

***JEANNE MARIE  
BOUVIER  
DE LA MOTTE  
GUYON***



***THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF MADAME GUYON***

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**Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Motte Guyon**

# **The Autobiography of Madame Guyon**

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Contact: [DigiCat@okpublishing.info](mailto:DigiCat@okpublishing.info)



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# **MADAME GUYON**

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## **PART ONE**

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## CHAPTER 1

There were omissions of importance in the former narration of my life. I willingly comply with your desire, in giving you a more circumstantial relation; though the labor seems rather painful, as I cannot use much study or reflection. My earnest wish is to paint in true colors the goodness of God to me, and the depth of my own ingratitude—but it is impossible, as numberless little circumstances have escaped my memory. You are also unwilling I should give you a minute account of my sins. I shall, however, try to leave out as few faults as possible. I depend on you to destroy it, when your soul hath drawn those spiritual advantages which God intended, and for which purpose I am willing to sacrifice all things. I am fully persuaded of His designs toward you, as well for the sanctification of others, as for your own sanctification.

Let me assure you, this is not attained, save through pain, weariness and labor; and it will be reached by a path that will wonderfully disappoint your expectations. Nevertheless, if you are fully convinced that it is on the nothing in man that God establishes his greatest works—you will be in part guarded against disappointment or surprise. He destroys that he might build; for when He is about to rear His sacred temple in us, He first totally razes that vain and pompous edifice, which human art and power had erected, and from its horrible ruins a new structure is formed, by His power only.

Oh, that you could comprehend the depth of this mystery, and learn the secrets of the conduct of God,

revealed to babes, but hid from the wise and great of this world, who think themselves the Lord's counselor's, and capable of investigating His procedures, and suppose they have attained that divine wisdom hidden from the eyes of all who live in self, and are enveloped in their own works. Who by a lively genius and elevated faculties mount up to Heaven, and think to comprehend the height and depth and length and breadth of God.

This divine wisdom is unknown, even to those who pass in the world for persons of extraordinary illumination and knowledge. To whom then is she known, and who can tell us any tidings concerning her? Destruction and death assure us, that they have heard with their ears of her fame and renown. It is, then, in dying to all things, and in being truly lost to them, passing forward into God, and existing only in Him, that we attain to some knowledge of the true wisdom. Oh, how little are her ways known, and her dealings with her most chosen servants. Scarce do we discover anything thereof, but surprised at the dissimilitude betwixt the truth we thus discover and our former ideas of it, we cry out with St. Paul, "Oh, the depth of the knowledge and wisdom of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." The Lord judgeth not of things as men do, who call good evil and evil good, and account that as righteousness which is abominable in His sight, and which according to the prophet He regards as filthy rags. He will enter into strict judgment with these self-righteous, and they shall, like the Pharisees, be rather subjects of His wrath, than objects of His love, or inheritors of His rewards. Doth not Christ Himself assure us, that "except our righteousness exceed that of the scribes and pharisees we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And which of us even approaches them in righteousness; or, if we live in the practice of virtues, though much inferior to theirs, are we not tenfold more ostentatious? Who is not



pleased to behold himself righteous in his own eyes, and in the eyes of others? or, who is it doubts that such righteousness is sufficient to please God? Yet, we see the indignation of our Lord manifested against such. He who was the perfect pattern of tenderness and meekness, such as flowed from the depth of the heart, and not that affected meekness, which under the form of a dove, hides the hawk's heart. He appears severe only to these self-righteous people, and He publicly dishonored them. In what strange colors does He represent them, while He beholds the poor sinner with mercy, compassion and love, and declares that for them only He was come, that it was the sick who needed the physician; and that He came only to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

O thou Source of Love! Thou dost indeed seem so jealous of the salvation Thou hast purchased, that Thou dost prefer the sinner to the righteous! The poor sinner beholds himself vile and wretched, is in a manner constrained to detest himself; and finding his state so horrible, casts himself in his desperation into the arms of his Saviour, and plunges into the healing fountain, and comes forth "white as wool." Then confounded at the review of his disordered state, and overflowing with love for Him, who having alone the power, had also the compassion to save him—the excess of his love is proportioned to the enormity of his crimes, and the fullness of his gratitude to the extent of the debt remitted. The self-righteous, relying on the many good works he imagines he has performed, seems to hold salvation in his own hand, and considers Heaven as a just reward of his merits. In the bitterness of his zeal he exclaims against all sinners, and represents the gates of mercy as barred against them, and Heaven as a place to which they have no claim. What need have such self-righteous persons of a Saviour? they are already burdened with the load of their own merits. Oh, how long they bear the flattering load,

while sinners divested of everything, fly rapidly on the wings of faith and love into their Saviour's arms, who freely bestows on them that which he has so freely promised!

