THE \((NE)_{GE}\) ORDER AND THE SUBSEQUENT REDUCTION OF THE PLURAL INFLECTIONS OF THE VERB IN OE COMMANDS AND PROHIBITIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ANGLO-SAXON, NORTHUMBRIAN AND OLD MERCIAN VERSIONS OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MATTHEW

UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA
1. Introduction

To any novice of Old English the form of the verb *beon* in the sentence ‘*Ne beo ge na hogiende ymb pa morgelican neode* ...’ may seem to be a grammatical mistake (number concord) as *ge* requires a plural verb and, accordingly, *beon* (if it is considered a present subjunctive) or *beoh* (if imperative) should have been used instead. However, *beo* is grammatically correct and the loss of the final ending (*-n/-p*) is due to the type of structure involved, namely VS order or V-1 type. Actually, the plural ending of a verb may be reduced when followed by *we/ge* operating as an overt grammatical subject. This phenomenon is briefly described in some of the OE grammars and primers consulted (Campbell, 1991; Mitchell, 1975 & 95; Brook, 1966; Quirk & Wrenn, 1958; Sweet, 1953 & 1959). Thus, the aim of our research was to study the appearance of exhortative forms without the endings *-n/-p* and, for this reason, a corpus was collected from OE versions of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. Initially, only the expressions of prohibition that could fit the pattern \_*VS_\,* were the objective of our investigation, but we noticed later that they shared some features with commands, negative statements and negative questions, and that is why we decided to include them along with prohibitions, thus enhancing the scope of the work which can be stated as a threefold task, namely, 1) to analyse and classify the examples in the corpus, 2) to provide a general framework of the structures used in Old English as exponents of the functions ‘commanding and forbidding’, and 3) to find out if commands and prohibitions share the same features and other related phenomena and, to what extent, negative statements and non-dependent questions also share them.

2. Commands

Commands in Modern English can be expressed in a wide variety of ways depending on the attitude of the speaker towards the hearer, although the most common expression of command is usually associated with the ‘subjectless imperative structure’ (Traugott, 1972:72) or with a sentence ‘with no overt grammatical subject, and whose verb is in the imperative mood’ (Quirk et al., 1972: 386). So, to distinguish between a command and a statement, the following features can be taken into account: 1) the ‘marked’ use of the imperative mood as opposed to the ‘unmarked’ indicative mood, usual in statements, and 2) the omission of the subject, which is generally expressed in statements (Quirk et al.,1972: 72). But, this distinction does
not always prove to be clear-cut, as no one-to-one correlation exists between
a linguistic function and the expression used to convey it.

Likewise, different syntactic expressions can be used in Old English for
a command, though the imperative construction occurs most frequently.
Before the examples illustrated in this paper are analysed, it may be useful
to provide the different forms of the imperative. In the strong verbs, the
singular (henceforth sing.) coincides with the stem (i.e., nim-an ‘to take’ ®
nim), as in Modern English Take!, whereas in the weak verbs the inflection
-er/-e/-a is usually added to the stem (i.e. fremm-an ‘to perform’ ® frem;
fed-an ‘to feed’ ® fed; luf-ian ‘to love’ ® lufa). The plural (henceforth pl.)
is always formed by adding the inflection -ap to the stem of any strong or
weak verb. However, these ‘regular’ forms may suffer some modification
especially in anomalous verbs. As the imperative inflections allow us to
distinguish between singular and plural, commands expressed by means of
an imperative can be classified according to their number category. In the
same way, sing. and pl. commands can be re-classified, by taking as a key
factor the absence or the presence of the pronominal subject, into two groups:
1) those with an overt grammatical subject (VS) and 2) those with no-overt
grammatical subject (V(S)), the latter being of higher frequency than the
former.

2.1. Commands expressed by an imperative singular

In MnE commands, 2nd pers. pron. you is generally assumed to be the
omitted subject of an imperative verb, as both (the pron. and the verb) share
the same uninflected form for the sing. and the pl. (S\textsubscript{(om)}V order). In Old
English, however, 2nd pers. sing. pron. bu is the implied subject in sing.
imperative commands (VS\textsubscript{bu}), whereas 2nd pers. pl. pron. ge is understood
to be the subject in the pl. (VS\textsubscript{ge}). To illustrate the commands with no overt
subject, we have chosen an example [1] containing one strong verb (cuman
® cum), three weak verbs (be-cypan ® be-cyp, syllan ® syle & folgian ®
folga) and an anomalous one (gan ® ga).

[1] ga & be-cyp ... & syle hyt perfum & cum & folga me
uade uende ... et da pauperibus et ueni sequere me (Mt., XIX, 21)

Now, let us examine some other examples, each one containing a strong
verb (sv) or a weak verb (wv).

[2] Aris (sv 1)
surge (Mt., II, 20)

[3] acoerf hyne of & awurp fram be (sv 3)
abscondc cum et proice abs te (Mt., XVIII, 8)

[4] cum (sv 4)
Notice that syle [8], sete [9] (along with other cases, such as freme, teme, tryme, etc.) do not have the double medial consonant found in their respective infinitives (syllan/sellan, settan, fremman, temman, trymman). As imperative sing., syle/sele is the regular form although sylle/selle may sometime occur (Campbell, 1991: #326; Bosworth & Toller, 1991: 861-2). Actually, no reliable explanation can be supplied for the occurrence of sylle/selle unless we assume that it was written with ‘double l’ to represent a pronunciation on analogy with the infinitive, or it is simply a case of mis-spelling.

