THE THEOLOGY OF DEBT IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LITERATURE

Exploring debt's permutations in Middle English texts, Anne Schuurman makes the bold claim that the capitalist spirit has its roots in Christian penitential theology. Her argument challenges the longstanding belief that faith and theological doctrine in the Middle Ages were inimical to the development of market economies, showing that the same idea of debt is in fact intrinsic to both. The double penitential–financial meaning of debt, and the spiritual paradoxes it creates, is a linchpin of scholastic and vernacular theology, and of the imaginative literature of late medieval England. Focusing on the doubleness of debt, this book traces the dynamic by which the Christian ascetic ideal, in its rejection of material profit and wealth acquisition, ends up producing precisely what it condemns. This title is part of the Flip it Open Programme and may also be available Open Access. Check our website Cambridge Core for details.

ANNE SCHUURMAN is Associate Professor of English at the University of Western Ontario. She is the author of *Shame and Guilt in Chaucer* (2012) and co-editor of *An Epistle of Noble Poetrye* (2022).

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477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009385954

DOI: 10.1017/9781009385947

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009385947

First published 2024

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

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
NAMES: Schuurman, Anne, author.
TITLE: The theology of debt in late medieval English literature / Anne Schuurman, The University of Western Ontario.
DESCRIPTION: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2024. | Series: Cambridge studies in medieval literature | Includes bibliographical references and index.
IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2023025422 (print) | LCCN 2023025423 (ebook) | ISBN 9781009385954 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009385985 (paperback) | ISBN 9781009385947 (epub)
SUBJECTS: LCSH: English literature–Middle English, 1100-1500–History and criticism. | Debt in literature. | Penance in literature. | Theology in literature. | Economics in literature. | LCGFT: Literary criticism.
CLASSIFICATION: LCC PR275.D44 S38 2024 (print) | LCC PR275.D44 (ebook) | DDC 820.9/001–DC23/eng/20230706
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023025422
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023025423

ISBN 978-1-009-38595-4 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-38598-5 Paperback

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