How full of self-love are the self-righteous, and how void of the love of God! They esteem and admire themselves in their works of righteousness, which they suppose to be a fountain of happiness. These works are no sooner exposed to the Sun of Righteousness, than they discover all to be so full of impurity and baseness, that it frets them to the heart. Meanwhile the poor sinner, Magdalene, is pardoned because she loves much, and her faith and love are accepted as righteousness. The inspired Paul, who so well understood these great truths and so fully investigated them, assures us that "the faith of Abraham was imputed to him for righteousness." This is truly beautiful for it is certain that all of that holy patriarch's actions were strictly righteous; yet, not seeing them as such, and being devoid of the love of them, and divested of selfishness, his faith was founded on the coming Christ. He hoped in Him even against hope itself, and this was imputed to him for righteousness, (Rom. 4: 18, 22,) a pure, simple and genuine righteousness, wrought by Christ, and not a righteousness wrought by himself, and regarded as of himself.

You may imagine this a digression wide of the subject, but it leads insensibly to it. It shows that God accomplishes His work either in converted sinners, whose past iniquities serve as a counterpoise to their elevation, or in persons whose self-righteousness He destroys, by totally overthrowing the proud building they had reared on a sandy foundation, instead of the Rock—CHRIST.

The establishment of all these ends, which He proposed in coming into the world, is effected by the apparent overthrow of that very structure which in reality He would erect. By means which seem to destroy His Church, He

establishes it. How strangely does He found the new dispensation and give it His sanction! The legislator Himself is condemned by the learned and great, as a malefactor, and dies an ignominious death. Oh, that we fully understood how very opposite our self-righteousness is to the designs of God—it would be a subject for endless humiliation, and we should have an utter distrust in that which at present constitutes the whole of our dependence.

From a just love of His supreme power, and a righteous jealousy of mankind, who attribute to each other the gifts He Himself bestows upon them, it pleased Him to take one of the most unworthy of the creation, to make known the fact that His graces are the effects of His will, not the fruits of our merits. It is the property of His wisdom to destroy what is proudly built, and to build what is destroyed; to make use of weak things to confound the mighty and to employ in His service such as appear vile and contemptible.

This He does in a manner so astonishing, as to render them the objects of the scorn and contempt of the world. It is not to draw public approbation upon them, that He makes them instrumental in the salvation of others; but to render them the objects of their dislike and the subjects of their insults; as you will see in this life you have enjoined upon me to write.

## CHAPTER 2

I was born on April 18, 1648. My parents, particularly my father, was extremely pious; but to him it was a manner hereditary. Many of his forefathers were saints.

My mother, in the eighth month, was accidentally frightened, which caused an abortion. It is generally imagined that a child born in that month cannot survive. Indeed, I was so excessively ill, immediately after my birth, that all about me despaired of my life, and were apprehensive I should die without baptism. Perceiving some signs of vitality, they ran to acquaint my father, who immediately brought a priest; but on entering the chamber they were told those symptoms which had raised their hopes were only expiring struggles, and all was over.

I had no sooner shown signs of life again, than I again relapsed, and remained so long in an uncertain state, that it was some time before they could find a proper opportunity to baptize me. I continued very unhealthy until I was two and a half years old, when they sent me to the convent of the Ursulines, where I remained a few months.

On my return, my mother neglected to pay due attention to my education. She was not fond of daughters and abandoned me wholly to the care of servants. Indeed, I should have suffered severely from their inattention to me had not an all-watchful Providence been my protector: for through my liveliness, I met with various accidents. I frequently fell into a deep vault that held our firewood; however, I always escaped unhurt.

The Dutchess of Montbason came to the convent of the Benedictines, when I was about four years old. She had a great friendship for my father, and obtained his permission that I should go to the same convent. She took peculiar delight in my sportiveness and certain sweetness in my external deportment. I became her constant companion.