Example [11] illustrates a kind of ‘fluctuation’ in the form of the imperative sing. (Campbell, 1991: #752) and a similar phenomenon occurs in becyp [1] (bechep in WS2) (¬ class I weak verb becypan with ‘long y’) but this time it is a case of ‘high vowel deletion’ (Lass, 1994: 177) where the (inflectional) vowel -e drops after a heavy syllable. Accordingly, the reduction occurring in the synonym bebyg [11] (¬ class I weak verb bycgan with ‘short y’) and in styr (¬ class I weak verb styrian with ‘short y’) cannot be considered a case of ‘high vowel deletion’. Again, a ‘regular’ form with -e is attested in the following example:

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‘irregular’ one (where the corresponding inflection is dropped as in styre or
an un-necessary analogical inflection is added as in bige). Likely as it may
be, a rather simplistic justification would be to take it as a ‘lapsus calami’
performed by a particular scribe but it would be rather likely to justify the
variation as ‘the prelude to change’ (Lass, 1994: 243) as, chronologically,
the Gospel was translated into the language of the late period (Late Old
English), in which the inflections used to distinguish unambiguously between
different forms (i.e., in the case of verbs, sing. vs plural, indicative vs
imperative, 1st pers sing. vs 3rd pers sing, etc.) turn out to be unstable
markers. Next, an example containing an anomalous verb (av).
[12] **Dō pin sword on hys scepe (av)**

convértē gladium tuum in locum suum (Mt, XXVI, 52)

As mentioned above, commands in Old English can be expressed,
though less frequently, by means of sing. imperative constructions where
the overt subject *pu* always follows the verb (VS_{pu} order). This type of
command, in S_{pu} V order or V-2, still survives in Modern English, as in **You
be quiet!**, which can be directed to a sing./pl. subject. The OE unnecessary
double-marked concord (pers. and number categories) resulting from the
inclusion of the subject may result in a more ‘emphatic’ command, usually
admonitory and appropriate to express irritation, as can be observed in the
next examples.

*ga on beælinc pu wiperwearde* (M)

uade satanas (Mt., IV, 10)

The placement of *on beælinc* in M must not be taken as an order change.
[14] **Beo pu onbugende þinum wiðerwinna hraðe ... (av)**

Esto consentiens auersario tuo cito (Mt., V, 25)

Upto this point, we have illustrated commands in the imperative with
or without an overt subject. As a result of the experience gained from usage,
sometimes enriched by grammatical learning, we tend to associate
‘command’ with ‘imperative’ because the latter is the most commonly used
expression of the former. Furthermore, we have to unavoidedly associate
‘imperative’ with ‘2nd pers.’ for just a one-to-one relation is implied. But,
when a command is directed to a subject other than ‘2nd pers.’, the imperative
construction is not possible and the subjunctive must be employed as in
[15]. Cf., also, the use of the subjunctive in the Latin version as well as in
the Spanish text.
[15] **he sylle hyre. hyra híggedales bóc (WS1) (wv 1)**

**sylle he hire. hyra híggedales boc** (WS2)

**selle hir boc freodomes** (N)

**selle him boc þære ðweorpnesse** (M)
Despite the non-existence of contrast between ‘2nd pers./3rd pers.’ in the imperative mood, it might be argued that [15] is a case of imperative with a 3rd pers. sing. as a subject on the grounds of the order appearing in WS2, and on the grounds of the omission of subject in the N & M versions. This hypothesis, however, must be rejected on the grounds of the verb form, namely syle, selle (notice the double ‘I’), which resembles a subjunctive form (see [23]) rather than an imperative (see [8]). Moreover, commands expressed by means of an imperative do not occur in SV order.

2.2. Commands expressed by an imperative plural

As with the singular, VS \(_{\text{sec}}\) is a common order in Old English, whenever the 2nd pers. pl. is the subject implied. From the occurrences found, the subjectless model also turns out to be the most frequent expression, and thus will be dealt with first.

[16] *Cunad after me* (sv 4)

\(\text{uenite post me} (\text{Mt.}, \text{IV}, \text{19})\)

[17] *Farað* (sv 6)

\(\text{ite (Mt.}, \text{II}, \text{8})\)

[18] *gehyræd hyne* (WS) (wv I)

\(\text{ipsum audite (Mt.}, \text{XVII}, \text{5})\)

[19] \& *axiað geornlice be pam cilde* (wv II)

\(\text{et interrogate diligenter de puero (Mt.}, \text{II}, \text{8})\)

[20] *Eormustlice beod fullremede* (WS1) (av)

\(\text{estote ergo uos perfecti (Mt.}, \text{V}, \text{48})\)

[21] *Dof dead-bote* (av)

\(\text{paenitentiam agite (Mt.}, \text{III}, \text{2})\)

Next, we will deal with the overt-subjectpl. imperative constructions (VS \(_{\text{sec}}\) order).

[22] *Ge-hyre ge soplice pas sawendar bigspell* (WS1)

\(\text{gie fordon gehera/lysnas bisena das sauende/sedere (N)}\)

\(\text{ge fordon geherað gelicnisse pas sawendes (M)}\)

\(\text{Uos ergo audite parabolam seminantis (Mt.}, \text{XIII}, \text{18})\)

The reduction of the pl. ending of the verb (-ap \(\text{@} \text{-e}\)) may be attested, or just the dropping of the final consonant in case of monosyllabic forms, when a pron. of the 1st or 2nd pers. pl. follows the verb (Campbell, 1991: 296-7). In a broad sense, the same phenomenon may take place in the present indicative (-ap \(\text{@} \text{-e}\)) and in the present subjunctive (-en \(\text{@} \text{-e}\)) under the same circumstances. This simplification can be explained by adding the tendency of natural languages to eliminate unnecessary double markers (here, plurality is twice indicated: 1) by the inflection of the verb and 2) by the ‘marked’ pl. pron. ge). Accordingly, WS1 *Ge-hyre ge* has been analysed...
as an imperative pl. because it is expected to derive from *Ge-hyrēp ge* (see [18]), although it might also be analysed as a reduced subjunctive pl., deriving from *Ge-hyren ge*. We have opted for the first analysis, by relying on the non-reduced imperative forms used in the other versions (cf. the use of the ending -as in N), even when SV is employed. The evidence found in examples [27, 28], where the same verb occurs in the reduced and non-reduced forms can be used as a proof.

