

Chapter 7. The Subjunctive

It's easy to spot subjunctives when they differ from indicatives: the subjunctive verb paradigm is always very simple (see table 7.2). But it is not always easy to know what a subjunctive is doing or how to translate it, for Old English often uses the subjunctive where Modern English uses the indicative. Translate each of the following sentences, paying careful attention to the subjunctive verbs (in **bold** type). Be prepared to discuss why the subjunctive is used in each sentence. Since subjunctives often come in complex sentences, this is an advanced exercise.

1. Hit wæs gewītegod þæt Crist on ðære byriġ Bethlehem ācenned **wurde**.
2. Se lārēow his hīeremen¹ tō betran life spōn,² ðy lās hīe mid eorðlicre sorge **wurden** ġebundne.
3. Sȳ se man ofslāġen þe³ ðū þīne hāðenan godas mid **finde**.
4. Ġif ðū hwelcne cræft **cunne**, begā⁴ þone ġeorne.
5. Þēah ðe hīe unlybban⁵ **drincen**, hit him ne dereð.
6. Wēne ġē þæt ġē **māġen** ætwindan þissum rēþan wīte?
7. Ġif ðū earm **weorðe**, ġeþenc þæt ðū hit ēaðe⁶ **ġeþolie**.
8. Mīn hlāford hēt þē biddan þæt þū **cȳdde** þis spell mannum.
9. Þis gewrit cȳð hū folces synna ġebētte⁷ bēon **scylen**.

1 *hīeremen*: servants, hirelings.

2 *spōn*: urged (an alternative past form of *spanan*).

3 Take *mid* with the relative pronoun and translate “with whom you . . .”

4 *begā*: In addition to the meanings given by the glossary for *begān*, it can mean “practice.”

5 *unlybban*: poison.

6 *ēaðe*: In addition to the meaning for this adverb in the glossary, it can mean “willingly.”

7 Past participle of (*ġe*)*bētan*.

10. Bēon⁸ ġif hīe mannan ācwellað, **cwelle** hīe man⁹ hraðe and **ete** man þæt huniġ þæt hīe worhton.
11. Ġif ðū **wille** ġōdne hlīsan habban, ne fæġna ðū nānes yfeles.
12. Ðā ðrīe cempan hine scotodon¹⁰ mid hira strælum oð þæt hē **wære** ācweald.
13. Ic ðē bebēode ðæt ðū **bēo** ġestrangod¹¹ and ellenrōf.
14. Ne bēoð ealle untrume for synnum ġeswencte, þēah þe hīe sume **bēon**.
15. Hit is mannum ġeþūht swelce sēo sunne and þā tunglas **gangen** westweard.¹²

8 *Bēon*: bees (nominative).

9 *Man* is the subject of *cwelle* and *hīe* the object.

10 *scotodon*: shot.

11 *ġestrangod*: strengthened (i.e. strong)

12 *westweard*: towards the west.