I was guilty of frequent and dangerous irregularities in this house, and committed serious faults. I had good examples before me, and being naturally well inclined, I followed them, when there were none to turn me aside. I loved to hear God spoken of, to be at church, and to be dressed in a religious garb. I was told of terrors of Hell which I imagined was intended to intimidate me as I was exceedingly lively, and full of a little petulant vivacity which they called wit. The succeeding night I dreamed of Hell, and though I was so young, time has never been able to efface the frightful ideas impressed upon my imagination. All appeared horrible darkness, where souls were punished, and my place among them was pointed out. At this I wept bitterly, and cried, "Oh, my God, if Thou wilt have mercy upon me, and spare me yet a little longer, I will never more offend Thee." And thou didst, O Lord, in mercy hearken unto my cry, and pour upon me strength and courage to serve thee, in an uncommon manner for one of my age. I wanted to go privately to confession, but being little, the mistress of the boarders carried me to the priest, and stayed with me while I was heard. She was much astonished when I mentioned that I had suggestions against the faith, and the confessor began to laugh, and inquire what they were. I told him that till then I had doubted there was such a place as Hell, and supposed my mistress had spoken of it merely to make me good, but now my doubts were all removed. After confession my heart glowed with a kind of fervor, and at one time I felt a desire to suffer martyrdom. The good girls of the house, to amuse themselves, and to see how far this

growing fervor would carry me, desired me to prepare for martyrdom. I found great fervency and delight in prayer, and was persuaded that this ardor, which was as new as it was pleasing, was a proof of God's love. This inspired me with such courage and resolution, that I earnestly besought them to proceed, that I might thereby enter into His sacred presence, but was there not latent hypocrisy here? Did I not imagine that it was possible they would not kill me, and that I would have the merit of martyrdom without suffering it? Indeed, it appeared there was something of this nature in it. Being placed kneeling on a cloth spread for the purpose, and seeing behind me a large sword lifted up which they had prepared to try how far my ardor would carry me I cried, "Hold! it is not right I should die without first obtaining my father's permission." I was quickly upbraided with having said this that I might escape, and that I was no longer a martyr. I continued long disconsolate, and would receive no comfort; something inwardly reproved me, for not having embraced that opportunity of going to Heaven, when it rested altogether on my own choice.

At my solicitation, and on account of my falling so frequently sick, I was at length taken home. On my return, my mother having a maid in whom she placed confidence, left me again to the care of servants. It is a great fault, of which mothers are guilty, when under pretext of external devotions, or other engagements, they suffer their daughters to be absent from them. I forbear not condemning that unjust partiality with which parents treat some of their children. It is frequently productive of divisions in families, and even the ruin of some. Impartiality, by uniting children's hearts together, lays the foundation of lasting harmony and unanimity.

I would I were able to convince parents, and all who have the care of youth, of the great attention they require,

and how dangerous it is to let them be for any length of time from under their eye, or to suffer them to be without some kind of employment. This negligence is the ruin of multitudes of girls.

How greatly it is to be lamented, that mothers who are inclined to piety, should pervert even the means of salvation to their destruction—commit the greatest irregularities while apparently pursuing that which should produce the most regular and circumspect conduct.

Thus, because they experience certain gains in prayer, they would be all day long at church; meanwhile their children are running to destruction. We glorify God most when we prevent what may offend Him. What must be the nature of that sacrifice which is the occasion of sin! God should be served in His own way. Let the devotion of mothers be regulated so as to prevent their daughters from straying. Treat them as sisters, not as slaves. Appear pleased with their little amusements. The children will delight then in the presence of their mothers, instead of avoiding it. If they find so much happiness with them, they will not dream of seeking it elsewhere. Mothers frequently deny their children any liberties. Like birds constantly confined to a cage, they no sooner find means of escape than off they go, never to return. In order to render them tame and docile when young, they should be permitted sometimes to take wing, but as their flight is weak, and closely watched, it is easy to retake them when they escape. Little flight gives them the habit of naturally returning to their cage which becomes an agreeable confinement. I believe young girls should be treated in a manner something similar to this. Mothers should indulge them in an innocent liberty, but should never lose sight of them.

To guard the tender minds of children from what is wrong, much care should be taken to employ them in agreeable and useful matters. They should not be loaded with food they cannot relish. Milk suited to babies should be administered to them not strong meat which may so disgust them, that when they arrive at an age when it would be proper nourishment, they will not so much as taste it. Every day they should be obliged to read a little in some good book, spend some time in prayer, which must be suited rather to stir the affections, than for meditation. Oh, were this method of education pursued, how speedily would many irregularities cease! These daughters becoming mothers, would educate their children as they themselves had been educated.