[23]  
\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{selle} \ & \textit{ge \ him \ etan} \ & \text{(WS1)} \ & \text{(wv1)} \\
\textit{seallas} \ & \textit{him \ ge\lum \ eata} \ & \text{(N)} \\
\textit{sellap} \ & \textit{heom \ ge \ etan} \ & \text{(M)} \\
\textit{date \ illis \ uos \ manducare} \ & \text{(Mt., XIV, 16)}
\end{align*}
\]

The subject of *seallas* (N)/*sellað* (M) follows its object (which also operates as the subject of the infinitive) in what may be interpreted as an interlinear translation from Latin. Before proceeding with the analysis, it must be remarked that no strong verb has been found to occur in VS_{ge} in the corpus and therefore no evidence of reduction has been found (Campbell, 1991; #730). However, anomalous verbs do appear in VS_{ge}.

[24]  
\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{dop} \ & \textit{ge \ him \ þ+ \ sylfe} \ & \text{(WS1)} \ & \text{(av)} \\
\textit{gée \ doed\wyrcah} \ & \textit{him \ ðtus} \ & \text{(N)} \\
\textit{ge \ doap} \ & \textit{heom \ þis} \ & \text{(M)} \\
\textit{uos \ facite eis \ haec} \ & \text{(Mt., VII, 12)}
\end{align*}
\]

[25]  
\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{beo} \ & \textit{gé \ gearwe} \ & \text{(WS1)} \ & \text{(av)} \\
\textit{gé \ wosus} \ & \textit{gearua} \ & \text{(N)} \\
\textit{ge \ ek \ beob} \ & \textit{gearwe(M)} \\
\textit{estote \ parati} \ & \text{(Mt., XXIV, 44)}
\end{align*}
\]

[26]  
\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{ga} \ & \textit{gé \ on \ minne \ wingeard} \ & \text{(WS1)} \ & \text{(av)} \\
\textit{gaað} \ & \textit{& \ gie \ in \ wiu-geard} \ & \text{(N)} \\
\textit{gæp} \ & \textit{ge \ ek \ in \ wiu-geard} \ & \text{(M)} \\
\textit{ite \ et \ uos \ in \ uineam} \ & \text{(Mt., XIX, 4)}
\end{align*}
\]

Finally, preterite-present verb *witan* also occurs in VS_{ge} ordering.

[27]  
\textit{Gewitað frum me \ ge \ þe \ worhton \ unrihtwisnesse} \ (WSf) \ (ppv)

discedete \ a \ me \ qui \ operamini \ iniquitatem \ (Mt., VII, 23)

[28]  
\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{Wite} \ & \textit{ge \ þ+ \ ...} \ & \text{(WS1)} \ & \text{(ppv)} \\
\textit{ge \ wutan} \ & \textit{þ+ \ ...} \ & \text{(N)} \\
\textit{wutas \ gie} \ & \textit{...} \ & \text{(M)} \\
\textit{scitis \ quia} \ & \textit{...} \ & \text{(Mt., XXVI, 2)}
\end{align*}
\]

The subject of *gewitað* is the relative clause introduced by *ge þe* and perhaps no reduction is produced due to the insertion of *frum me*. In [25, 26] the loss or reduction of the pl. endings occurs in WS; otherwise, no loss or reduction takes place even though the subject follows the verb (cf. the Latin model, especially in [26] ' & *gie’, 'ge ek’ = ‘et uos’ = ‘etiam uos’ and in [28] with the use of the present indicative ‘ge wutan’ = ‘wutas gie’ = ‘scitis’).
From the analysis and classification of the examples in the corpus, the structures used for commanding have been summarized in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMANDS</th>
<th>LATIN</th>
<th>OLD ENGLISH (ANGLOSAXON GOSPELS)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>SINGULAR</td>
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<td><em>Uade</em></td>
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<td>Subjectless Imperative</td>
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<td>ⁿSubjectless Imperative à →</td>
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<td><em>Uade</em></td>
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<td>Overt-Subject Imperative</td>
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<td><em>Det</em></td>
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<td>Subjectless Subjunctive</td>
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<td>Overt-Subject Subjunctive</td>
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<td>PLURAL</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Date</em></td>
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<td>Overt-Subject Imper./Subjunct.</td>
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<td><em>Uos</em></td>
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<td>ergo</td>
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<td>Overt-Subject Imperative</td>
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<tr>
<td>audite</td>
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3. Prohibitions

In Modern English, prohibitions or negative commands can be expressed in a range of constructions depending upon the attitude of the speaker to the hearer(s), the most common being the resulting from the addition of an initial *do not* (*don’t*) to the main verb as in *Don’t smoke here!*. As with commands, the insertion of *you* (sometimes, *anybody* [Quirk et al., 1972: 405]) after the initial *don’t* as in *Don’t you do that!, Don’t you dare touch that!, Don’t anyone smoke here!* will add more emphasis to the prohibition.

