

Anne Vaughan Lock's Translations of Four Sermons by John Calvin:

A Modern English Interpretive Summary

By

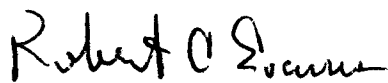
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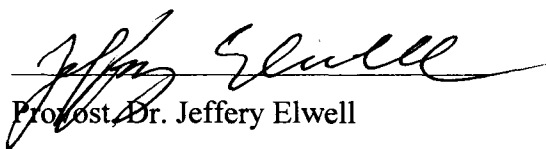
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## INTRODUCTION

Although Anne Vaughan Lock and her works in poetry and prose were neglected for many years, they have recently become the subject of increasing academic attention. Lock, who lived in the sixteenth century, was an Englishwoman who translated sermons by the Protestant theologian Jean Calvin and who also is now recognized as the author of *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner: Written in a Maner of a Paraphrase upon the 51. Psalme of David* – a strongly Calvinistic collection of poems that also happens to be the very first sonnet sequence in the history of the English language. However, although the connection between Lock’s poems and Calvin’s theology is highly important, it has not received nearly as much study as it deserves. One purpose of this thesis, then, will be to make Lock’s understanding of Calvin’s theology more readily accessible to as wide a readership as possible.

Lock’s translations of Calvin’s sermons have been available for many years, but they are extremely difficult for most lay readers – especially students – to comprehend, partly because Lock’s spelling often seems so archaic, her phrasing and vocabulary often seem so difficult, and her syntax often seems so tangled and complex. The main goal of this thesis, then, is to provide a detailed paraphrase of Lock’s translations, turning her often arcane and highly complicated prose into modern English that is simple, clear, and readily accessible to contemporary readers. Just as Lock, in her translations, sought to share Calvin’s ideas with her contemporaries by translating his French sermons into



sixteenth-century English, so the present thesis seeks to share Lock's translations with readers of modern English. Lock was a religious partisan – not simply a Christian but a *Calvinist* Christian. Therefore, an understanding of her responses to Calvin is crucial to an understanding of her own works. There is no better or fuller evidence of the link between Calvin and Lock than her translations of four of his key sermons. Likewise, Lock's translations of Calvin's sermons offer the best and most relevant possible contexts for understanding her own poetry.

Unfortunately, several factors make Lock's translations of Calvin's sermons difficult for modern readers to comprehend. One of these factors is the often obsolete spelling that Lock employs. For example, in the prefatory letter she addressed to the Duchess a Suffolk (a letter that precedes the translations themselves), Lock uses such terms as the following: "beynge" ("being"); "tourmented" ("tormented"); "soreness" ("soreness"); "furnished" ("furnished"); and "fele" ("feel"). These words occur just in the opening sentence alone, and, although none of them is especially difficult to comprehend, the total effect of reading page after page of such spellings is to slow down the reading experience, making it somewhat tedious and cumbersome, especially for modern undergraduates (see Appendix).

However, an even more difficult aspect of Lock's prose, especially for modern students, is her use of words or terms that are no longer current in modern English, at least in the senses in which Lock used them. Again, the letter to the Duchess of Suffolk provides many typical examples. For instance, Lock uses "accompted" instead of "accounted," "constaunce" instead of "constancy," "suffisance" instead of "sufficiency,"

“nouriture” instead of “nourishment,” and “holpen” instead of “helped.” All of these unfamiliar words appear just on the first page of the letter to the Duchess, and although their meanings can often be inferred from their contexts (or with the help of notes or the *Oxford English Dictionary*), the need to pause constantly to try to figure out the meaning of a word or term means that reading Lock’s translations can be a slow, tedious, and frustrating process, especially for modern students.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of Lock’s prose, however, is her tendency to write extremely long and highly complicated sentences – sentences that go on and on and on, almost without pause, and sentences in which the punctuation is by no means clear (at least by modern standards). The opening sentence of the letter to the Duchess of Suffolk is a perfect example of this tendency:

It falleth out in experience (my gracious and singular good Lady)  
that some men beyng oppressed with povertie, tossed with worldlye  
adversitie, tourmented with payne, soresnes, and sicknes of body, and other  
suche common matters of grieffe, as the world counteth miseries and evils:  
Yet having theyr myndes armed and furnished with prepared patience, a  
defence of inward understandyng, all these calamities can not so farre  
prevaile, as to make them fall, nor yet once stoupe into the state of men to  
be accompted miserable: but they beare them with such constance, as if  
such afflictions were not of such nature as other commonly do fele them,  
or as if those men were such upon whome those troubles could not worke  
theyr naturall propertie. <sup>i</sup>