Parents should also avoid showing the smallest partiality in the treatment of their children. It begets a secret jealousy and hatred among them, which frequently augments with time, and even continues until death. How often do we see some children the idols of the house, behaving like absolute tyrants, treating their brothers and sisters as so many slaves according to the example of father and mother. And it happens many times, that the favorite proves a scourge to the parents while the poor despised and hated one becomes their consolation and support.

My mother was very defective in the education of her children. She suffered me whole days from her presence in company with the servants, whose conversation and example were particularly hurtful to one of my disposition. My mother's heart seemed wholly centered in my brother. I was scarcely ever favored with the smallest instance of her tenderness or affection. I therefore voluntarily absented myself from her. It is true, my brother was more amiable than I but the excess of her fondness for him, made her blind even to my outward good qualities. It served only to



discover my faults, which would have been trifling had proper care been taken of me.

## CHAPTER 3

My father who loved me tenderly and seeing how little my education was attended to sent me to a convent of the Ursulines. I was near seven years old. In this house were two half sisters of mine, the one by my father, the other by my mother. My father placed me under his daughter's care, a person of the great capacity and most exalted piety, excellently qualified for the instruction of youth. This was a singular dispensation of God's providence and love toward me, and proved the first means of my salvation. She loved me tenderly, and her affection made her discover in me many amiable qualities, which the Lord had implanted in me. She endeavored to improve these good qualities, and I believe that had I continued in such careful hands, I should have acquired as many virtuous habits as I afterward contracted evil ones.

This good sister employed her time in instructing me in piety and in such branches of learning as were suitable to my age and capacity. She had good talents and improved them well. She was frequent in prayer and her faith was as great as that of most persons. She denied herself every other pleasure to be with me and to instruct me. Such was her affection for me that it made her find more pleasure with me than anywhere else.

If I made her agreeable answers, though more from chance than from judgment, she thought herself well paid for all her labor. Under her care I soon became mistress of most studies suitable for me. Many grown persons of rank could not have answered the questions.

As my father often sent for me, desiring to see me at home, I found at one time the Queen of England there. I was near eight years of age. My father told the Queen's confessor that if he wanted a little amusement he might entertain himself with me. He tried me with several very difficult questions, to which I returned such pertinent answers that he carried me to the Queen, and said, "Your majesty must have some diversion with this child." She also tried me and was so well pleased with my lively answers, and my manners, that she demanded me of my father with no small importunity. She assured him that she would take particular care of me, designing me for maid of honor to the princess. My father resisted. Doubtless it was God who caused this refusal, and thereby turned off the stroke which might have probably intercepted my salvation. Being so weak, how could I have withstood the temptations and distractions of a court?

I went back to the Ursulines where my good sister continued her affection. But as she was not the mistress of the boarders, and I was obliged sometimes to go along with them, I contracted bad habits. I became addicted to lying, peevishness and indevotion, passing whole days without thinking on God; though He watched continually over me, as the sequel will manifest. I did not remain long under the power of such habits because my sister's care recovered me. I loved much to hear of God, was not weary of church, loved to pray, had tenderness for the poor, and a natural dislike for persons whose doctrine was judged unsound. God has always continued to me this grace, in my greatest infidelities.

There was at the end of the garden connected with this convent, a little chapel dedicated to the child Jesus. To this I betook myself for devotion and, for some time, carrying my breakfast thither every morning, I hid it all behind this

image. I was so much a child, that I thought I made a considerable sacrifice in depriving myself of it. Delicate in my choice of food, I wished to mortify myself, but found self-love still too prevalent, to submit to such mortification. When they were cleaning out this chapel, they found behind the image what I had left there and presently guessed that it was I. They had seen me every day going thither. I believe that God, who lets nothing pass without a recompense, soon rewarded me with interest for this little infantine devotion.

I continued some time with my sister, where I retained the love and fear of God. My life was easy; I was educated agreeably with her. I improved much while I had my health, but very often I was sick, and seized with maladies as sudden as they were uncommon. In the evening well; in the morning swelled and full of bluish marks, symptoms of a fever which soon followed. At nine years, I was taken with so violent a hemorrhage that they thought I was going to die. I was rendered exceedingly weak.

