



## *Virtue in Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte Guyon (1648-1717)*

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Faithful to her Quietist principles, Madame Guyon argues that moral virtues in the human agent can only flow from mystical union with God; efforts to cultivate the moral virtues by dint of one's personal effort lead to illusion. The practice of contemplation, in which one surrenders one's will to the will of God, permits God to inaugurate the virtues appropriate to each moral agent. "This is the short and certain method to acquire virtue. Since God is the source of all virtue, possessing God means possessing all virtue. The more we approach this religious possession, the more we possess virtue in an eminent degree" (1686: 35). Authentic union with God, which involves the annihilation of the individual will, detaches the moral agent from attachments to the world and the creatures therein, thus fostering the growth of ascetical virtue.

Critics attacked this mystical account of virtue as a denial of free will and moral responsibility for one's actions.

### **Primary Sources:**

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