Likewise, from the analysis of the examples in the corpus, prohibition can be expressed in Old English by means of different structures, which sometimes denote dialectal variations, such as follows: 1) negative sing. imperative constructions with an overt subject, 2) negative sing. subjunctive constructions with an overt subject, 3) negative pl. imperative constructions with no overt subject, 4) contracted/non-contracted negative plural imperative/subjunctive constructions with an overt subject. This variety of
constructions, however, is not observed in Latin where prohibition is expressed by means of ‘non + simple future indicative’, ‘ne(que)/non + (present) subjunctive’, ‘noli(te) + infinitive’, ‘ne vellitis + infinitive’. Notice that ‘noli(te) + infinitive’ is the only negative imperative in Latin. With respect to the form of the subjunctive in Old English, notice that the inflection -e (sing.)/-en (pl.) is added to the stem (cf. the imperative is described in 2) and with respect to order, SV is sometimes possible but the most frequently attested ordering is VS, which may cause the reduction or the loss of the pl. ending in the same way as described above.

3.1. Prohibitions expressed by a negative imperative singular and an overt subject

Prohibitions can be expressed by an imperative sing. preceded by ne and followed necessarily by 2nd pers. sing. pron. þu as an overt subject (VS order). Notice that subjectless negative sing. imperative constructions have not been found.

[29] ne do þu manu-slyht, ne do þu unriht-haem. ne stel þu. ne sege þu lese gewittmysse (WS1)
non homicidium facies non adulterabis non facies furtum non falsum testimonium dices (Mt., IX, 18)

The previous example (containing strong, weak and anomalous verbs) and those given below demonstrate that there is no restriction as to the kind of verb employed.

[30] ne ofsle þu (sv 6)
non occides (Mt., V, 21)

[31] Ne unrihthaem þu (WS1) (wv I)
non moechaberis (Mt., V, 27)

et solent mutuari a té né auertaris (Mt., V, 42)

[33] & ne gelære þu us on costanige (WS1) (wv I)
& ne inlæd usih in costanige (N)
& ne gelæt us gelæde in costiugae (M) (gelætan = allow)
et ne inducas nos in temtationem (Mt., VI, 13)

Notice the loss of the sing. ending -e in wyrn [32] (∽ class I weak verb wyrn-an/wyrn-an) in the same way as in styr[11]. A different case is observed in [33] where the ‘long æ’ of the weak verb (gelæd-an® gelæd; inlæd-an® inlæd; gelæt-an® gelæt) causes the dropping of the ending (cf. ‘high vowel deletion’).

[34] ne costna þu drihten pinne god (wv II)
non temtabis dominum deum tuum (Mt., IV, 7)

[35] Ne gast þu (WS1) (av)

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ne of-gaestu (N)
ne gees þu (M)
non exies (Mt., V, 26)

\( _{ne} \text{VS}_{ha} \) is a common feature in [35] (cf. of-gaestu \( \textcircled{\text{\( \text{\( @ \)\)}}} \) of-gaest þu) where the present indicative is used to describe a future action/prohibition.

3.2. Prohibitions expressed by a negative subjunctive singular and an overt subject.

A sort of ‘mild’ prohibition can be expressed by means of a negative sing. subjunctive construction where ne is placed to the left of the verb and where the overt subject is not restricted to the 2nd pers. sing. nor is it either restricted to a personal pronoun \( (_{ne} \text{VS}_{ha}, he, me) \), as it is in the imperative.

[36] \( ne \text{ Forswere þu } (sv \ 6) \)
non periurabis (Mt., V, 33)

[37] \( Ne dū ne swere þurh þin heafod (WS1) (sv \ 6) \)
\( ne \text{ þerh heafod þin swere } dū (N) \)
neque per caput tuum iuraeceris (Mt., V, 36)

_Forswere, swere_ are in the subjunctive mood (cf. the inflection used, viz. -e). S \( _{js,ne} \) V order in (37, WS) can be explained by saying that it is the rule in a negative coordinate clause. Within the scope of negative commands, in [38, 39, 40, 41], 3rd pers. sing. subjunctive constructions may be used to express what may be termed as ‘negative recommendation’, a mixture of prohibition and advice. The overt grammatical subject is, obviously, a 3rd pers. sing. pron. _he_ or a noun (phrase) _man(n)/mon(n)_. Some of the verb forms used in N & M, namely, _cerrab, eft-gecerras, stigap, ofstiges_ seem to lead us into a mis-concorded imperative form (sing. subject and pl. verb) when actually they are alternative forms of the 3rd pers. sing. present indicative (cf. the northern endings _-ap, -as, -es_ as opposed to the southern _-(e)p_).

[38] \( ne \text{ cyrre } he \ b+ ... \) (wv I)
\( ne \text{ cerrab he efti to nimene } ... \) (N)
\( ne \text{ eft-gecerras to niomanne } \) (M)
non rantueottollere ... (Mt., XXIV, 18)

[39] \( ne \text{ gā he nyþyr } b+ (WS1) (av) \)
\( ne \text{ stigad he nider to geniomanne } ... \) (N)
\( ne \text{ ofstiges genioma } \) (M)
non descendat tollere (Mt., XXIV, 17)

[40] \( ne \text{ blawe man byman } (WS1) (sv \ 7) \)
noll tuba canere (Mt., VI, 2)

[41] \( ne \text{ ge-twane } mān \text{. } þa } \text{ de god gesonnode } (WS1) (wv I) \)
quod ergo deus coniunxit homo non separat (Mt., XIX., 6)
3.3. Prohibitions expressed by a negative imperative plural and no overt subject

Prohibitions can be expressed by means of a negative plural imperative (\textit{ne VS} \textit{ge} order).

