

Summary: The document below is a copy in what appears to be a contemporary hand of Latin verses concerning Oxford's first wife, Anne Cecil, stated to have been written in the frontispiece of a New Testament which is no longer extant. The content of the verses suggests that the New Testament was presented to Anne Cecil by her mother or father or a close family friend at the time of the birth of her daughter, Elizabeth Vere, on 2 July 1575, while Oxford was traveling on the continent. As the document has survived in the Cecil Papers, it seems likely that the copyist was the composer of the Latin verses, and that the document is a record made by the presenter of his/her gift.

Since the copy states that the verses were written in the frontispiece of a New Testament ('Scripta in fronte Noui testamenti'), issue has been taken with the fact that Ward described the now-lost volume as a 'Greek testament':

. . . a Latin poem of ten lines, stated to have been copied from the fly-leaf of a Greek Testament, once in the possession of the Countess of Oxford.

However Ward's assumption that the volume was a Greek testament is not unwarranted considering that Erasmus' edition of the New Testament in Greek (*Novum Instrumentum Omne*) was published by Froben in Basel in 1516, the first ever to be printed. Roger Ascham (1515-1568) recorded that when Princess Elizabeth, later Queen Elizabeth, was his pupil, 'she used to give the morning to the Greek Testament', presumably Erasmus' edition, and a copy of a Greek New Testament printed in Paris in 1550 and given to her in 1558 by Cambridge University is still extant. See:

<http://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/library/exhibition/williamson-online-exhibition/>

Moreover Anne Cecil's mother, Mildred (nee Cooke), Lady Burghley, was a classical scholar, fluent in Greek, and it is therefore possible that Anne Cecil was taught Greek.

The English translation below is taken from Ward, B.M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604 from Contemporary Documents* (London: John Murray, 1928) pp. 108-9.

VERAM Vera decent: sunt falsa [Greek word: aousala] vero
 Solaq{ue} vera manent: caetera vana volant.
 VERA ergo VERI: cum sis coniunxq{ue} parensq{ue}
 VERA. speq{ue} bona sis paritura VERVM.
 Mens tua fac VERI semper deflagret amore
 VERI SEMPER AMANS, sint tua verba VERA
 Quos magis ut praestes, a veri Authore requiras
 Litera te doceat: spiritus intus alat.
 Chari ut Longa viri sic desideria Leuans
 Gloria vera viri VERA vocere tui.

Ad Illustriss{imam} foeminam D{ominam} Annam Veram
Comitissam oxonij cum Illustriss{imus}
Coniunx Edoardus Verus Comes oxonij
in transmarinis partibus versaretur.

Scripta in fronte Noui testamenti

[=Words of truth are fitting to a Vere. Lies are foreign to the truth, and only true things stand fast. All else is fluctuating and comes to an end. Therefore, since thou, a Vere, art wife and mother of a Vere daughter, and seeing that thou mayest with good hope look forward to being mother of an heir of the Veres, may thy mind always glow with love of the truth, and may thy true motto be *Ever Lover of the Truth*. And that thou mayest the better attain to this, pray to the Author of all Truth that His Word may teach thee; that His Spirit may nourish thy inner life, so that, thus alleviating the absent longings of thy dear husband, thou, a Vere, mayest be called the true glory of thy husband.

To the illustrious Lady Anne Vere, Countess of Oxford, while her noble husband, Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford, was travelling in foreign parts.

Written in the frontispiece of a New Testament]