He forbade þæt hi ne weopon: A negative element in the þæt-clause introduced by a verb of prohibition

Michiko Ogura
Tokyo Woman’s Christian University

In ICEHL 20 at the University of Edinburgh,1 I made a report of my research on this theme. The present paper gives additional facts on the construction of a verb of negation followed by a þæt-clause with a negative element. What I try to exemplify is not a historical change from expletive negative to affirmative clause, but the facts that (i) the expletive negative was one of the correlative constructions based on Old English syntax and (ii) the affirmative clause was already found in early Old English together with the negative clause, even though the negative clause was frequent in late Old English to early Middle English and then decreased after late Middle English. The verb with negative import with a negated þæt-clause is, therefore, not an illogical expression but a stylistic device of combining the negation of the governing verb with the content of the governed, negated þæt-clause.2

Keywords: correlative expressions; early Middle English; forbeodan; Old English; verbs of negative import

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1. Old English *forbeodan* > Middle English *forbidden*

Table 1 shows the syntactic patterns of Old English *forbeodan* ‘to forbid’. In the whole 327 examples, the proportion of the expletive negative construction is 14.7 per cent, which seems not so large. When the examples are restricted to those with a *þæt*-clause, however, the ratio of expletive negative goes up to 73.8 per cent. This is the reason why the Old English period is regarded as that of the expletive negative and criticised as ungrammatical by modern linguists.

Let us start looking at the examples as dialectically as possible. The first three examples below are quoted from *Cura Pastoralis* (MS Hatton 20, dated 890–897, that is, the earliest examples). As Visser (1963–1973) had already stated, the *þæt*-clause introduced by *forbeodan* could take either negative or affirmative. The expletive negative is not at all idiomatic in *Cura Pastoralis*; the proportion of affirmative versus negative is five to two.

(1) *CP* 32.213.24
\[ \text{ða spréce he súelce he hit ³agiet nyste ³æt hie hit him ða io ondredon, ac } \]
\[ 
\text{forbead hime ³æt hit } \text{ne scolda sua weordan,} \\
\text{‘when he spoke as if he did not yet know that they had been afraid of it,}
\text{but forbade them that it must be in such a way’} \\
\]

(2) *CP* 59.451.5
\[ \text{Ac ³ær ³ær us God forbead ³æt we ure ryhtwisnesse beforan monnum } \]
\[ \text{dyden, he us gecyðde forhwy hit forbead, ða he cwa³ð, ðylæs hi eow } \]
\[ \text{herigen.} \\
\text{‘But when God forbade us that we should perform our righteousness before men, he showed us why he forbade it, when he said, “lest they praise you”.’} \\
\]

(3) *CP* 11.73.15
\[ \text{sua hwelc bonne sua } \text{ðissa uncysta hwelcre underõieded } \text{bîð, him } \text{bîð } \]
\[ 
\text{forboden } ³æt he offrige [Gode] hla³ε,} \\
\text{‘whomsoever, then, is subject to one of those vices, is forbidden that he}
\text{should offer bread to God’} \\
\]

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1 Data on manuscripts are based on Ker (1957/1990).
Table 1. Old English forbeodan and its syntactic patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntax Pattern</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V + obj.</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + Ø</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + þæt + ne</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + to-inf.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + þæt</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + inf.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + d.s.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + obj. + þæt + ne</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + þus cwæð + d.s. + ne</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + þus cwæðende + d.s. + ne</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + cwæðende + d.s.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + þus cwæð + d.s.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + þ cwæð + þæt</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + þ sægde + þæt + ne</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + þ segð + þæt + ne</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + þ sæde + d.s.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + d.s. + ne</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ne/na + V</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ne + V + þæt + ne</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>327</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example (4) below is from interlinear glosses of the Psalter. The Lambeth Psalter (PsGlI, Lambeth Palace 427, dated in the first half of the eleventh century) has a triple gloss of the verb of negative import and the expletive negative. When the Vespasian Psalter (PsGlA, Cotton Vespasian A. i, ninth century) and the Stowe Psalter (PsGlF, Stowe 2, later than the Lambeth Psalter) are compared, bewerian, a synonym of forbeodan, is not followed by a þæt-clause but by þæt in Vespasian, the earliest, Mercian gloss, while late West Saxon Stowe Psalter has a þæt-clause with negation. (For the examples of the Psalter and the Gospels, I include the Wycliffite (WyEV, WyLV) and Authorized versions (AV) to show the historical change in syntax and renderings.)
(4) *PsGlI* 33.14 [Prohibe linguam tuam a malo et labia tua ne loquantur dolum]