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Ariska} \& \textit{ne ondraedh} \textit{eow} (WS1) (sv I \& 7)
\item \textit{surgite et nolite timere} (Mt., XVII, 7)
\item \& \textit{ne cwepead betwe eow} (WS1) (sv 5)
\item \textit{et ne uellitis dicere intra uos} (Mt., III, 9)
\end{itemize}

3.4. Prohibitions expressed by an imperative/subjunctive plural and an overt subject

Prohibitions can be expressed by a negative pl. imperative or by a negative pl. subjunctive form and an overt subject, which always follows the verb. The imperative and subjunctive constructions have been grouped together because the verb form does not always allow us to distinguish reliably between them, especially when the plural inflection has been reduced or modified. Although no strong verb has been found in \textit{VS} \textit{ge} order, it seems that the same restriction does not exist when \textit{ne VS} \textit{ge} order is involved [44, 48, 49, 50].

Along with the negative constructions where \textit{ne} is placed to the left of the verb, in other cases an abbreviated \textit{ne} (\textit{n}-) may be incorporated to the beginning of such verbs as \textit{hæbban}, \textit{witan}, \textit{willan}, \textit{agan}, \textit{beon/wesan} (Brook, 1966: 84, 95): \textit{ne wille(n)} \& \textit{nolle(n)}, \textit{nelle(n)}, \textit{ne wite\textsuperscript{\circ} nite} (cf. Latin \textit{non volo \& nolo} and MnE pronominals and adverbs \textit{noboby, neither, nothing, none, never, nor, etc.}). The same verb may be found to occur in both equivalent expressions [44, 45, 46, 47]: 1) \textit{ne} constructions (normal or uncontracted) and 2) expressions initiated by contracted form \textit{nelle(n)}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \& \textit{ne ondraede ge hā de eowyrne lichaman of-sleap} (WS1) (sv 7)
\item \textit{et nolite timere eos qui occidunt corpus animam autem non possunt occidere} (Mt., X, 28)
\item \textit{nellen ge eow ondredan} (WS1) (av)
\item \textit{nolite timere} (Mt., XIV, 27)
\item \textit{Ne wene ge h\textsuperscript{+} ic come sybbe on eorpan to sendanne ...}(WS1) (wv I)
\item \textit{Nolite arbitrari quia uenerim mittere pacem in terram} (Mt., X, 34)
\item \textit{Nelle ge wēnan h\textsuperscript{+} ic come towurpan hā .āe.} (WS1) (av)
\item \textit{Nolite putare quonium ueni soluere legem} (Mt., V, 17)
\end{itemize}

Most Latin prohibitions are expressed by means of the pl. imperative \textit{\textquoteleft nolite+ infinitive'}, translated into Old English by using different expressions derived from \{contracted/non-contracted \textit{ne}, reduced/non-reduced

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subjunctive/imperative form + ge} where $ne\ VS_{ge}$ is a common factor. The following examples are classified into two sub-groups depending upon whether a negative contraction is employed or not.

3.4.1. Non-contracted ne constructions

Taking into consideration the number of examples collected, this type of construction can be estimated to occur as frequently as the contracted construction.

[48]  
\begin{align*}
   ne\ be-farah\ &\text{ge israhela burga} \ \text{ærpan he mannnes sunu cumen} \ (\text{WS1}) \ (\text{sv 6}) \\
   ne\ be-fare\ &\text{ge israele burgan ær} \ \text{pañ he mannnes sunu cune} \ (\text{WS2}) \\
   ne\ cerras\ &\text{ge burgas israelw wið} \ \text{he cyrne sunu monnes} \ (\text{N}) \\
   nege-endigael/ge-endigap\ &\text{ge castre israheles ærpon cune sunu monnas} \ (\text{M}) \\
   &\text{non con[sum]abitis ciuitates israhel donec ueniatus filius hominis}(\text{Mt., X, 23})
\end{align*}

As can be observed in (48, WS1), be-farah is a ‘non-ambiguous’ pl. imperative (or, is it a pl. present indicative denoting a future action?), whereas be-fare (SW2) may be a reduced pl. imperative, (~ be-farah), a reduced pl. subjunctive form (~ be-faren) or, at least hypothetically, a reduced pl. present indicative form, be-farah (~ be-faras, be-faran, be-faron in N & M versions).

The ambiguity produced by the occurrence of reduced forms made us classify the examples under the heading ‘imperative/subjunctive constructions’.

[49]  
\begin{align*}
   ne\ fare\ &\text{ge út} \ (\text{WS1}) \ (\text{sv 6}) \\
   ne\ gæþ\ &\text{ge út} \ (\text{N}) \\
   nallas\ &\text{gie geonga} \ (\text{M}) \\
   &\text{nolite exire} \ (\text{Mt., XXVI, 26}) \\
\end{align*}

[50]  
\begin{align*}
   ne\ fare\ &\text{ge on beoda weg} \ (\text{WS1}) \ (\text{sv 6}) \\
   in\ uoeq\ hadna/cynna\ &\text{ne gaas ge} \ (\text{N}) \\
   in\ œaq\ deode\ &\text{[n]e gæþ ge} \ (\text{M}) \\
   in\ utiam\ gentium\ &\text{ne abieritis} \ (\text{Mt., X, 5})
\end{align*}

[51]  
\begin{align*}
   &\text{& ne nemne gë eow faedyr ofer eorpan} \ (\text{WS1}) \ (\text{ww I}) \\
   &\text{et patrem nolite uocare uobis super terram} \ (\text{Mt., XXIII, 9})
\end{align*}

