*Madame Jeanne Guyon (1648-1717)*

*“Madame Jeanne Guyon - child of another world” by Dorothy Gawne Coslet, Christian Literature Crusade, 219 pages.*

*Youth*

**As a ten year old, Jeanne spent most of the day reading from the Bible, giving no attention to other books. Deeply absorbed in Bible reading, she memorized long Scripture portions. (pp. 23-25)**

**Although Jeanne Marie loved her father, she also feared him and his volatile temper. At home it seemed as if everyone was against her - her mother, the servants, her younger brother. Jealousy, envy and strife grew in her heart as she tried, but failed, to cope successfully with her allegedly difficult role of family scapegoat. She was frequently blamed for her brother's mischief and the discord in the home.**

**She spent hours reading the Bible, meditating and praying in an effort to find the peace of God.**

**She desired more than anything else to know the will of God for the remainder of her life. The thought of giving herself wholly to God for His service entered into her thinking.**

**She would shut herself away from all other activities to fast, pray, study the Bible and read devotional books.**

**She wrote the word, "Jesus" in large letters on pieces of paper. Then with needle and thread and some ribbon she sewed this name to her skin in four places, allowing it to remain there under her clothes in painful penance to the Lord. This was only the beginning of a series of austerities Jeanne Marie inflicted upon herself in the years that followed. Attempting all the time to eradicate internal sin, she hoped to purge her body and soul from Satan's grasp. Wrong as it was, we have to remember that the Roman Catholic Church did advocate and encourage self-discipline of this nature among its adherents.... She prayed faithfully to the saints and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, for the forgiveness of sins and the preservation of her soul from the torment of hell, went to confession often and took Holy Communion every two weeks at the nearby parish church.**

*Conversion*

**Madame Guyon confided in a young monk how she had given herself to prayer, Bible reading, church attendance and charitable works, but had not found that spiritual joy she had once known. She even confided in him about the penances and general confession she had recently made. He told her, "Your efforts have been unsuccessful, Madame, because you have sought externally what you can only find within your soul. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart, and you will not fail to find Him." He said she should be encouraged in her search for the reality of God, and advised her to seek her soul's salvation through simple faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen again, not by outward good works - as she had been attempting so vainly.**

**At twenty years old, she was truly born-again by the power of the living God. She was at peace with God! Cleansed from sin! Happy in the Lord!**

**What a dramatic change came to this once so active social butterfly! The change in her was unmistakably wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Her understanding of spiritual things was enlightened. With no dreams, no visitation, nothing audible, that "still, small voice" spoke loudly to her soul, guiding her past the temptations of the world. To be wholly the Lord's wasn't easy in the hostile environment of the Guyon household.**

**Her marriage had never been based on mutual love, a kind of superficial affection passed between her husband and she merely as a marital duty acknowledged to the other.**

**Knowing that Madame Guyon always commemorated the date of her conversion, July 22, Sister Genevieve Granger wrote suggesting that she add to her act of consecration and commemorate this fourth anniversary of her conversion in a very special way - by signing a marriage covenant with the Savior. This was based on Revelation 19:7-8, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."**

*Problems*

**By the time Madame Guyon was 28 years old, her father died. That same month her little three-year-old daughter died from a cerebral hemorrhage. She took this loss as stoically as she had the death of their second son: it was the will of God. But when her friend and spiritual counselor Sister Genevieve Granger died a few months later, she was deeply affected. Now with both her parents and Sister Granger gone, there was no one for her to lean upon in time of perplexity. (p. 61)**

**There seemed to be a desperate void in her relationship with the Lord. Where previously she had found happiness and personal satisfaction in serving God and ministering to others in the name of Jesus, now she went about doing good without feeling God's presence and blessing upon her efforts.**

**She entered a Convent in a spiritual retreat to receive help from a Sister Garnier who seemed to understand her current problem. It was commonplace their to experience methodical practice of mortification - the use of instruments of penance. In those days the devout believed penances of this nature enabled the human soul to attain a closer relationship to God.**

