more vulgar, pushful, assertive and

noisy than the most boorish and ill-bred men." Neither Dante addressed his *Vita Nuova* nor Petrarch his sonnets to the woman of the suffragette type.

Corelli condemned the religious hypocrisy of her days. Religion had lost its spiritual significance. It had become a mask for selfish ends. Both clerics and laymen cared very little for the salvation of their souls and both had become self-centered. Corelli hated 'Sunday-show morality.' She warned the doom of all decadent Christian sects. "All churches as they at present exist, are mockeries, and as such, are inevitably doomed. Nothing can save them; no prop will keep them up; neither fancy spiritualism, nor theosophism, nor any other 'ism' offered by notoriety - hunting individuals as a stop-gap to the impending crash." But Corelli herself tried to form a new creed of Christianity in the light of theosophy.

Corelli was dissatisfied with Christian orthodoxy. She differed from most of the fundamental doctrines of the Church. She did not accept the sacramental system and sectarian philosophy. She rejected Pauline Christianity. She did not believe in man's original sin and Christ's sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. She thought of Christ as the sole mediator between God and man. Man should get his redemption through Jesus Christ.

"through the dear might of him that walk'd the waves." In her view Christ belongs to no particular sect. She demanded a new interpretation of the New Testament in the light of what she called the esoteric teaching of Jesus Christ. She welcomed a Christian religion based entirely on the true principles of Christ. Corelli imagined and posited more details about the life of Jesus Christ than what is available in the New Testament. She referred to Jesus's training and wandering in Egypt and in the Chaldean monasteries before the commencement of his public preaching. She gave a description of Jesus's personality and wisdom. She hinted that the principles which Jesus taught were the echoes of the principles of some ancient creed in Egypt. She accepted the resurrection of Jesus's soul, but not his body. Corelli did not believe in the cult of Virgin Mary. She suggested that the Christian idea of the Virgin Mother had been promoted by the worship of a Roman goddess at that time.

According to the Church, God reveals Himself gradually but intermittently in time to human beings. He is not a metaphysical abstraction though He is transcendental. Corelli's God is infinite and indefinable. He is immanent and pervades all things in the universe. Corelli did not say that God created the universe out of nothing, as the Church believes

He did. According to her conception, God first created the spiritual world and then through His working principle, 'the Electric Circle,' He created the material universe. It was in her description of the creation of the earth that Corelli made use of the Old Testament. Corelli was opposed to the Christian conception of hell. She did not believe in the Christian non-conception of Satan. She believed in the immortality and evolution of every human soul. She conceived of Satan as a repenting soul and was convinced of his salvation at the end. Corelli did not place Satan in hell below the earth. The Satan of her conception stays among men and women on earth. He is convinced of the supreme and benevolent power of God.

Corelli accepted non-Christian doctrines which developed into convictions in her life. She believed in the law of karma and in the reincarnation of the human soul. She accepted the Chaldean conception of the creation of the universe. She believed in the doctrine of duality both in the physical and moral world of the universe. She accepted the spiritualist idea of twin souls. She was not prepared to give up these ideas. She tried to synthesise them with some of the principal doctrines of Christianity and to form a new creed of her own.

Corelli's philosophical terminology is mainly theosophical. The word 'electric' in her creed is taken from theosophical works. Her numerous direct and indirect references to
theosophy and theosophists reveal her close study of theosophical works and even her acquaintance with the prominent theosophists of her days.

With all her acceptance of non-Christian doctrines Corelli was yet a Christian. She believed in the supremacy of Jesus Christ in attaining salvation. According to her Jesus is the sole mediator between God and man. He is the perfect symbol of God in man. Man should get his redemption through faith in Jesus. Corelli believed in the Christian conception of Heaven. The Heaven of her conception is the abode of superior human beings rather than of the supramental spirit. She believed in the Christian conception of the Holy Ghost. Attributing an androgynous nature to the Holy Ghost, she tried to give Biblical authority to her theory of twin souls. She accepted the cross of Christianity as the symbol of the worship of Divinity. Corelli posited a close connection between the ancient philosophical tradition of the Chaldean Fraternity of more than 6000 years B.C. and the comparatively modern religion of Christianity in order to emphasize the greatness and superiority of Christ and his religion. She welcomed the primitive form of Christianity. Corelli's new creed of Christianity, therefore, was an amalgam of both Christian and theosophical doctrines.

Corelli herself said that she had gone through 'many peculiar phases of thought and feeling relating to occultism
and clairvoyance. But her works and her personal life reveal that she was not a mystic. She had no spiritual insight. She was even something of a poseur. She had faith in spiritual knowledge, but she lacked yogic experience. She had, however, an imaginative, if not a mystical realization of the principles of her new creed. This is seen in the vividness of her description of spiritual incidents and persons and in the zealous propagation of those spiritual doctrines.

Corelli’s abuse of theosophists and theosophy is seen to be somewhat unkind, especially when one remembers the fact that her synthesis of theosophical doctrines with the principles of Christianity is one of the attractive features of her novels. She was not a member of the Theosophical Society. She does not say plainly anywhere to which sect of Christianity she belonged. She might have belonged to some secret or semi-secret order of Christianity interested in esoteric philosophy.

In any case, Corelli gives a magnetic exposition of her 'electric creed' in her novels. Her philosophic novels make fascinating reading, partly because of the novelty of the ideas presented in them and partly because of the vividness with which they have been realized imaginatively.

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