[52]  
\begin{align*}
   ne\ gelyfe\ &\text{ge him} \ (\text{WS1}) \ (\text{ww I}) \\
   &\text{nolite credere} \ (\text{Mt., XXIV, 23})
\end{align*}

[53]  
\begin{align*}
   bonne\ &\text{ge eow gebidden ne beo gé swylce liceteras} \ (\text{WS1}) \ (\text{av}) \\
   &\text{et cum oratis non eritis sicut hypocritae} \ (\text{Mt., VI, 5})
\end{align*}

[54]  
\begin{align*}
   &\text{& ne ge ge inuam smarinata ceastre} \ (\text{WS1}) \ (\text{av}) \\
   &\text{et in ciuitates samaritanorum ne intraueritis} \ (\text{Mt., X, 5})
\end{align*}

If the previous examples are compared to those numbered [23-29] no order change is observed in the negative transformation $VS_{ge} \Theta ne \ VS_{ge}$. Notice, however, that examples [48, 49, 50] illustrate the occurrence of strong verbs in $ne\ VS_{ge}$.
3.4.2. Contracted ne constructions

As explained in 3.4., the contracted negative prohibitions initiated with *nelle(n)* appear to be the exclusive occurrence, excepting [58, 59].

[55]  *Nelle(n) ge eornostlice him ge-afelacan* (WS1,2)
     *nallas ge donne wosa gelic him wat* (N)
     *ne sculon forpon gelice beon him* (M)
     nolite ergo assimilari eis scit (Mt., VI, 8)

[56]  *nellon/nellen ge wesan swytce lease licceteras* (WS1,2)
     *nællæ ge wosa sua legeras unrotæ* (N)
     *ne beop ge swa swa licceteras unrote* (M)
     nolite fieri sicut hypocritæ tristes (Mt., VI, 16)

[57]  *nelle ge spreçan feła* (WS1)
     *nallas ge feolo/monigfald gespreca* (N)
     *ne scule ge feola spreçan* (M)
     nolite multum loqui (Mt., VI, 7)

Similarly, example [58] illustrates the occurrence of *neæbbe* (contracted *ne hæbbe*).

[58]  *neæbbe ge gold ne seolfer ne feoh on eowrum bigyrldum* (WS1) (vw III)
     *ne sculan ge agan gólde ne sylfur ne seof on gyrdels eowrum* (M)
     nolite possidere aurum neque argentum neque pecuniæ in zonis uestrís (Mt., X, 9)

Example [59] illustrates the use of a noun phrase as a subject of a subjunctive sentence expressing a negative recommendation or desire, where the contracted verb *nyte* (*ne wite*) is used. Notice also that the reduction may take place as in *ne scule ge* [57M] or it may not as in *ne sculon ge* [58M].

[59]  *nyte þín wynstre hwæt dó þín swypré* (WS1) (ppv)
     nesciat sinistra tua quid faciat dextera tua (Mt., VI, 3)

As with commands, the structures used for forbidding have been summarized in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEGATIVE COMMANDS/PROHIBITIONS</th>
<th>LATIN: non, ne</th>
<th>OLD ENGLISH (ANGLOSAXON GOSPELS): ne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SINGULAR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non occides</td>
<td>↗</td>
<td>Overt-Subject Imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non perirabes</td>
<td>→ Subjectless Indicative</td>
<td>Overt-Subject Subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non exies</td>
<td>↗</td>
<td>Overt-Subject Indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ne indicæ</td>
<td>↗</td>
<td>Overt-Subject Imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on auentarís</td>
<td>→ Subjectless Subjunctive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neque ... iuraveris</td>
<td>↗</td>
<td>Overt-Subject Subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noli tangere</td>
<td>→ noli + infinitive (()</td>
<td>Overt-Subject Impat/Subjunct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homo non separat</td>
<td>→ Overt-Subject Subjunct.</td>
<td>Overt-Subject Subjunctive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| PLURAL                                                                                       |
|                                                                                             |
| non consumabitis → Subjectless Indicative                                                   |
|                                                                                             |
| ne abieritis → Subjectless Subjunct.                                                        |
|                                                                                             |
| ne uellitis dicere → ne uellitis + infinitive → Subjectless Imperative                       |
|                                                                                             |
| nolite timere → Subjectless Imperative                                                     |
|                                                                                             |
| nolite exire → nolite + infinitive → Overt-subject Imper/Subjunct.                           |
|                                                                                             |
| nolite timere → Nelle(n) ge                                                                     |
|                                                                                             |

4. Negative statements

Although in Modern English there is an opposition between the order occurring in (negative) statements and (negative) commands, in Old English the order *ne* VS ordering, which is not necessarily emphatic (Mitchell, 1975:61-2), is shared by both. Like prohibitions, negative statements are made either by placing *ne* to the left of the verb form (present or preterite of indicative) or by a negative incorporation followed in either case by an overt subject. Due to this order, modifications in the pl. endings of the verb are likely to take place, even in strong verbs [64].

[63] *ne gā gē on heofonan rīċe* (av)
    non intrabitis in regnum caelorum (Mt., V, 20)

[64] *ne gesēoph ge me heonon-ford* (WS1) (sv 5)
    *ne seo ge me heonan-ford* (WS2)
    non me uidebitis a modo (Mt., XXIII, 38)

[65] *Eelles nābbe gē méde mid eowrum fēder þe on heofonum ys* (wv III)
    eaðe mæg meardæ **nabbas ge** mid fader iurre sēde in heafnas is
    elles/elcurge ne habbah lean/mearde mid eower fēder þæne þe in heofonum is
    all-oquin mercedem non habetis apud patrem uestrum qui in caelis est
    (Mt., VI, 1)

The order *S ne* V is, however, preferred in clauses as *Ic ne mæg swa fela gefon awa ic mæg gesyllan* but it is the only ordering in:

1) reported speech as in "*on cweap: 'Hie ne weldon ...'*"

2) negative coordinated clauses

[66] *Ne gē in ne gap ne ge gehafiað þþ oðre ingan* (av)
    uos enim non intratis nec intro-euntes sinitis intrare (Mt., XXIII, 13)

3) subordinated clauses.