**forbeod l. forhafa l. bewere** tungan þine fram yfle weleras þine þet hig ne sprecon faken
cf. *PsGLA*: **bewere** tungan ðine from yfle weolure **by ðæs** spreccen fæcen
cf. *PsGLF*: **bewere** tungan ðine fram yfle ðy welerum ðinum þæt ne sprecon fæcen

WycEV: **Forfende** thi tunge fro euel; and thi lippis that thei speke not trecherie.
WycLV: **Forbeode** thi tunge fro yuel; and thi lippis speke not gile.
AV: Kepe thy tongue from euill, and thy lippes from speaking guile.

Examples (5) and (6) are from the Gospels. In (5), *Lindisfarne* (*Li*, Cotton Nero D. iv, latter half of the tenth century) and *Rushworth* (*Ru*, Auct.2.19, tenth century) use **bebeodan**, while *West Saxon Corpus Christi* (*WSCp*, CCCC140, eleventh to twelfth century) chooses **forbeodan**; the expletive negative appears, therefore, in the *West Saxon* version. In (6), *Li* uses the double gloss of **forbeodan** and **werian** with another double gloss of **to-infinitive** and **þæt**-clause, *Ru2* uses **forbeodan** with **to-infinitive** (or rather, follows the first gloss of *Li*), and *WSCp* chooses **forbeodan** with the expletive negative. These examples of the Psalter and of the Gospels show that the late West Saxon texts tend to use the expletive negative construction.

(5) *Mk* 3.12 [et uhementer cominabatur eis né manifestare illum]

*Li*: 7 sweðe **bebed** him þe hia ne æwades l mersades hine
*Ru*:\ 7 sweðe **bebed** him þe hia ne cowde him

WSCp: 7 he him sweðe **forbead**. þi hine ne ge-swutelodon.
WycEV: And gretely he manasside hem, that thei shuld nat make hym opyn, or knowen.
AV: And he straitly charged them, that they should not make him knowen.

(6) *Lk* 23.2 [hunc inuenimus sub-uertentem gentem nostram et prohibentem tributa dari caesari et dicentem sé christum regem esse]

*Li*: ðiosne woe gemitten under-cerrende l cyyn usere 7 **forbeadende** l **woerdende** gefelo l to scallanne l þte se gesald ðæm caseri 7 cuoeðende hine cristum cyning þte woere l þte sé
*Ru2*:\ ðiosse we gemitten under-cerrende cyyn usea 7 **forbeodende** æ æ 7 wigga [sic] 7 **for-beodende** gefe to sellanna ðæm casera 7 cuweðende hine crist cynig þte were
He forbead þæt bi ne weapon

WSCp: Disne we gemétton for-hwyrfende ure þeode. 7 for-beodende þ man þam casere gafol ne sealde. 7 segð þ he si crist cyning;

WycEV: We han founden this man turnynge vpsodoun oure folk, and forbedinge tributis to be ȝoun to Cesar, and seyinge him silf to be Crist king.

AV: We found this fellow peruerting the nation, and forbidding to giue tribute to Cesar, saying, that he himselfe is Christ a king.

Examples (7) and (8) are from Orosius (Or, Additional 47967, first half of the tenth century), (7) with a negative (expletive) clause and (8) with an affirmative þæt-clause.