**Madame Guyon would fast for unbearably long periods, taking only small quantities of juice into her system. She scourged herself across the shoulders, arms and legs with knotted cords until blood came to the surface. She even resorted to wearing a broad belt of horsehair and nettles braided together, a girdle set with sharp nails poking into her bare flesh, and knee and elbow bracelets studded with blunt chunks of metal. But try as she did, there was absolutely nothing spiritual gained by such self-discipline. She left the convent disappointed. (p. 63)**

**That same year, her husband died. She was unable to cry-unable to utter a word for that matter. She was expecting this for many weeks. She closed herself in her room and knelt in prayer with a rosary clutched in her hand. There, before an image of her Heavenly Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, she renewed her marriage covenant to Jesus, adding to it a vow of chastity. Such radiant euphoric joy came into her soul at that moment as she had never before experienced. She thought she could see hovering angels smiling their approval from the he clouds in the bright blue sky overhead.**

**True to her commitment, she regarded herself as belonging entirely to Christ. Now she recognized that the time had come to devote her life exclusively to His work. But being left a rich young widow, only twenty-eight years old, did not free her immediately to follow the Lord, no matter how certain she was of His call. Besides the three children, her mother-in-law and the servants, she was now responsible for the family business and her late husband's estate, all of which had to be dealt with first. (p. 65)**

*To Work For The Lord*

**Wherever she went, she seemed impelled by the Holy Spirit to recommend Jesus as the Savior from all sins, past and present - even to those who already professed a strong belief in Him.**

**Bishop D'Aranthon denounced Madame Guyon as a heretic and set to trap Father La Combe by his own words. In an attempt to do this deceitful thing, the Bishop invited Father La Combe to preach in his diocese. La Combe chose for his sermon text Psalm 45:13, "The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold..." In his sermon he likened the King to the Lord Jesus Christ and the King's daughter to the genuinely born-again believers as the Lord's Bride collectively. In so doing he proposed to point out the difference between a religious experience consisting of the observance of ceremony, ritual and penances, and that which is of the Holy Spirit of God - possessing and filling the soul of the believer with pure love and holiness. (p. 90)**

**Thoroughly convinced of the importance of possessing the Holy Spirit, being sanctified by faith in the blood of Jesus, and living intimately with God in the Spirit that she could not stop telling others the joyous news about her resurrected Savior.**

**Madame Guyon faced one trial after another. The fat was beginning to hit the fire. "*In*" the Roman Catholic Church , but not "*of*" it.**

*Beginning Her Religious Writings*

Madame Guyon wrote the inspirational book which caused such heated disputes among Church officials. In this book, A Short and Easy Method of Prayer, translated into English and today published under the title, Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ, she advocated praying directly to God in the name of Jesus Christ, thus by-passing the Blessed Virgin Mary, Church-approved saints and those prescribed methods of prayer set forth by Roman Catholic tradition and papal law. This, of course, was considered heresy and could not go unnoticed by Church authorities!

In her own experience, Madame Guyon had learned that she could go directly to God the Father in prayer and that her prayer would be heard. She was convinced that praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary or to the saints was an unnecessary intermediate step. Prayer, being a personal communication with the Lord Jesus Christ, should not be controlled by rules and regulations as it was within the Roman Catholic Church. She felt that religious services from a priest, such as saying masses and novinas on one's behalf, should not have a price tag on them. Rather, she taught that in order to pray the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man one's prayer life should be free and directed by the Holy Spirit. (p. 103)

Madame Guyon returned to Paris after many trials and persecutions. She wrote: "One must not judge of the servants of god by what their enemies say of them, nor by their being oppressed under calumnies without any resources. Jesus Christ expired under painful pangs. God uses the like conduct toward His dearest servants, to render them conformable to His Son, in whom He is always well pleased and so disposed. But few place that conformity where it ought to be. It is not in voluntary pains or austerities but in those which are suffered in a submission ever equal to the will of God, in a renunciation of our whole selves, to the end that God may be our ALL in ALL, conducting us according to His views and not our own, which are generally opposite to His. All perfection consists in this entire conformity with Jesus Christ, not in shining which worldly men esteem. It will only be seen in eternity who are the true friends of God. Nothing pleases Him but Jesus Christ, and that which bears His mark of character."