

## Anthony Gilby: 16<sup>th</sup> century Rector of St Helen's



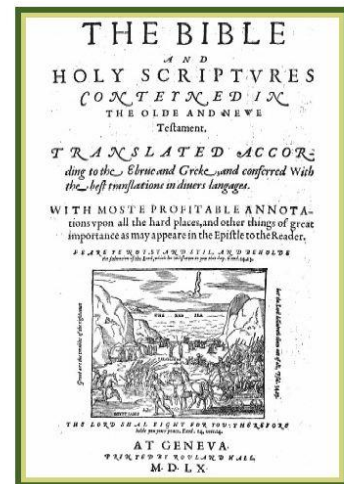
Anthony Gilby

Arguably the most important and eminent Rector at St Helen's was Anthony Gilby (1510 – 1585). He was born in Lincolnshire and was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, graduating in 1535. He married a woman named Elizabeth and they had three surviving children: Ruth, Godfred and Nathaniel.

Gilby converted to Protestantism in his younger years. He served as a preacher in Leicestershire under the rule of Edward VI (1547–1553). When Mary I came to the throne, many eminent Protestants were forced to flee to Europe, amongst them Gilby. There he met a number of the most important people in the Protestant movement, including John Knox, the great orator and preacher, and John Foxe, historian and martyrologist; his *Book of Martyrs* became essential reading and every church was given a copy.

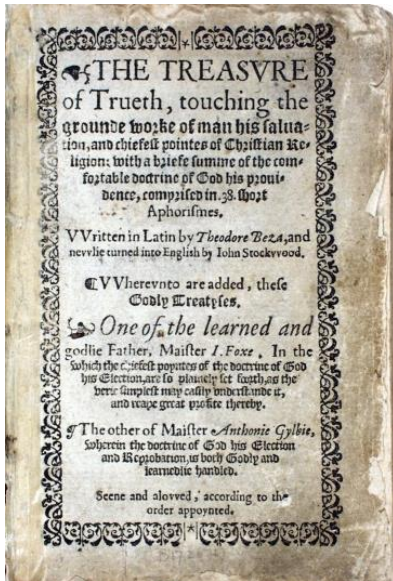
It was probably Gilby's work on the translation and compilation of the Geneva Bible which brought him most fame as a biblical scholar. The main features of the Geneva Bible were its new print-type, its division of the text into verses and the use of italics to denote the addition of words to make the meaning of the text clearer. But it also added notes, prefaces, "arguments" and annotations, which have sometimes been called a "Calvinist Manifesto".

Gilby's role was probably the coordination of the task as a whole and writing the annotations and theological arguments. Gilby was well trained in biblical languages but he worked with a number of eminent scholars with more experience in Hebrew and Greek. The scholarship of Gilby and his co-workers is generally recognised as being of the highest and ahead of its time. It marks a turning point in the evolution of the English Bible, starting from scratch on the basis of the original Hebrew and Greek texts. The Geneva Bible is one of the most significant translations of the Bible into English. It was used by William Shakespeare, Oliver Cromwell, John Donne and John Bunyan. But the popularity of the annotations, and thus Gilby's main contribution, is evident in at least five editions of the King James Version (1611), which included the annotations of the Geneva edition of 1560.



Geneva Bible

Gilby returned to England in 1560 and discovered that a great many "popish remnants" remained in the church of Elizabeth I from Mary's reign. His main concern was the use of vestments, caps and surplices, but also the lack of Bible reading and preaching.



A book written by Gilby.

Gilby came to Ashby as lecturer and rector in 1560, at the behest of Henry Hastings, the 'Protestant' earl. The Earl intended that Gilby should evangelise not only the Earl's household, but the whole country! Thanks to the sponsorship of Henry Hastings, Gilby was able to live out the rest of his life as a lecturer at Ashby and Rector of St Helen's. With the Earl's help and the influence he had over education at the Ashby Grammar School, Gilby became an important leader of the Puritan movement. He died in 1585 and was briefly succeeded by his son Nathaniel.

The Earl made sure that Gilby's influence on the practice of Protestantism would continue locally by appointing Arthur Hildersham as rector at Ashby in 1587.

**Anne Heaton  
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