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978-0-521-76997-6 - On Time, Punctuality, and Discipline in Early Modern Calvinism

Max Engammare

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ON TIME, PUNCTUALITY, AND DISCIPLINE IN EARLY MODERN CALVINISM

In *On Time, Punctuality, and Discipline in Early Modern Calvinism*, Max Engammare explores how the sixteenth-century Protestant reformers of Geneva, France, London, and Bern internalized a new concept of time. Applying a moral and spiritual code to the course of the day, they regulated their relationship with time, which was, in essence, a new relationship with God. As Calvin constantly reminded his followers, God watches his faithful every minute. Come Judgment Day, the faithful in turn will have to account for each minute. Engammare argues that the inhabitants of Calvin's Geneva invented the new habit of being on time, a practice unknown in Antiquity. It was also fundamentally different from notions of time in the monastic world of the medieval period and unknown to contemporaries such as Erasmus, Vives, the early Jesuits, Rabelais, Ronsard, and Montaigne. Engammare shows that punctuality did not proceed from technical innovation. Rather, punctuality was above all a spiritual, social, and disciplinary virtue.

Max Engammare is a scholar of the Reformation (Swiss National Science Foundation Researcher) and General Director of publishing house Droz in Geneva. He is the author and editor of ten books, including an edition of the sermons of John Calvin and, most recently with Nicole Gueunier, *Sebastien Castellion, Les livres de Salomon*.

Karin Maag is also a scholar of the Reformation, Professor of History at Calvin College (Michigan), and Director of the H. Henry Meeter Center. She is a specialist in early modern education and in relations between civil and ecclesiastical authorities in early modern cities.

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Swiss National Science Foundation Researcher

Translated by Karin Maag



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521769976

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First published in French as
L'Ordre du temps. L'invention de la ponctualité au XVI^e siècle by Droz 2004
First published in English 2010

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data
Engammare, Max.

On time, punctuality, and discipline in early modern Calvinism /
Max Engammare, Karin Maag.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-76997-6 (hardback)

1. Calvinism – History – 16th century. 2. Time – Religious aspects – Christianity.
3. Church history – 16th century. I. Maag, Karin. II. Title.

BX9415.E54 2009

284'.2–dc22 2009011759

ISBN 978-0-521-76997-6 Hardback

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To the memory of André (1876–1970)

and

Pierre Engammare (1927–78)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While writing a book is usually a solitary endeavor, its development arises out of fruitful dialogue. I am pleased to be able to express my appreciation to those who contributed to this book, thanking them for sharing their time with me. The first impetus came from Ms. Marie-Clotilde Hubert, who gave me the opportunity in early 1997 to reflect on the structuring of time in sixteenth-century Geneva.¹ Based on this initial research, I created an outline for a book. I wish to thank the late Michel Simonin, a leading figure in the field of sixteenth-century studies, who allowed me to begin research on the Genevan calendars during a conference on heretical books, held at the Centre d'Etudes Supérieures de la Renaissance in Tours in June 1999. Most of the book was written during two periods away from Geneva. In July and August 2000, Karin Maag, the dynamic director of the Meeter Center at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, welcomed me with kindness and efficiency. During my stay, I was given the opportunity to present the results of my research to a select group of interested listeners, including Richard Muller, whose participation led to fruitful debate. Two years later, in June and July 2002, Terence Cave welcomed me to St. John's College, Oxford, where I completed a draft of the book, using the resources of the college library and the Bodleian. Richard Cooper also made me welcome at Brasenose during the same trip, and read *Avec le temps*. I am grateful to all of them.

I also wish to thank many colleagues, scholars, and friends. Thank you to Jean Céard, with whom I exchanged very humanist, albeit

¹ See Max Engammare, "Organisation du temps et discipline horaire chez Calvin et à Genève au XVI^e siècle. Vers une spiritualité temporelle" in *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des chartes* 157 (1999): 345–67. This article does not appear in this book, but many of its components have been integrated into various chapters.