[67] *þþ ge ne sin ymbhydlige eowre sawle hwæt ge eton* (WS1) (av)
    ne solliciti sitis animae uestrae quid manducetis (Mt., VI, 25)
5. Questions

The _VS_ order and the subsequent reduction of the final ending of the verb are also common features in questions (confirmation, information and negative) as can be seen in the examples, which show no restriction as to the type of verb involved. Let us examine them in turn. Firstly, confirmation questions in _VS_ order are illustrated below.

[68] *Geseop gé eall pis...*(sv5)
_Geseo gé eal pis_
uidetis haec omnia (Mt., XXIV, 2)

[69] *ongyte gé ealle þas þing* (sv 5)
_ongetah gé þas eall* (M)
intellixistis haec omnia (Mt., XIII, 51)

[70] *& synt gé gyt butan angyte* (av)
et uos sine intellectu estis (Mt., XV, 16)

Next, information questions where the _hw_- word comes to the left of _VS_ order.

[71] *Hwi stande gé her eallne deag idele* (sv 6)
quid hic statis tota die otiosi (Mt., XX, 6)

[72] *hwæt seege gé þ+ ic si* (wv3)
quam me esse dictis (Mt., XVI, 15)

[73] *Hwi ne mihte we hyne ıt-drifan* (ppv)
quare nos non potuimus siecere illum (Mt., XVII, 19)

Finally, negative questions are included.

[74] *ne ongyte gé þ+ eall þ+ on þone muþ garþ* (sv 5)
non intelligitis quia omne quod in òs intrat ... (Mt., XV, 17)

[75] ... *ne raedde gé ...* (wv 1)
non legisitis ... (Mt., XIX, 4)

[76] *ne mihton gé nut wacian ðane tid mid me* (ppv)
non potuitis una hora uigilare mecum (Mt., XXVI, 40)

6. Conclusions

The core of this work has been to attest the cases where the plural inflection of the verb becomes reduced on the grounds of the order employed in exhortative expressions _VS_. To accomplish this task, the expressions of command and prohibition collected in the corpus have been analysed and classified as to ordering, mood and use of overt grammatical subject. But we had to face some difficulties when analysing the form of the verb, as the inflectional instability observed did not allow us to state whether the reduced verb (i.e., _selle gé_) is derived from an imperative (i.e. _sellah gé_) or from a subjunctive (i.e. _sellan ge_). As a result, we have been forced to
classify together the prohibitions that can be expressed in imperative or in subjunctive.

The optional reduction provides us with a clue of a bigger change going on in Late Old English, as the non-reduced forms of the verb also exhibit a great variation, which may be considered as an exponent of the inflec
tional instability already illustrated in notes [7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19] as well as in examples [11, 32, 36]. These changes, which lead to what Lass (1994: 243) calls ‘the dissolution of Old English’, constitute the seeds of Middle English, where the early texts are still 'characterized by the very extensive variation they show in their orthography' (Jones, 1989: 94). So, the inflec
tional reduction of verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc. will produce a simplification of the constructions available to express commands and prohibitions.

In the light of this dissolution process, we must interpret the phenomenon of plural ending reduction and the occurrence of alternative forms. In particular, attention must be payed to the following aspects:

1) _ VS ge._ has been found to eventually cause the reduction/dropping of the plural ending of the verb. No restriction has been found in terms of tense or type of verb involved.

2) By analogy, the _ VS bu. order seems to cause the loss of the imperative singular inflection in some weak verbs [32]. Conversely, the imperative singular inflection used by weak verbs has been added to some strong verbs occurring in the same order [36, 37]. Both phenomena seem to be part of a process of regularization where unstressed vowels tend to become weak.

In addition to this, it seems necessary to comment on the ordering of exhortative expressions, as a prerequisite for the reduction concerned. In a general sense, Modern English is clearly an SVO/V-3 language since no unmarked declarative clause deviates from that order whereas Old English could be labelled SVO/V-2 or SOV/V-F since both orders are possible, the former being predominant in main clause declaratives and the latter in subordinate clauses. In the previous pages commands, prohibitions and questions have been analysed and labelled as constituting VS/V-1 ordering, _ V(S) in our notation. As this order deviates from what must be taken as base order, it may be considered to provide some ‘markedness’ to this construction which seems to have changed little over the centuries (cf., however, the use of the overt subject after the verb in Old English as opposed to MnE order, where the subject comes in front of the verb under the same ‘emphatic’ conditions).

3) From all this it might be deduced that the _ marked order in which commands, prohibitions and questions usually occur, constitutes independent
domains and thus should be treated separately.

