

Madame Guyon

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1648–1717

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Madame Jeanne Marie Bouvier De La Motte Guyon

Who was Madame Guyon?

Madame Jeanne Marie Bouvier De La Motte Guyon

William Irvine mentioned in a letter he wrote in 1924 the name **Madame Su Yen**: "Thirty years come June, the Lord gave me Isaiah 41:10-20 before I started out, and it has always been before me...It was in June 1895, that I bowed my head and asked the Lord to give me encouragement, as He had given **Madame Su Yen**, whose book I was reading. She opened the Book and put her finger on this spot, and when I opened my Book, it was at the same place. So much was I surprised, that I was ashamed to take it. But after reassuring myself that there was no trickery in the matter, I wrote my name and date down, little dreaming that it would all come so clear before me today, with all its glorious detail, which is impossible for me to doubt now" (to Edwards, March 3, 1924. *TTT*).

From that time forward, Irvine took as his personal *Call to Service* from God, the verse Isaiah 41:15: "Behold, I will make thee a new, sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff."

Irvine wrote: "Little did I think in 1895 when asking counsel about how to spend my life, by opening the Book [Bible] blindfold, and putting my fingers on a place, then reading it (as I had read of another doing [Madame Guyon]), that I was making a great choice. Isaiah 41, 42, 43 and 44 is like a biography of my work and witness and its consequences to all men on the Earth, and all of them read it for the Lord—in place of His Servant at a certain time and place in history, which has never yet been fulfilled" (to Dunbars, Placentia, CA, May 7, 1937, *TTT*).

Who was Madame Su Yen? or Madame Suyon?

For years, I searched for more information about illusive **Madame Su Yen**—to no avail. Fast forward a few years. I received in the mail a small collection of Irvine's letters from an Australian Omega follower of Irvine. A letter was included where Irvine described that same scenario in the first paragraph above—but this letter referred to Madame **Suyon** (not Madame Su Yen).

A google search for "**Madame Suyon**" pulled up information about the renown mystic French lady, **Madame Jeanne Marie Bouvier De La Motte Guyon** (commonly called *Madame Guyon*). Apparently, Irvine's handwriting was difficult to interpret, and various typists had spelled her name incorrectly. Finally, the mystery lady turned up! There are many articles on the internet about this lady that may be consulted. Brief biographical details follow here. Her autobiography tells of her finding Isaiah 41 in a similar manner to Irvine.

Madame Jeanne Marie Bouvier De La Motte Guyon was born into a prominent family on April 13, 1648, in Montargis, France. In 1664, when she was 15 years old, Jeanne Marie was forced into an arranged marriage to wealthy Frenchman, Jacques Guyon, age 38. He died twelve years later in 1676, leaving behind a wealthy widow (age 28) with three children. She was born into, lived and died in the Catholic Church.

Soon after her widowhood, Madame Guyon began her public career as an evangelist. She devoted her life to missionary journeys on behalf of "passivity," also known as Quietism. Her charming manner, her imposing appearance, and the force and eloquence with which she explained her mystical ideas gained many adherents.

QUIETISM

QUIETISM was a religious movement that became popular in France, Italy and Spain during the late 1670s and 1680s. According to Wikipedia, "The Quietist heresy" was seen by critics to consist of wrongly elevating contemplation over meditation, intellectual stillness over vocal prayer, and interior passivity over pious action in an account of mystical prayer, spiritual growth and union with God.

The chief leaders of Quietism were Miguel de Molinos, François Malaval (1627–1719), Madame Jeanne Marie Guyon (commonly known as Madame Guyon, 1648–1717), and semi-Quietist French Catholic archbishop François Fénelon (1651–1715). Madame Guyon's writings and books would eventually fill over 40 volumes; she also wrote many poems.*

Quietism came to be regarded as heresy by the Catholic Church. Molinos' writings were condemned as heresy by the Pope Innocent XI in 1687. In 1688, Madame Guyon's published works, the *Moyen Court* and the *Règles des associées à l'Enfance de Jésus*, were both placed on the List of Prohibited Books (banned books). Fénelon's *Maximes des saints* was also condemned.

After an examination of her conduct and writings, when she was 47 years old, Madame Guyon was imprisoned for more than seven years, from December 1695 until March 1703, and spent the majority of that time in Bastille.

Upon her release, she retired to the home of her daughter, the Marquise de Bois, at Blois. For the next fifteen years, she had numerous visitors of all ranks and countries. She spent much of her time writing; e.g. her considerable correspondence, poetry, etc. She died on June 9, 1717, aged 69, and is buried in the Roman Catholic Church of the Cordeliers, Blois, Loir-et-Cher, France.