(7) Or 6 11.140.11
he forbead ofer ealne his onwald þæt mon nanum cristenum men ne abulge,
‘he forbade over all his dominion that any Christian men should be offended’

(8) Or 6 1.133.31
þæt wæs þæt he fleah forbead þæt hiene mon god hete, swa nan cyning nolde þe ær him wæs,
‘that was, that he declined and forbade that one should call him god, as no king who had been before him wanted’

Example (9) is from Bede (Tanner 10, first half of the tenth century), which has a repetitive word pair of bewereð and forbeodeð (for ‘prohibit’) with an infinitive (following Latin). In the first half of the tenth century, therefore, it can be said that the construction ‘a verb with negative import + þæt-clause with a negative element’ is not yet idiomatic.

(9) Bede 1 16.70.6 [et sacra lex prohibet cognitionis turpitudinem reuelare] ond seo halige ß bewereð þa scondlicnesse onwreon mægisibia
‘and the holy law prohibits and forbids to uncover the shame of relatives’

From example (10) we see the choice in the works of Ælfric and late West Saxon. Example (10) is from Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies (ÆCHom, Cambridge University Library Gg.3.28, tenth to eleventh century), which has the expletive negative construction. Example (11) from the same manuscript shows forbeodan + þus cuðende + direct speech containing a negative element; this is one of the
stylistic devices using a verb of saying (cf. Ogura 1988) with direct or indirect speech of negation, as seen in Table 1 above. Example (12) is from Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints*, St Swithun (Cotton Julius E. vii, eleventh century) and (13) from Ælfric’s *First Old English Letter to Wulfstan* (CCCC190, first half of the eleventh century), both of which illustrate the expletive negative.

(10) *ÆCHom* II, 43 322.115
Se ælmihtiga god *forbead* þurh his witegan þæt nán ðæra manna þe rihwis beon wile. *ne* scealyllan his feoh to gafole;
‘The Almighty God forbade through his wise man that anyone of those men who wish to be righteous must give his money as tribute’

(11) *ÆCHom* 21 206
ac Moyses him *forbead* micclum þus cweðende: Ne fare ge, ic eow bidde, swa fuse to þam lande
‘but Moses forbade them severely saying thus, “Do not go, I command you, so eagerly to the land”’

(12) *ÆLS* (*Switben*) 410
and god sylf *forbead* þæt we swefnum *ne* folgion. þæt læs ðe se deofol us bedyrian mæge.
‘and God himself forbade that we should follow vision, lest the devil could deceive us’

(13) *ÆLet* 2 (*Wulfstan* 1) 10
and Moyses hy awrat and mancynne *forbead*, þæt hi nænne haþenscype habban *ne* mostan
‘and Moses wrote them and forbade to mankind that they should have any paganism’

Example (14) is from *Alexander’s Letter to Aristotle* (Cotton Vitellius A. xv, tenth to eleventh century) and (15) from *Genesis* in the *Heptateuch* (Cotton Claudius B. iv, first half of the eleventh century), both of which show the expletive negative. In example (16), *First Sunday in Lent* (CCCC198, eleventh century), *forbeodan* is negated, and so is the content of the following *þæt*-clause, which means that *ne* in the *þæt*-clause is redundant. Examples (17) *Sermo bone paredicatio* (CCCC201), (18) *Prudentius Psychomachia Titles* (CCCC23), and (19) *Poenitentiale pseudo-Egberti* (Laud Misc. 482) all illustrate the expletive negative.
He forbead þæt hi ne weopon

(14) *Alex* 40.13
Ac þa forbead hit se bisceop þæt hi ne weopon.
‘But then the bishop forbade it that they should weep’

(15) *Gen* 3.1 [Cur præcepit uobis Deus, ut non comederetis de omni ligno Paradisi?]
Hwi forbead God eow ðæt ge ne æton of ælcon treowe binnan Paradisum?
Wyc*EY*: Whi comaundide God to yow, that ye shulden not ete of ech tree of paradis?
AV: Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

(16) *HomS* 16(*Ass* 12) 81
Men ða leofestan, we mynegiað ea c ælcne getreowfulne man, þæt he gelomlice lufige cumliðynosse and nanum cuman ne forbeode, þæt he ne mote on his huse gerestan,
‘Beloved men, we remember each faithful man, that he should frequently love hospitality, and forbid no guests that he should be allowed to rest in his house’