A little before this severe attack, my other sister became jealous, wanting to have me in turn. Though she led a good life, yet she had not a talent for the education of children. At first she caressed me, but all her caresses made no impression upon my heart. My other sister did more with a look, than she with either caresses or threatenings. As she saw that I loved her not so well, she changed to rigorous treatment. She would not allow me to speak to my other sister. When she knew I had spoken to her, she had me whipped, or beat me herself. I could no longer hold out against severe usage, and therefore requited with apparent ingratitude all the favors of my paternal sister, going no more to see her. But this did not hinder her from giving me marks of her usual goodness, in the severe malady just mentioned. She kindly construed my ingratitude to be rather owing to my fear of chastisement, than to a bad

heart. Indeed, I believe this was the only instance in which fear of chastisement operated so powerfully upon me. From that time I suffered more in occasioning pain to One I loved, than in suffering myself at their hand.

Thou knowest, O my Beloved, that it was not the dread of Thy chastisements that sunk so deep, either into my understanding or my heart; it was the sorrow for offending Thee which ever constituted the whole of my distress; which was so great. I imagine if there were neither Heaven nor Hell, I should always have retained the same fear of displeasing Thee. Thou knowest that after my faults, when, in forgiving mercy, Thou wert pleased to visit my soul, Thy caresses were a thousand-fold more insupportable than Thy rod.

My father being informed of all that passed, took me home again. I was nearly ten years of age. I stayed only a little while at home. A nun of the order of St. Dominie, of a great family, one of my father's intimate friends, solicited him to place me in her convent. She was the prioress and promised she would take care of me and make me lodge in her room. This lady had conceived a great affection for me. She was so taken up with her community, in its many troublesome events that she was not at liberty to take much care of me. I had the chickenpox, which made me keep to my bed three weeks, in which I had very bad care, though my father and mother thought I was under excellent care. The ladies of the house had such a dread of the smallpox, as they imagined mine to be, that they would not come near me. I passed almost all the time without seeing anybody. A lay-sister who only brought me my allowance of diet at the set hours immediately went off again. I providentially found a Bible and having both a fondness for reading and a happy memory, I spent whole days in reading it from morning to night. I learned entirely the historical part. Yet I was really

very unhappy in this house. The other boarders, being large girls, distressed me with grievous persecutions. I was so much neglected, as to food, that I became quite emaciated.

## CHAPTER 4

After about eight months, my father took me home. My mother kept me more with her, beginning to have a higher regard for me than before. She still preferred my brother; every one spoke of it. Even when I was sick and there was anything I liked, he demanded it. It was taken from me, and given to him, and he was in perfectly good health. One day he made me mount the top of the coach; then threw me down. By the fall I was very much bruised. At other times he beat me. But whatever he did, however wrong, it was winked at, or the most favorable construction was put upon it. This soured my temper. I had little disposition to do good, saying, "I was never the better for it."

It was not then for Thee alone, O God, that I did good; since I ceased to do it, when it met not with such a reception from others as I wanted. Had I known how to make a right use of this thy crucifying conduct, I should have made a good progress. Far from turning me out of the way, it would have made me turn more wholly to Thee.

I looked with jealous eyes on my brother, seeing the difference between him and me. Whatever he did was considered well; but if there were blame, it fell on me. My stepsisters by the mother, gained her goodwill by caressing him and persecuting me. True, I was bad. I relapsed into my former faults of lying and peevishness. With all these faults I was very tender and charitable to the poor. I prayed to God assiduously, loved to hear any one speak of Him and to read good books.

I doubt not that you will be amazed at such a series of inconsistencies; but what succeeds will surprise you yet more, when you see this manner of acting gain ground with my years. As my reason ripened, it was so far from correcting this irrational conduct. Sin grew more powerful in me.

O my God, thy grace seemed to be redoubled in proportion to the increase of my ingratitude! It was with me as with a city besieged, Thou didst surround my heart, and I only studied how to defend myself against thy attacks. I raised fortifications about the wretched place, adding every day to the number of my iniquities to prevent Thee taking it. When there was an appearance of Thy becoming victorious over this ungrateful heart, I raised a counter-battery, and threw up ramparts to keep off thy goodness, and to hinder the course of thy grace. None other could have conquered than Thyself.