References:

Madame Guyon has written several books that are reprinted on [google books](#).

Brief Biography of Madame Guyon

1911 Encyclopedia Britannica/Quietism

The Project Gutenberg (free) E-Book of [The Autobiography of Madame Guyon](#) by Jeanne Marie Bouvier de La Motte Guyon by Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois:

The scenario Irvine described about finding Isaiah 41:15 is in the above Gutenberg E-book.

Irvine's Call to Service

1895 was the year William Irvine received his "Call to Service." He believed God had called him to protest the evils of Christendom. Irvine took his Call to Service very seriously and believed God intended for this verse to be his life's mission. It was no secret he viewed himself as the thresher with sharp teeth, beating down mountains of clericalism. According to historian Goodhand Pattison:

"Mr. Irvine regarded Isa. 41:15–16 as his 'Call to Service' and certainly seemed to fit in with the description given there. The threshing instrument was to be new and sharp, having teeth, and most people who knew him in those and subsequent days can well remember how well he could thresh and how sharp could be his bite ... being a 'new' instrument, very 'uncommon' in his methods and his 'like or equal' unknown or unheard of ... there was not another in all the world who could or would have dealt such deadly blows to the 'mountains' of clergy, and of clericalism and so-called organizations, or to the 'hills' of traditional social customs and usages." (1935, Threshing, TTT)

Later, Irvine proclaimed "What John the Baptist was to Jesus as forerunner, John the apostle from Heaven will be to Jesus' second coming. Isaiah 40 is his work and Isaiah 41 is my work, as Jacob, with a few who share my anointing" (to Billetts, Jan. 8, 1934, TTT).

Some theologians view Isaiah 41 as a prophecy of a future historical natural event for the Jewish nation; a prophecy to the whole nation of Israel about how, in time, God would use the army of Israel to conquer the surrounding pagan nations.

Madame Guyon Was Not a Worker or Friend

She was not a professing Two by Two—She was a Roman Catholic

Some Two by Twos mistakenly believe Madame Guyon was professing. Some brief biographical details and some of her poems have been circulated among them. This is not true. **She was born in 1648 and died in 1717, long before Wm Irvine started his Two by Two Sect in 1897.**

Further, Madame Guyon lived, died and was buried in the Catholic Church, even though she was persecuted and imprisoned for seven years by the highest authorities of that church.

The introduction to the circular (unknown Two by Two author) contains some incorrect information and assumptions. Fact is, Madame Guyon was in prison for seven years and lived another fifteen years after her release. She was 47 years old (not 50) when she entered prison. The introduction reads:

*Evidently, two professing ladies in France. Madame Guyon was 50 when she entered the prison, and according to date below, she died in 1717... making her 69 at death. She must have been imprisoned for **the Truth's sake for 19 years, if she died in prison.** How sad—but read the beautiful poetry she composed under the most terrible conditions.*

Madame Jeanne Guyon

(1648–1717)

In September 1698, the "letter de cachet" was delivered authorizing the transfer of the fifty-year-old Madame Guyon and her maidservant Mademoiselle La Gautiere to the Bastille in Paris where political prisoners were kept under the most outrageous conditions.

Like all Parisians they must have looked with awe upon this imposing, four story, gray stone prison-fortress many times as they had passed by previously. The great and dreaded Bastille, with its 12-foot thick stonewalls and 80-foot high towers would have taken on even larger dimensions now as they were herded inside to stay.

At the base of each tower was a below ground dungeon cell which was almost totally dark and poorly ventilated by one small window which was open to the weather in all seasons. The three-inch thick oak plank doors were equipped with locks and heavy iron bars. One cannot imagine how cold and damp such a place would be during the cruel winter weather without any heat.

Madame Guyon was weak, sick and exhausted, as she was led to her cell. She found her straw pallet on the floor in the dark and lay down to try to sleep. It was miserable. Repulsive noises in the corridor kept her awake as she tossed restlessly through the night, with bed bugs, lice and rats as her companions. There were no sanitary facilities, the water polluted, the food putrid, and many prisoners died of fever, nausea, diarrhea, insect bites and running body sores. Even when sick, they were left to their own devices to lie in the filth unattended, for weeks on end. Live or die, there was no one who cared.