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electronic, letters dealing with Rabelais, Pliny, Barbaro, and even Erasmus. Matteo Campagnolo and André-Louis Rey lent me their transcription of Casaubon's *Ephemerides*: I hope I have made good use of it. I thank Mohamed Cherkaoui for a stimulating discussion about Weber and for the encouragement to return to Durkheim. Jean-François Cottier's extraordinary talents as a Latinist helped translate a number of Melancthon's astrological subtleties. My friend and predecessor Alain Dufour had previously alerted me to Henry Meylan's article on Jean Ribit and to the biography of Benedetto Croce, before giving me Beza's critique of Rabelais. Jean-François Gilmont helpfully steered me toward Gilbert Cousin. Mrs. Leila Hamrat was a perfect host and generous companion. Michel Jeanneret, who established with me the series in which the French edition appeared, was the first to hear of this project and lent me the collection of Jean Starobinski's articles on "the ordering of days." He also read this manuscript with his customary friendly care. I corresponded with Thomas Lambert, the learned coeditor of the *Registres du Consistoire*, about the complicated issue of worship times, and Tom very kindly sent me a copy of his unpublished thesis. Christopher Ligota was a gracious host at the Wartburg Institute in London, and our conversations about history and time were illuminating.² Michel Porret is a living example of Montaigne's idea of the three exchanges. Mrs. Ann Lake Prescott brought the Anglican liturgical calendar to my attention. Michael Screech welcomed me to his chaplaincy at All Souls for a wonderful Oxford discussion about time: the experience was unforgettable. At Merton College, Oxford, Michael Stansfield generously made the treasures of the library available to me. I wish to thank Jean Starobinski for providing me with one of his texts on the ordering of the day that was missing from Michel Jeanneret's collection. May all who gave of their time, "this most precious of gifts," as we will read, find here a token of my sincere gratitude and warm appreciation. They know what they have contributed to this book.

Finally, Isabelle, who has been for a long time my preferred conversation partner, my first reader, and my primary research colleague, did not support this project at first because she wanted to see me leave Calvin aside for a few moments of scholarly freedom and focus on the *Pictures of the*

² The call numbers for books on the understanding and measurement of time in the Warburg library are FAH-FAN and HAF 60–63.

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Bible. If this book convinces her that it can be useful in any way, that would be my greatest reward ... together with the smiles of Anne, Valérie, and Stanislas.

Oxford, the Bodleian Library, July 2002
Rotalier, February 2004

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Some reviewers indicated that the French edition did not pay enough attention to monastic rules or Books of Hours. I took advantage of this translation to correct this weakness, to make my viewpoint more explicit, and to compare accurately the monastic and medieval ordering of time to the Genevan and Reformed punctuality of the sixteenth century. The reader will find this new section in Chapter 2.¹³ I also took advantage of the publication of the English text to present the discovery of the first French Genevan calendar published by Conrad Badius in 1555, which was unknown to me until 2005 (see Chapter 4). Moreover, this English translation allowed me to correct or develop some points, such as technological changes in measurement of time in early modern Europe, and some other minor points here and there.

Last but not least, I gratefully thank Karin Maag who decided to translate this book into English, and did it marvelously.

... and nowadays I add Sibylle's smiles.

Geneva, November 2008

¹ See reviews of the French edition by Annie Noblesse-Rocher in *Revue d'histoire et philosophie religieuses* 85 (2005): 594; Susan Karant-Nunn in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 37 (2006): 188–90; Jean-François Gilmont in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 405 (2006): 1180 and following; and by Massimo Borlandi in *Revue Française de Sociologie* 2006 (many thanks to the author who sent me his long and documented review prior to publication).

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Working on this project has been both enjoyable and rewarding. I would like to express my thanks to Max Engammare for inviting me to translate his monograph; to the Meeter Center program coordinator Ryan Noppen for patiently deciphering my handwriting; and to the Meeter Center student assistants Lauren Colyn and Chelsey Harmon, who diligently typed, proofed, checked footnote information and format, and provided invaluable help in making sure that the translation is as accurate as possible. Any remaining infelicities of style are mine.

Grand Rapids, January 2009