(17) *HomU* 47 (*Nap* 58) 103
hit is forbidden on halgum bocum swyðe deope, þæt nan cristen man ne mote his ælmessan ahwæþer behatan oðde to bringan ne his wæccan ne his broces bote secean ahwider, buton to Criste sylfum and to his halgum and to cyrcean.
‘It is forbidden in holy books very deeply that any Christian is allowed either to promise the alms or to bring wakefulness or to seek remedy for his misery, except for Christ himself and for his saints and for church.’

(18) *Conf* 3.1.1 (*RaithY*) 146
Ælcum geleaffullum men is forbidden, ðæt he his feoh ne his æhta to nanum unrihtum gafol ne læne,
‘It is forbidden for each faithful man that he should give his cattle or his goods as any false debt’

(19) *PrudT* 1 1
Her godes swyðra forbade Abrahame, þæt he his sunu ne ofsloge,
‘Here God’s power forbade Abraham that he should kill his son’
Peterborough Chronicle (Laud Misc. 636, dated a. 1121) shows the expletive negative in examples (20), (21), and (22), and this construction keeps appearing in the texts of the transitional period like Bodley 343 Homilies (c. 1175), as in examples (23) and (24).

(20) *Chron*E 656.91

> Đic forbede þet ne kyning ne nan man ne haue nan onsting buton þon abbot ane,

‘and I forbid that either a king or any man should have any authority except the abbot alone’

(21) *Chron*E 675.31 (MED *forbēden* (v.) 1a (a))

> Als wa ïc beode þe Saxulf biscop þet swa swa þu hit geornest þet seo minstre beo freo, swa ïc *forbeode* þe 7 calle þe bispópas þe after þe cumon of Criste 7 of calle his halgan þet ge nan onsting ne hauen of þet minstre buton swa micel swa þone abbot wile.

‘Likewise I command you, bishop Seaxwulf, that just as you wish the monastery to be free, so I forbid you and all those bishops that succeed you, by Christ and by all his saints, to have any authority over the monastery except in so far as the abbot shall permit’ (tr. Garmonsway)

(22) *Chron*E 1012.5 (= *ChronF* 1012.4, *ChronC* 1012.6, *ChronD* 1012.6)

> forþan þe he nolde heom nan feoh behaten 7 *forbead* þet man nan þing wið him syllan ne moste

‘because he did not wish to promise them any money and forbade that anything should be given for him’

(23) *LS 5 (InventCrossNap)* 101 (= *HRoed (Bod343)* 8.12)

> þonne wolde ic ðe sceawian gyt sum ðare ðingæ ðe he me swiðlice *forbead* þ ic ðe sceawian ne sceolde

‘then I would like to show you something which he strongly forbade me that I must show you’

(24) *BodHom 122.2* (MED)

> For hwón *forbeat* Crist his þeignment þ heo ne sceoldeon cūpen ne sægen nāne men þ bihtlice sihde, buton for twam þingum?

‘Why did Christ forbid his disciples to make known or tell anyone of that bright vision except for two reasons?’
This construction is still found in *Ormulum* (a. 1200, *Orm*) as in (25), and more examples in Laȝamon’s *Brut* (c. 1275, *Laȝ*), as in (26) to (30), all in expletive negative, except (28).

(25) *Orm* 9833 (MED)

> 7 all forðþ forðbæd Johan,
> þatt te33 ne sholldenn ȝellpenn
> Þurrh modi3nnesse off þe33re kinn,
> 'and therefore John forbade all, that they should yelp through the pride of their people'

(26) *Laȝ* (C) 781

> yppe þere muchele lufe þe us bi-tuei ðenn lið.
> þat nan ne beo so wilde nan swa unwitti. 
> 'and I forbade my faithful thanes, by the great love that lies between us, that none should be so wild, none so void of wit'

