

Miii3 Thy followers in hope to flatter thee

Notes. In the summer of 1621, James appointed the Dean of Westminster, John Williams, as the new Lord Keeper and Bishop of Lincoln. This poet's low opinion of Williams's qualifications for high office is captured in the anagram on Williams's name that precedes this verse. The anagram also circulated separately (in Huntington MS HM 116, for instance, it is transcribed alongside a second anagram on Williams: see "Anagram on John Williams"); however, here it not only accompanies the libel but also becomes the basis for the final, mocking, verdict on Williams delivered in the last ten lines of the verse.

Anagram:

John Williams

Who I? silly man

Thy followers in hope to flatter thee

Will sweare thou dost deserve this dignity

5

Of beeing keeper, and thy freinds in love,

Will say as much as may thy faults remove.

truth thou shalt never heare from them, and foes

With too much passions thy name expose,

to all untruth: and strangers of thy worth,

10

Dare not for fear of punishment speak truth.

But that thou mayest thy owne life character

Discerne¹ and know what thou art & what hereafter,

Time will speake of thee: know within thy name

Thy selfe doth question and resolve the same,

15

Most just of all sides: let thy name speake then

John Williams, who I? a silly man

Thou well maiest wonder from the keyes of Peter²

That thou should'st rise into the place of keeper

And when in modesty thy name thus courts thee

20

It speakes but truly what all men report thee.

Source. John Rylands MS Eng. 410, fol. 26v

Other known sources. Huntington MS HM 116, p. 137 (the anagram only)

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¹ *But that...Discerne*: some contemporaries believed that a person's true character could be hidden in the letters of his or her name; thus anagramming could stake a claim not only as an exercise in wit, but also as a form of revelation.

² *keyes of Peter*: Williams was Dean of Westminster Abbey, the church of St. Peter.
