

## Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 53

At the same conference which section 52 was received, Algernon Sidney Gilbert approached Smith and requested a revelation. This section is the response to that request.

1 Behold, I say unto you, my servant Sidney Gilbert, that I have heard your prayers; and you have called upon me that it should be made known unto you, of the Lord your God, concerning your calling and election in the church, which I, the Lord, have raised up in these last days.

2 Behold, I, the Lord, who was crucified for the sins of the world, give unto you a commandment that you shall forsake the world. 3 Take upon you mine ordination, even that of an elder, to preach faith and repentance and remission of sins, according to my word, and the reception of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands; 4 And also to be an agent unto this church in the place which shall be appointed by the bishop, according to commandments which shall be given hereafter. 5 And again, verily I say unto you, you shall take your journey with my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon.

6 Behold, these are the first ordinances which you shall receive; and the residue shall be made known in a time to come, according to your labor in my vineyard. 7 And again, I would that ye should learn that he only is saved who endureth unto the end. Even so. Amen.

v1 Introduction indicating this statement is in reply to Gilbert's request to know his status with the Lord.

v2 This verse can be arranged as an antithetical parallelism:

Behold, I, the Lord,  
    who was crucified for the sins of the world,  
Give unto you  
    a commandment that you shall forsake the world.

Similar statements appear in D&C 20:17-25, 21:9, 35:2, 76:41-42, 138:35. All of these are saying Jesus was crucified for the sins of the world so we might be redeemed/sanctified/spared. Jesus suffered that we might not have to. Thus, Jesus, the Lord, commands His followers to abandon worldliness and sin because He has made it possible for them to escape it.

v3-5 Three things Gilbert should do to "forsake the world", namely become a proselyting Elder (v. 3), be an agent to the Church (v. 4, cp. 57:6-9), journey with Smith and Rigdon (v. 5).

v6 Doing the "first ordinances", or the direction in v. 3-5, will result in Gilbert being instructed in things to come.

v7 Concludes with an admonition that compliments v. 1. Those who endure to the end are saved, cp. Mosiah 4:6-8.

## **Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 53**

Algernon Sidney Gilbert ran the merchandise store in Kirtland, OH with Newel K. Whitney.

This section was first published in the Book of Commandments in 1833, pages 179-180. It was then published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, page 195. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 4, page 432, dated February 15, 1844, and in the Millennial Star, volume 5, number 8, page 113, dated January, 1845.

### **Excerpt from History of the Church**

Shortly after the foregoing was received, at the request of Algernon Sidney Gilbert I inquired, and obtained the following:

[text of D&C 53 quoted]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, page 179)

### **Excerpt from History of the Church**

Algernon Sidney Gilbert was called and chosen, and appointed to receive his endowment in Kirtland, and to assist in gathering up the strength of the Lord's house, and to proclaim the everlasting Gospel until Zion is redeemed. But he said he "could not do it." (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 2, page 113)

### **Excerpt from History of the Church**

The drafting and signing of the above, was the last public act of the keeper of the Lord's storehouse Algernon Sidney Gilbert, for he was attacked with the cholera the same day, and died about the 29th. He had been called to preach the Gospel, but had been known to say that he "would rather die than go forth to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles." (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 2, page 118)

### **Excerpt from Comprehensive History of the Church**

The New Dispensation has had few men more devoted to its interests than Algernon Sidney Gilbert; and few men of keener intellect and larger capacity. He was a man of rare good sense, conservative and of sound judgment. All of which appears in the many communications drawn up in Missouri by him during the

troubulous times through which the church passed in those days. Much of the correspondence between the Missouri brethren and Governor Dunklin was the work of Elder Gilbert, and it bears witness to the truth of what is here said of him. Something like prejudice existed against him among the early members of the church, because he was once heard to say, when informed that he had been called to preach the gospel, that he "would rather die than go forth to preach the gospel to the Gentiles." His death occurring about this time led one of the prominent elders to say--"The Lord took him at his word." Yet Elder Gilbert's remark did not arise out of any lack of faith in the truth of God's great latter-day work, but from a native diffidence and lack of confidence in his ability to preach the gospel; and, of course, a dread of the hardness of heart and the unbelieving minds of those to whom he would be sent. The place and date of Elder Gilbert's birth cannot be ascertained. His father's family resided in Huntington, Connecticut. Besides himself, there was a younger brother who joined the church, but he died of cholera in St. Louis, Missouri, the same year that his elder brother died. Elder Gilbert for some years was a successful merchant in Painsville, Ohio; and subsequently, with Newel K. Whitney, he founded the successful mercantile firm of Gilbert and Whitney in Kirtland, Ohio, at which place the gospel found him in the year 1830. Later, as we have seen in the text of this History, he was called to go to Missouri, and was appointed keeper of the Lord's storehouse, and upon him also devolved the responsibility of purchasing lands for the saints. In the persecutions which came upon the people in Jackson county, he sacrificed all his goods, and was among the six who offered their own lives for the lives of their friends in the Jackson county trouble. (See ante, ch. xxvii). Such a character and such a career as that of Algernon Sidney Gilbert dignifies the cause to which he devoted the energies of his manhood, and is worthy of honorable mention in the pages of its history. (B. H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church, volume 2, page 118, footnote 7)

#### **Excerpt from Regional Studies in LDS History**

By the last week of June 1834, as the threat of battle was subsiding, another misfortune beset the Saints in Clay County. The arrival of Zion's Camp into Clay County brought Cholera which is a disease of the digestive tract and was often a frightful malady of the sometimes unsanitary frontier. It struck members of the Camp violently when they stopped at Rush Creek two miles east of Liberty, 24 June, two days after the reception

of the "Fishing River Revelation." Some of the members of Zion's Camp believed the disease was a divine retribution for their own misconduct during their journey to Missouri. About seventy members of the Camp were stricken with it and thirteen of them died as did two local Church members, including Algernon Sidney Gilbert. Gilbert had treated some of the diseased Camp members at his house near Rush Creek. The presence of the disease in Clay County terrified the citizens, and with the sinking of the ferry still fresh in their memory, it further hardened them against the Latter-day Saints. Just before the outbreak of the disease, the now General David R. Atchison had advised Camp members not to enter Liberty because of the enraged feelings of the people against them. The sinking of the ferry, the arrival of Zion's Camp-and the enmity associated with both-and the outbreak of cholera deepened the animosity. Thus, though less than a year in Clay County, the Saints suffered repeated disappointments, the hardships of a displaced people, and the hatred from some of their new neighbors. (Arnold K. Garr and Clark V. Johnson, Regional Studies in LDS History Series: Missouri, pages 252-253, from an essay entitled "Latter-day Saint Conflict in Clay County" by Max H. Parkin)

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