(27) *Laȝ* 13180

> C: Vortiger þe hæ for-bad his hired-monnen.
> þet heo nane manne ne tælden what heo hæfden on anwolde.
> O: Vortiger anon rihtes for-bead alle his cnihtes.
> þat non of ȝam ne tolde wat he hadde on anwolde. 
> 'Vortiger the high (immediately) forbade his followers (knights) that they should tell anyone (of them) what they (he) had in power'

(28) *Laȝ* 20579

> C: & Arður for-bæd his cnihtes daiȝes & nihtes. 
> þat heo liðen stille swulc heo stelen woldë. 
> O: Arthur for-bed his cnihtes daiȝes and nihtes. 
> þat hii ȝeoden ase stille so hii stele wolde. 
> 'Arthur forbade his knights, by day and night, that they should proceed still, as if they would steal'

(29) *Laȝ* 25799

> C: þenne for-beode ich þe bi þine bare life.
> þat þu nauere wið þene scucke feht no biginne. 
> O: þanne for-bed ich þe bi þine bare liue. 
> þat þou neure wiþ þan fiht ne bi-gynne. 
> 'then I forbid thee, by thy bare life, that thou shouldest ever begin fight with the monster'
(30) _Laȝ_ 26013  
*C: for-bad* heom bi heore leomen & bi heore bare liuen.  
*þat nan neoren* swa kene þat heom neh comen.  
buten he iseȝen þat hit ned weoren.  
*O: for-bed* sam bi hire leomes and hire bare lifuc.  
*þat non neore* so kene þat heom neh come.  
b.e hii .eȝen þat hit neod weore.  
‘(Arthur) forbade them, by their limbs and their bare lives, that anyone who were so keen should come near, unless they saw that it were need’

From the *Middle English Dictionary*, I add examples (31) from _Ayenbit of Inwit_ (1340), and (32) from Chaucer’s _Tale of Melibee_ (c. 1390).

(31) _Ayenb_ 10.6 (MED)  
Ine þisse heste ous ys uorbode þet we ne þyȝeȝe ne ous uorzuerie;  
‘In this behest it is forbidden for us to lie or forswear (lit. that we should neither lie nor forswear)’

(32) _Chaucer CT.B.Mel._ 2770–2775 (MED)  
This is to seyn, that nature deffendeth and forbedeth by right that no man make hymself riche unto the harm of another persone.

2. Other verbs and verb phrases of negative import

Most verbs of negative import have the same feature of showing the expletive negative construction. Examples (33) and (34) are those of *oðsacan* and *ætsacan*. As seen in manuscript variants, *ansacan*, *ætsacan*, *ondsacan*, *oðsacan*, and *wiðsacan* share this feature. In example (35), in addition to the different choice of prefixes to the verb, the use of *þæt* as an indicator of both direct and indirect speech is illustrated. *Li* and *Ru* have *þæt* + direct speech, while *WSCp* has an indirect speech after *þæt*, with the expletive negative. Example (36) has two examples of *wiðsacan*, one with a *þæt*-clause with a negative element and the other *ne* + *wiðsacan* with a *þæt*-clause with a negative element; both illustrate the expletive negative.
(33) Or 6 4.136.28

**Obsace** [C: ætsace] nu, cwæð Orosius, se se þe wille ofþfe se þe dyrre, þæt þæt angin nære gestilled for þæs cristendomes Gode, ‘Deny now, said Orosius, he who wish or dare, that the beginning were stable before the Christian God’

(34) *Lay (C) 6100*

bute þat þa Densce men dunriht at-soken [O: asoken].
þæt heo to Brut-londe nolden moren senden.
gold ne garsume ne guel of þon lode.
‘except that the Danish men denied downright, that they would send anymore gold or treasure or tribute of the land’

(35) *Mt 26.72 [et iterum negavit cum iuramento quia non noui hominem]*

*Li:* 7 eft-sona onsóc mid að þ ic ne conn ðone monno
*RuI:* 7 eft ðsoc mid hafþ þ ic ne conn þone monn
*WSCp:* 7 he wiðsóc eft mid ðfe þ he lys ðan þing ne cuðe
*WycEV:* And eftsone he denied with an oath, for he knewe nat the man.
*WycLV:* And eftsoone he denyede with an oath, For I knewe not the man.
*AV:* And againe hee denied with an oath, I doe not know the man.

