Quiz 4

One of the versions of the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) below is a translation written during the first half of the 11th century; another is from the Wycliffite Bible (c. 1395). Identify which text is which and give five pieces of evidence (orthographic, morphological, syntactic or lexical) which enables you to make this identification.

Text 1: Oure fadir that art in heuenes, hatewid be thi name; thi kyngdoom come to; be thi wille don in erthe as in heune; ȝye to vs thi dai oure breed our other substaunce; and forȝyeu to vs oure dettis, as we forȝyuen to oure dettouris; and lede vs not in to temptacioun, but delyuere vs fro yuel.

Text 2: Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum; Si þin nama gehalgod to become þin rice gewurþe δin willa on eorðan swa swa on helfonum. Urne gedæghwamlican half syle us todæg and fôrþgif us ure gyltas swa swa we forgyfaδ um gyltendum and ne gelæd þu us on costnunge ac alys us of yfele soplice.

(PDE translation: Our Heavenly Father, may your name be honored; May your kingdom come, and your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day the bread we need, Forgive us what we owe to you, as we have also forgiven those who owe anything to us. Keep us clear of temptation, and save us from evil. Phillips, J. B., tr. 1963. The New Testament in Modern English. New York: Macmillan)

Text 1 is Middle English and Text 2 is Old English

Sample diagnostic differences:

Orthographic:

  th and ȝ are found in Middle English and not in Old English.
  v is found for [v] and [u] in Middle English and not in Old English
  δ is found in Old English and not in Middle English.

Morphological and syntactic:

  Possessive pronouns are found before or after the N they possess in Old English, as in δin willa (Possessor-Possessed) and Fæder ure (Possessed-Possessor); in Middle English, possessive pronouns only appear before the N they possess OE Fæder ure = ME Oure fadir
  Possessive pronouns agree with the N they possess in person number and gender so it’s Fæder ure, but ure gyltas and urum gyltendum. In Middle English, the possessive pronouns are invariant, so its Oure fadir, oure dettis and oure dettouris.
  In Old English negation uses the preverbal negative particle ne, as in ne gelæd while in Middle English negation uses the postverbal negative adverb not, as in lede us not.
  Use of inflected dative in Old English forgyf us ure gyltes replaced by prepositional phrase in Middle English forȝyeu to vs oure dettis.

Lexical:

  French borrowings found in Middle English, not in Old English, such as temptacioun, dettis, dettouris, substaunce
  Native Old English words not found in Middle English, ac, rice, gewurþe, syle