I cannot bear to hear it said, "We are not free to resist grace." I have had too long and fatal an experience of my liberty. I closed up the avenues of my heart, that I might not so much as hear that secret voice of God, which was calling me to Himself. I have indeed, from tenderest youth, passed through a series of grievances, either by maladies or by persecutions. The girl to whose care my mother left me, in arranging my hair used to beat me, and did not make me turn it except with rage and blows.

Everything seemed to punish me, but this instead of making me turn unto Thee, O my God, only served to afflict and embitter my mind.

My father knew nothing of all this; his love to me was such that he would not have suffered it. I loved him very much, but at the same time I feared him, so that I told him nothing of it. My mother was often teasing him with



complaints of me, to which he made no other reply than, "There are twelve hours in the day; she'll grow wiser." This rigorous proceeding was not the worst for my soul, though it soured my temper, which was otherwise mild and easy. But what caused my greatest hurt was, that I chose to be among those who caressed me, in order to corrupt and spoil me.

My father, seeing I was now grown tall, placed me in Lent among the Ursulines, to receive my first communion at Easter, at which time I was to complete my eleventh year. And here my most dear sister, under whose inspection my father placed me, redoubled her cares, to cause me to make the best preparation possible for this act of devotion. I thought now of giving myself to God in good earnest. I often felt a combat between my good inclinations and my bad habits. I even did some penances. As I was almost always with my sister, and as the boarders in her class, which was the first, were very reasonable and civil. I became such also, while among them. It had been cruel to educate me badly; for my very nature was strongly disposed to goodness. Easily won with mildness, I did with pleasure whatever my good sister desired. At length Easter arrived; I received the communion with much joy and devotion. In this house I staid until Whitsuntide. But as my other sister was mistress of the second class, she demanded that in her week I should be with her in that class. Her manners, so opposite to the other's, made me relax my former piety. I felt no more that new and delightful ardor which had seized my heart at my first communion. Alas! it held but a short time. My faults and failings were soon reiterated and drew me from the care and duties of religion.

As I now grew very tall for my age, and more to my mother's liking than before, she took care to deck and dress me, to make me see company, and to take me abroad. She

took an inordinate pride in that beauty with which God had formed me, to bless and praise Him. However it was perverted by me into a source of pride and vanity. Several suitors came to me; but as I was not yet twelve years my father would not listen to any proposals. I loved reading and shut myself up alone every day to read without interruption.

What proved effectual to gain me entirely to God, at least for a time, was that a nephew of my father's passed by our home on a mission to Cochin China. I happened at that time to be taking a walk with my companions, which I seldom did. At my return he was gone. They gave me an account of his sanctity, and the things he had said, I was so touched that I was overcome with sorrow. I cried all the rest of the day and night. Early in the morning I went in great distress to seek my confessor. I said to him, "What! my father, am I the only person in our family to be lost? Alas; help me in my salvation." He was greatly surprised to see me so much afflicted, and comforted me in the best manner he could, not thinking me so bad as I was. In my backslidings I was docile, punctual in obedience, careful to confess often. Since I went to him my life was more regular.

Oh, thou God of love, how often hast Thou knocked at the door of my heart! How often terrified me with appearances of sudden death! All these only made a transient impression. I presently returned again to my infidelities. This time thou didst take and quite carried off my heart. Alas, what grief I now sustained for having displeased Thee! what regrets, what exclamations, what sobbings! Who would have thought, to see me, but that my conversion would have lasted as long as my life? Why didst thou not, O my God, utterly take this heart to thyself, when I gave it to Thee so fully. Or, if Thou didst take it then, oh, why didst Thou let it revolt again? Thou wast surely strong enough to hold it, but Thou wouldst perhaps, in leaving me

to myself, display thy mercy that the depth of my iniquity might serve as a trophy to thy goodness.

I immediately applied myself to every part of my duty. I made a general confession with great compunction of heart. I frankly confessed all that I knew with many tears. I became so changed that I was scarcely known. I would not for ever so much made the least voluntary slip. They found not any matter for absolution when I confessed. I discovered the very smallest faults and God did me the favor to enable me to conquer myself in many things. There were left only some remains of passion, which gave me some trouble to conquer. But as soon as I had by means thereof, given any displeasure, even to the domestics, I begged their pardon, in order to subdue my wrath and pride; for wrath is the daughter of pride. A person truly humbled permits not anything to put him in a rage. As it is pride which dies the last in the soul, so it is passion which is last destroyed in the outward conduct. A soul thoroughly dead to itself, finds nothing of rage left.