About sunrise, the guards banged on the doors shouting, "Get off your soft beds! Do you loafers expect to sleep all day?" Buckets of food were distributed from cell to cell twice daily. Meals usually consisted of moldy bread, cabbage, and cold chunks of meat. Sometimes they had mutton and soupy bread crusts with a cup of sour wine. A person had to dip his hands into the bucket to pick up the food.

Eventually her companion, Mademoiselle La Gautiere did die of the terrible deprivation but remained true to her trust in God until the end of her life. She had once written to a friend describing her relationship with Madame Guyon: "Yes I love her because she loves the God I love; and it is with a love that is real, living and operative. This love has the power of uniting our hearts in a manner which I am unable to express verbally; but it seems to me that this is the beginning of that union which we shall have in heaven, where the love of God will unite all in Him." To me this is the real definition of true fellowship.

It was in this lonely setting of solitary confinement over the next four years, that some of these poems enclosed were written by Jeanne Guyon. She was widely misunderstood and hated because of her fervent, yet simple faith. The authorities of the organized Roman Catholic Church doggedly persecuted her as a heretic. Although I know very little about this woman, I admire her conviction and her feeling of desperate need for a close, deep and loving relationship with God. No amount of pressure brought to bear could dissuade her from remaining true to the One she loved.

Poems Written In Prison

Prison Walls

Strong are the walls around me,
That hold me all the day;
But they who thus have bound me,
Cannot keep God away:
My very dungeon walls are dear,
Because the God I love is here.

They know, who thus oppress me,
'Tis hard to be alone;
But know not one can bless me,
Who comes through bars and stone;
He makes my dungeon's darkness bright,
And fills my bosom with delight.

Thy love, O God, restores me
From sighs and tears to praise;
And deep my soul adores thee,
Nor thinks of time or place;
I ask no more, in good or ill,
But union with Thy holy will.

'Tis that which makes my treasure,
'Tis that which brings me gain;
Converting woe to pleasure,
And reaping joy from pain:
O 'tis enough, whate'er befall,
To know that God is All in All.

The Entire Surrender

Peace has unveiled her smiling face,
And woos thy soul to her embrace;
Enjoyed with ease, if thou refrain,
From selfish love, else sought in vain;
She dwells with all who truth prefer,
But seeks not them, who seek not her.

Yield to the Lord with simple heart,
All that thou hast, and all thou art;
Renounce all strength but strength Divine,
And peace shall be for ever thine;
Behold the path that Jesus trod...
My path till I go home to God.

Love Constitutes My Crime

Love constitutes my Crime,
For this they keep me here,
Imprisoned thus so long a time
For Him I hold so dear;
And yet I am, as when I came,
The subject of this holy flame.

How can I better grow,
How from my own heart fly?
Those who imprison me should know
True love can never die:
Yea, tread and crush it with disdain,
And it will live and burn again.

And am I then to blame?
He's always in my sight;
And having once inspired the flame,
He always keeps it bright:
For this they spite me and reprove,
Because I cannot cease to love.

What power shall dim its ray?
Dropped burning from above!
Eternal life shall ne'er decay;
God is the life of love;
And when its source of life is o'er,
And only then, twill shine no more.

The Light Above Us

There is a light in yonder skies,
A light unseen by outward eyes;
But bright and clear to inward sense,
It shines, the star of Providence.

The radiance of the central throne,
It comes from God and God alone;
The ray that never yet grew pale,
The star that "Shines within the veil."

And faith, unchecked by earthly fears,
Shall lift its eyes, though filled with tears,
And while around It is dark as night,
Untired, shall mark that heavenly light.

In vain they smite me, men but do
What God permits with different view;
To outward sight they wield the rod,
But faith proclaims it all of God.

Unmoved then, let me keep my way,
Supported by that cheering ray,

Which shining distant, renders clear
The clouds and darkness gathering near.

A Little Bird Am I

A little bird I am
Shut from the fields of air;
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God it pleases Thee.

Nought have I else to do,
I sing the whole day long;
And He whom most I love to please,
Doth listen to my song;
He caught and bound my wandering wing,
But still He bends to hear me sing.

Thou hast an ear to hear,
A heart to love and bless;
And though my notes were e'er so crude,
Thou wouldst not hear the less;
Because Thou knowest as they fall,
That love, sweet love, inspires them all.

My cage confines me round,
Abroad I cannot flee;
But though my wing is closely bound,
My heart's at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom of the soul.

Oh! it is good to soar
These bolts and bars above,
To Him whose purpose I adore,
Whose providence I love;
And in Thy mighty will to find
The joy, the freedom of the mind.