

In þe¹ bigynnyng² god made of nouȝt³

¹**þe** - the /ðə/, /ði/, /ði:/ (def. art.): Late OE *þe*, nominative masculine form of the demonstrative pronoun and adjective. After c.950, it replaced earlier *se* (masc.), *seo* (fem.), *þæt* (neuter), and probably represents *se* altered by the *th*- form which was used in all the masculine oblique cases. OE *se* is from PIE root **so*- “this, that” (source also of Sanskrit *sa*, Avestan *ha*, Greek *ho*, *he* “the,” Irish and Gaelic *so* “this”). The *þ*- forms, see *that*. The *s*- forms were entirely superseded in English by mid-13c., excepting a slightly longer dialectal survival in Kent. OE used 10 different words for “the,” but did not distinguish “the” from “that.” *That* survived for a time as a definite article before vowels (*that one* or *that other*).

²**Bigynnyng** - beginning /bi'gɪnɪŋ/ (n.): The process of coming into existence; the Creation (of the world, etc.); the first; origin; source. Late 12c., “time when something begins;” c. 1200, “initial stage or first part,” verbal noun from begin. Meaning “act of starting something” is from early 13c. The OE word was *fruma* (foremost). BEGIN /bi'gɪn/: OE *beginnan* “to attempt, undertake,” a rare word beside the more usual form *onginnan* (class III strong verb; past tense *ongann*, past participle *ongunnen*); from *be-* + West Germanic **ginnan*, which is of obscure etymology and found only in compounds, perhaps “to open, open up” (compare OHG *in-ginnan* “to cut open, open up,” also “begin, undertake”), with sense evolution from “open” to “begin.” Cognates elsewhere in Germanic include OF *biginna* “to begin,” MD *beghinnen*, OHG *beginnan*, German *beginnen*, OF *bijenna* “to begin,” Gothic *duginnan*. From late 12c. as “originate, be the originator of;” from c. 1200 as “take the first step in, start to deal with.” Intransitive sense “come into existence” is from mid-13c.

³**Nouȝt** - nought /nɔ:t/ (n.): Archaic. Nothing. From OE *nowiht* “nothing,” variant of *nawiht*. Meaning “zero, cipher” is from early 15c.

heuene⁴ and erthe⁵.

Forsothe the erthe was idel and voide,
and derknessis weren on the face of depthe;
and the spirit of the lord was borun on the
watris.

And god seide, Liȝt be maad, and liȝt
was maad.2245

⁴**Heuene** - heaven /'hev(ə)n/ (n.): From OE *heofon* “home of God,” earlier “the visible sky, firmament,” probably from Proto-Germanic **hibin-*, a dissimilation of **himin-* (source also of Low German *heben*, ON *himinn*, Gothic *himins*, OF *himul*, Dutch *hemel*, German *Himmel* “heaven, sky”). The abode of God, heaven, paradise.

⁵**Erthe** - earth /ɜ:θ/ (n.): OE *eorþe* “ground, soil, dirt, dry land; country, district,” also used (along with *middangeard*) for “the (material) world, the abode of man” (as opposed to the heavens or the underworld), from Proto-Germanic **ertho* (source also of OF *erthe* “earth,” OS *ertha*, ON *jörð*, MD *eerde*, Dutch *aarde*, OHG *erda*, German *Erde*, Gothic *airþa*), perhaps from an extended form of PIE root **er-* “earth, ground.” The earth considered as a planet was so called from c. 1400. The ME vocalism is in part influenced by OE *yrþ* plowland, and perhaps also by an unattested adj.