

Activity 10.3 - *The York Lay Folk's Catechism*

- This **er** the sex thinges ... These **be** þe sexe thyngys ...

The verb *be* is the most irregular verb in MnE, with its eight forms in Standard English - *be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been* clearly derived from different verbs.

The OE paradigms show two root infinitives - *beon* and *wesan*, with alternative dialectal realisations such as,

Present tense	ic eom þu eart he/heo/hit is we/ge/hi sind	ic beo þu bist he/heo/hit biþ we/ge/hi beo	we/ge/hi arun (Midland & Northern)
Past tense		ic wæs þu wære he/heo/hit wæs we/ge/hi wæron	

In ME, these are some of the forms that had developed (the variety of pronoun forms, especially the feminine singular, is not demonstrated),

	<i>Northern</i>	<i>Midland</i>	<i>Southern</i>
Present tense	ik/ic am/be thou art/bes he/sche/hit es/bes we/ye/thei are/bes	ich am/be thou art/bist he/sche/hit is/biþ we/ye/thei are/ben	ich am/be thou art/bist he/sche/hit is/biþ we/ye/he are/ben
Past tense	ik/ic was/wes thou was/wes he/sche/hit was/wes we/ye/thei war/bes	ich was/wes thou were he/sche/hit was/wes we/ye/thei weren	ich was/wes thou were he/sche/hit is/biþ we/ye/he weren

- halikirk / holy chirche, mast / most, halden to knawe / holde to know

kirk is from ON *kirkja*; *chirche* from OE *cirice*

The contrast of vowels spelt <a - o> in *hali/holy*, *mast/most* and *halden to knawe / holde to know* illustrates the rounding and shifting of OE long [ɑ:] to [ɔ:] in dialects south of the Humber, beginning in late OE.

- sal / schal

From OE *sceal* [ʃæəl] - the diphthong smoothed to [æ] and then [a] by the 12th century.

In Northern dialects the fricative consonant [ʃ] became [s] in unaccented syllables and words - hence *sal*.

- cum / come

From OE *cuman*. The <o> in *come* is a spelling convention from the writing of Latin to avoid confusion in reading <u> especially before or after ‘minim’ letters. Compare *son*, *wolf*, *wonder* from OE *sunu*, *wulf* and *wundor*.

- til al / to alle

Til derived from ON and was the equivalent of *to* in the OE Northumbrian dialect and Northern dialects of ME.

- kunnes tham / cunne hem; saies / seyþ

The present tense inflection <-es> was Northern.

tham is from the ON pronoun *ðeim* and eventually superseded OE-derived *hem* throughout the country. Chaucer used *they* but *hem*, not *them*.

- kunnandly / cunnyngly - conandly / kunnyngly - lastand / lastyngē

Kunnand-, *conand-* and *lastand* - derive from the OE present participle suffix <-ende>. The <-inge> suffix, which has become the standard <-ing> in MnE, developed in Southern dialects of ME in the 14th century.