(36) *ÆCHom II,13 130.101*

þa wiðsóc crist swithe rihtlice. þæt he deofol on him næfde. ac he ne wiðsoc þæt he nære samaritanisc.
‘Then Christ denied very rightly that he had a devil in him, but he did not deny that he was a Samaritan’

Examples of *forsacan* are given from (37) to (40). Example (37), from *Cura Pastoralis*, has an affirmative *þæt*-clause. Examples (38) and (39) are from Gregory’s *Dialogues* (CCCC178 first half of the eleventh century); (38) has a manuscript variant of *wiðsacan* and the following *þæt*-clause is in the affirmative; (39) is the only example of the expletive negative among the four examples of the verb in this text. Example (40), though from Ælfric, has the *þæt*-clause in the affirmative.

(37) *CP 36.247.19*

7 he forscarð þæt he him to cume
‘and he refuses that he should come to him (= Wisdom)’
he led the servants before him, whom he had entirely refused that he ever wanted to give it

But the man of the Lord refused, that he would receive such offering

if anyone should refuse it, that he must be burned on the hot oven

Example (41) has *wandian* 'to hesitate', and (42) and (43) show *forwynnan* 'to deny', all of which illustrate the expletive negative. Example (44) has *belean* 'to prevent' from a homily of the transition al period; this verb does not seem to have an example of the expletive negative in Old English.

And in one way those are to be admonished who do not rightly understand the words of the holy law, in another those who rightly understand them, and yet for humility hesitate to speak it

‘O you Caesar, do you not know the greatness of manslaughter which you did through your cruelty, or does your mind not perceive the great burden of your presumption which you have made, or whether your power which could deny that you must recognise these sins?’

ac gyf hyt se witega wäre, he wolde him *forwynnan* þæt he to hym ne gebæde, his Hælende on teonan;
'but if it were the prophet, he wished to deny him that he should pray for him, in view of insulting his Lord'

(44) 
\textit{TrinHom} 107.10

and for to bileande \textit{hæt no} man werpe \textit{hē} gilf of his sinne anuppen god 'and to prevent that anyone should throw the guilt of his sins upon God'

\textit{Tweogan, twoonian}, and \textit{twoo beon} behave slightly differently from other verbs or verbal phrases. They always take ‘\textit{ne} + \textit{Verb} + \textit{hæt} + \textit{ne}', i.e. the main verb or verb phrase is negated as well as the content of the following \textit{hæt}-clause. Examples are (45) from \textit{Boethius} (Cotton Otho A. vi, mid-tenth century), (46) and (47) from homilies in the late tenth to the eleventh century, and (48) from the transitional period.

(45) 
\textit{Bo} 37.113.21

\textit{Forðæm ne \textit{heaf} nænne wisne mon \textit{tweogan} \textit{hæt} ða yflan \textit{nazbben} eac ecu edlean hiora yflès; \textit{hæt} bið ece wite.} 

'For no wise man need doubt that the evil men do not also have eternal reward for their evil, that is eternal punishment' (tr. Godden & Irvine)

(46) 
\textit{HomU} 11 (\textit{ScruggVerc} 7) 66

\textit{Nu sio idelnes swa swiðe \textit{hiam} lichoman dereð, \textit{ne tweo} \textit{he na \textit{hæt} hio \textit{hære sawle ne sceðde},} 'Now idleness greatly injures the body; doubt that not at all, that it cannot (but) injure the soul' (tr. Nicholson)

(47) 
\textit{HomS} 17 (\textit{BlHom} 5) 178

\textit{forþon \textit{nis} nan \textit{twoo} \textit{hæt} he forgifnesse syllan \textit{nelle} \textit{hiam} \textit{he hee gecarnian willaþ,} 'for there is no doubt that he will grant forgiveness to those who desire to merit it'