There are persons who, being very much filled with grace and with peace, at their entrance of the resigned path of light and love, think they are come thus far. But they are greatly mistaken, in this view of their state. This they will readily discover, if they are heartily willing to examine two things. First, if their nature is lively, warm and violent, (I speak not of stupid tempers) they will find, from time to time, that they make slips, in which trouble and emotion have some share. Even then they are useful to humble and annihilate them. (But when annihilation is perfected all passion is gone—it is incompatible with this state.) They will find that there often arises in them certain motions of anger, but the sweetness of grace holds them back. They would easily transgress, if in any wise they gave way to these motions. There are persons who think themselves very mild

because nothing thwarts them. It is not of such that I am speaking. Mildness which has never been put to the proof, is often only counterfeit. Those persons who, when unmolested, appear to be saints are no sooner exercised by vexing occurrences than there starts up in them a strange number of faults. They had thought them dead which only lay dormant because nothing awakened them.

I followed my religious exercises. I shut myself up all day to read and pray. I gave all I had to the poor taking even linen to their houses. I taught them the catechism and when my parents dined out I made them eat with me and served them with great respect. I read the works of St. Francis de Sales and the life of Madam de Chantal. There I first learned what mental prayer was, and I besought my confessor to teach me that kind of prayer. As he did not, I used my own endeavors to practice it, though without success, as I then thought, because I could not exercise the imagination, I persuaded myself, that that prayer could not be made without forming to one's self certain ideas and reasoning much. This difficulty gave me no small trouble, for a long time. I was very assiduous and prayed earnestly to God to give me the gift of prayer. All that I saw in the life of M. de Chantal charmed me. I was so much a child, that I thought I ought to do everything I saw in it. All the vows she had made I made also. One day as I was reading that she had put the name of Jesus on her heart, to follow the counsel, "Set me as a seal upon thy heart." For this purpose she had taken a hot iron, whereupon the holy name was engraven. I was very much afflicted that I could not do the same. I decided to write that sacred and adorable name, in large characters, on paper, then with ribbons and a needle I fastened it to my skin in four places. In that position it continued a long time.

After this, I turned all my thoughts to become a nun. Because the love which I had for St. Francis de Sales did not permit me to think of any other community than the one of which he was the founder, I frequently went to beg the nuns there to receive me into their convent. Often I stole out of my father's house to go and repeatedly solicit my admission there. Though it was what they eagerly desired, even as a temporal advantage, yet they never dared let me enter, as they very much feared my father, to whose fondness for me they were no strangers.

There was at that house a niece of my father's, to whom I am under great obligations. Fortune had not been very favorable to her father. It had reduced her in some measure to depend on mine, to whom she made known my desire. Although he would not for anything in the world have hindered a right vocation, yet he could not hear of my design without shedding tears. As he happened at this time to be abroad, my cousin went to my confessor, to desire him to forbid my going to the visitation. He dared not, however, do it plainly, for fear of drawing on himself the resentment of that community. I still wanted to be a nun, and importuned my mother excessively to take me to that house. She would not do it, for fear of grieving my father, who was absent.

## CHAPTER 5

No sooner was my father returned home, than he became violently ill. My mother was at the same time indisposed in another part of the house. I was all alone with him, ready to render him every kind of service I was capable of, and to give him all the dutiful marks of a most sincere affection. I do not doubt but my assiduity was very agreeable to him. I performed the most menial offices unperceived by him taking the time for it when the servants were not at hand; as well to mortify myself as to pay due honor to what Jesus Christ said, that He came not to be ministered to, but to minister. When father made me read to him, I read with such heartfelt devotion that he was surprised. I remembered the instruction my sister had given me, and the ejaculatory prayers and praises I had learned.

She had taught me to praise Thee, O my God, in all Thy works. All that I saw called upon me to render Thee homage. If it rained, I wished every drop to be changed into love and praises. My heart was nourished insensibly with Thy love; and my spirit was incessantly engrossed with the remembrance of Thee. I seemed to join and partake in all the good that was done in the world, and could have wished to have the united hearts of all men to love Thee. This habit rooted itself so strongly in me, that I retained it throughout my greatest wanderings.

My cousin helped not a little, to support me in these good sentiments; I was often with her, and loved her, as she took great care of me, and treated me with much gentleness. Her fortune being equal neither to her birth nor