4) Furthermore, the sequence \( (ae) \) \( VS \) \( (go) \) has been attested with all types of verbs but this common order may lead to ambiguity since the same structure can be used to express different linguistic functions as can be seen in the examples and hypothetical constructions below.

\[
\text{geseo} \text{h ge eall pis (question) [69]}
\]

* \( \text{geseo} \text{h ge ... } \) (command)

* \( \text{hwæt geseo} \text{h ge ... } \) (information question)

\[
\text{ne geseo} \text{h ge me heonon-forh (negative statement) [64]}
\]

* \( \text{ne geseo} \text{h ge ... } \) (prohibition)

* \( \text{ne geseo} \text{h ge ... } \) (negative question)

5) Finally, dialectal variations have been observed in the word order: the sequence VS, which is the base order in WS, rarely occurs in N and M where SV is preferred following the Latin model (cf. overt subject 'uos' in [22, 23, 24]). In general terms, a clear parallelism is observed (cf. summary tables) between the Latin model and the OE version(s). The reason for this can be found in the desire to offer a word-for-word literal version, respecting in any case the original holly gospel. As a result from this, WS versions show a tendency for reduction which is not used in the other versions. Moreover, some constructions seem to be related to a specific version as can be summarised in the case of prohibitions: \{contracted/non-contracted \text{ne}, reduced subjunctive/imperative form + \text{ge}\} is preferred in WS; by way of contrast, in N \{contracted/non-contracted \text{ne}, non-reduced imperative form + \text{ge}\} is used as in \text{nellas} / \text{nælle}s / \text{nællæ}s / \text{nallas} (= \text{nællæp} = \text{nællæp} = \text{ne willæp}) whereas in M \{non-contracted \text{ne}, non-reduced imperative form + \text{ge}\} is used as in \text{ne wellæp}, \text{ne forhtæp ge}, \text{ne sculon}, \text{ne gæp}, \text{ne beo}p.

7. References


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NOTES

1. Let the evangelical exhortation be the motto of this paper dedicated to the memory of Prof. Lecocadio Martín, my close friend. May he rest in peace!

2. My personal thanks to Prof. de la Cruz who suggested me to study this grammatical issue, encouraged me to proceed further in the research and who has helped me at all times.

3. To label the word order we adopt Mitchell’s terminology for ‘word element’, which implicitly serves a means of classification and analysis: S.V. [...] , S....V., V.S. (Mitchell, 1964:19) or SV, S..V, VS (Mitchell, 1985:#3900). However, this labelling has been personalized in the following way: 1) by writing subindex ne to the left of V when a negative command or question is involved, 2) by using ‘(S)’, S(ju), S(ju) etc., when the subject is omitted, and 3) by writing subindex pu, we, ge, man, etc. to the right of S as implementation of the overt grammatical subject. For a review of OE
ordering from different approaches see Denison (1993:25-55).

4. The examples constituting the corpus include two versions in West-Saxon (WS), an interlinear gloss in Northumbrian (N) and one in Mercian (M), plus the original model in Latin. Most attention, however, has been devoted to the WS and Mercian versions and, as a rule, only the example in WS1 is shown unless a significant difference in the other version(s) are worth including and commenting on the purpose of our research. A close typographical transcription of the text is offered, respecting punctuations and accents which, despite their discretionary use, may sometimes provide an interpretative value. In addition, boldface types are used to mark the subject and the verb, and significant changes in the verb spelling are collected in the notes.


7. Other 'more tactful forms' for commands expressed in Modern English by using a question or a statement (Quirk et al, 1972: 402) will not be dealt in this paper.

8. Cf. sel, sele

9. Cf. on-sett, gesette

10. The doubling of originally Germanic single medial consonants was produced in West Germanic when preceded by a short vowel and followed by < j > and, parallel to this process, vowels became fronted. Afterwards in Primitive OE the < j > that had caused this change also disappeared. Hence, Grmc. *satjan (Goth. satjan) @ *sættjan @ settan; Grmc. *saljan (Goth. saljan) @ *sælljan @ sellan/syllan.

11. The Grmc. strong verbs ended in -jan, which formed the imperative sing. with the inflection -e in Old English, did not cause the doubling of the preceding consonant in West Germanic (Brook, 1966: 61).

12. Cf. gêm, preata


14. Cf. ues, wes/beo

15. Cf. the existence of 'a quite full paradigm' in Gothic imperative (2nd, 3rd sing., 2nd dual, 1-3 pl.) (Lass, 1994: 174).
16. Cf. cumēd, cumas
17. Cf. fereð, gaes, gæþ
18. Cf. geherēd, geheras
19. Cf. doð, doas, doþ
20. Cf. sylle
21. Cf. Ge-wītoð
22. Cf. the use of never in Never speak to me like that again! cf., also, other possible expressions of prohibition such as You can’t smoke here! (You are not allowed to smoke here or if a statement is preferred), You mustn’t smoke here! and You won’t smoke here! along with those found in notices such as No smoking.
23. Cf. costne, costa, costa
24. Cf. ðerh-suere, swer
25. Notice that forswerian is a strong verb; however, swerian may behave as a strong verb (pret. swor) or as a weak verb (pret. swerede) according to its meaning.
26. Cf. by
27. From Ælfric’s Colloquy (Brook, 1966: 106).
28. From King Alfred’s Preface to Gregory’s Pastoral (Brook, 1966: 98).
29. Mitchell (1964: 118) suggests that OE clauses beginning with ond, ac or ne should ‘be separately classified since although coordinate in nature they have a strong tendency to show the SXV order characteristic of subordinates’.
30. Cf. syon
31. The (word) order of a language must be understood as it ‘merely follows from the general, typical, unmarked order(s) found in the language at a particular time’ (Denison, 1993: 27).
32. ‘... translations, usually from Latin, and it is not always possible to evaluate how much of the language used is a direct word-for-word translation rather than idiomatic English.’ (Traugott, 1972: 20). ‘... much of it was translated from Latin or at least inspired by Latin modes’. (Traugott, 1972: 66).