(48) 
\textit{BodHom} (\textit{Bod343}) 52.21

\textit{Þeah \textit{hē} þenne hwylc mon \textit{beþi} swiðe sinful, 7 arleas, 7 unríhtwis, \textit{ne} sceal he him \textit{tweonijæn} \textit{hæt} he \textit{ne} mæþe Godes mildheortnesse biȝtæn, ȝif he wyle to ðædbote cýræn.}
'Any man, then, although he is very sinful, and wicked, and unrighteous, shall not doubt the possibility of his obtaining God's mercy, if he will turn to repentance' (tr. Belfour)

This feature is handed down to French loan verb *douter* (see Ogura 2007); examples are (49) and (50) from *Cursor Mundi* (Cotton Vespasian A. iii and Göttingen). In *Merlin* (?c. 1450), an example from MED, which I quote in (51), there is no negation of the main verb and the context shows a slightly different sense. The last example (52) is another loan verb *denie* from Chaucer's *Boece* (c. 1380).

(49) *Cursor* 10869
   C: þis leuedi *nathing doted* sco þat godd ne moght his will do,
   G: Þis leudy *na-thing doutid* scho, þat godd ne miht his wille al do,
   ‘This lady she doubted nothing that God could do his will’

(50) *Cursor* 12321
   C: For sco was traist and *duted noght*, þat godds wil ne suld be wroght.
   cf. T: She was trusty & *douted nouȝt* But goddess wille wolde be wrouȝt
   ‘For she was faithful and did not doubt that God’s will should be done’

(51) *Merlin* (*CmbFf*3.11) I 6.9 (MED: *douten that .. nought* fear lest (sth. happen))
   he [deuill] *dought* that he myght not wynne hem [these sustres] by felschip of man, with-oute counseille of some woman;
   cf. 30 I *doubte* that ye will me sle.

(52) *Chaucer Bo III Prose* 10.12
   But it may *nat be denied* that thilke good ne is, and that it nys ryght as a welle of alle goodes.

3. Conclusion

It was Visser (1963–1973) who first explained appropriately on this construction with examples of both an affirmative and a negative *fet*-clause from one of the earliest Old English texts of *Cura Pastoralis*, and Mitchell (1985: §§2039–2043) used the term “expletive negative” for this construction, as he explained it with many examples in his *Old English Syntax*. But after them, some
overgeneralisation has been accepted that the construction of expletive negative was a feature throughout the Old English period. From my investigation focused on Old English up and early Middle English some points have been made manifest: (i) A verb with negative import shows a tendency to invite the negative particle *ne* in the dependent clause it takes, owing to the negative import of the governing verb; this is a kind of correlative construction based on Old English syntax; (ii) Alternative expressions like ‘Verb (with negative import) and Verb of saying + direct speech or indirect speech (with *ne*)’ may suggest that the construction ‘Verb (with negative import) + *þæt* + *ne*’ is not illogical but a contracted and correlative form, meaning ‘he forbade saying, “You should not do that”’ or ‘he forbade and said that I should not do that’; (iii) ‘Verb (with negative import) + *to*-infinitive’ was found in Old English as an alternative of ‘Verb (with negative import) + *þæt*-clause’ with or without *ne*, which means that the shift from *forbid that* to *forbid to* is a tendency rather than a historical development; (iv) The ‘Verb (with negative import) + *þæt* + *ne*’ construction could be highly deemed in late Old English and early Middle English as Anglo-Saxon syntax.

In addition, the fact that the distinction between direct and indirect speech was not so complete as in the present-day English can be a cause of the existence of this construction, since *þæt* could be employed as an indicator of direct speech in biblical contexts, and also the fact that OE prefix *for*- could not be morphologically distinguished in two senses, i.e. in the sense of opposition (cf. G *ver*-) and in the sense of emphasis (cf. G *vor*-), has made the Old English syntax less explicit.

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Author's address
School of Arts and Sciences
Tokyo Woman's Christian University
2-6-1 Zempukuji, Suginami-ku
Tokyo 167-8585, Japan

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E-mail: oguradainagon@jcom.home.ne.jp

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