

Thomas Tillam

Brief Biographical Note

Thomas Tillam was an early Particular Baptist, Apocalyptic Radical, Fifth Monarchist and Seventh Day Advocate who pastored a congregation in Hexman, Northumberland, England, where he arrived in 1651, being sent there with the blessing of the Commission for Propagating the Gospel {as what was then termed as a 'messenger'} in the Northern Countries by the Baptist Church meeting in Coleman Street, London, which was at that time pastored by Hanserd Knollys. His exposition on Revelation Chapter Eleven, entitled, "The Two Witnesses," was also published at this time. In the ensuing years he had many conflicts with Paul Hobson, {Col. Hobson, army officer, and Baptist leader in Newcastle,} about ministerial support, congregational singing, laying on of hands, blessing of infants...which pressures on the Hexman church became so intense that the congregation split into pro and anti Tillam factions, which is probably why Tillam left Hexman about 1656. By 1657 Tillam had begun publically observing the Seventh Day {Saturday} Sabbath; {supposedly Tillam was the first to call the Sunday Sabbath the Mark of the Beast, a cry many later Sabbath-keepers would take up;} and encouraged trades on Sunday, which visible dissention did not sit well with the authorities, and he thus found himself jailed soon after. In 1659 the Quaker George Fox took him to task in his book entitled, "An Answer to Thomas Tillam's book called the Seventh Day Sabbath, wherein it is showed that a Christian's Sabbath is Christ, who is Lord of that Day." Tillam eventually established a millennial colony in Palatinate; a region in south western Germany, and little is known as to his latter days. MPJ

Christ's Two Witnesses

"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." {Rev.11:1} The first thing given to the Apostle John here is a reed, that he was a wise master builder might exactly measure his work and leave a pattern to all believers, as those that must work and walk by rule. This reed is the same with that measuring line, that plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, by which Jerusalem {in all ages} must be measured. {Zech.2:1, 4:10} This reed is not an Egyptian reed, {too weak for such a work,} {Is.36:6,} nor such a reed as was put for a mock scepter into the hand of our crucified Lord. {Mt.27:29} But this holy reed is that royal scepter of Christ's kingdom, whereby he ruleth his princely subjects, which he hath won by conquest from death and hell, being none other than the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, put into the hands and hearts of his faithful ministers, {II Tim.2:2, II Pet.1:15,} whom he had authorized to direct, guide, and govern his select sheep until his second coming. This royal reed is that staff of doctrine which was the great joy and solace of King David's soul. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." {Ps.23:4} This is the staff of beauty and the staff of bands, with which the Lord led and fed his flock of old, and with which he will have the Gospel Temple, and the Altar and every Worshiper therein exactly measured thereby. As Christ the foundation was {in all his actions} measured by this line of truth, {that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, as it is written according to the Scriptures, and the like, Jn.17:12, Mt.26:31, I Cor.15:3,4 ...,} so must every living stone, every true branch be squared, ruled, and measured by the same reed. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." "For I have given unto them the

words which thou gavest me." {Jn.17:6,8} "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God." {I Thes.2:13} Those stones that were admitted into Solomon's Temple were first hewed, squared, prepared, costly stones; and can it be imagined that a promiscuous heap of rugged, polluted, deformed, unpolished stones should be fit matter for the second more glorious Temple? Is it probable that Christ will admit of scandalous, ignorant, profane persons, {neither resembling, nor in a capacity of discerning his blessed body of truth,} as choice materials for this true tabernacle which the Lord hath pitched and not man? {Heb.8:2} Would such dirty patches be seemly in his seamless coat? The Lord abhorreth such a mixture! {I Cor.5:7} The true glory of this Gospel Temple consists in the purity of the materials, living lively stones, exactly measured, and fitly framed together, growing to an holy temple in the Lord; an habitation of God through the Spirit; a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people. {I Pet.2:5,9, Eph.2:21,22} - "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." {Rev.11:3,4} These two olive trees are plainly called the word of the Lord. "And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, this is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." {Zech.4:3-6} Not Zerubbabel and Joshua as some imagine; nor Enoch and Elias as others conjecture; nor Christ and his saints as a third conceive; but all with as much show of truth as that the two houses of this present Parliament should be them; but all these conceits and all other fancies of like nature are not worth the answer, as having not the least ground or warrant in that blessed Rule that is able to make us wise unto salvation. But some who have thought that these two witnesses are the Word and Spirit, do come nearest the truth, and in some sense this is truth, of which more hereafter. The two olive trees which we are inquiring of are called the witnesses distinct from the candlesticks; for though our translators have coupled them together by the conjunction 'and' yet we have been informed, that 'at' or 'besides' is more proper and significant according to Zech.4:3. But I have determined never to receive any testimony of man however excellent, unless it be strongly backed and substantially supported by that clear Fountain of Life, the Testimony of Truth; "to the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;" {Is.8:20;} and this testimony, even this very word discovers more heavenly light than I was aware of; for in this text the Scriptures are plainly called a Testimony or Witness; let the answer to Zechariah's question clear the truth hereof more fully, the prophet having a vision of these two olive trees, {which are plainly said to stand by the candlestick,} asketh the Angel what they were; to which he answered, "this is the word of the Lord;" that is to say, the Scriptures which before are called the Law and the Testimony; and this word of the Lord held forth by two olive trees is purposely produced for the cherishing and establishing of that Temple work that Zerubbabel had in hand, as if the Lord should say, let this inform and assure you, that though mountains of difficulties appear, though Sanballat and Tobiah {the exact type of Pope and Cardinals} {Neh.6:1} and many false brethren use all means to hinder and destroy my Temple work; though my candlestick

be now in a low, mean and obscure condition; yet my work shall go on and prosper; the word is gone out of my mouth, it is upon record in the writings of my prophets, and therefore cannot fail; but these Scriptures of truth shall continually stand by my candlesticks like two olive trees, conveying by my seven sorts of instruments as by so many pipes, such plentiful nourishment as shall be able to support my churches in the most exiled wilderness state. And now the word of the Lord is the only visible support, and supply of the poor distressed woman; and this word of the Lord stands like two olive trees on each side of the candlesticks, or true churches, yielding constant nourishment to the saints. {Zech.4:11,12} This light the Spirit of truth is pleased to communicate in this fourth verse of the eleventh chapter of the Revelation; that these witnesses are two olive trees, which must be so understood as Christ is a Vine, a Door, a Stone, a Nail, &c.; that is, not really, but figuratively, so these blessed witnesses have the same use, and therefore are fitly compared unto olive trees. First, that these two olive trees are expressly called the word of the Lord hath been already shown from Zechariah, and though this might abundantly satisfy being joined with that of Is.8:20, yet for the further evidence of this truth, let us consider the nature of the olive tree, {Rom.11:17} from which the Jews were broken off, and I believe it will clearly appear, that the olive tree there mentioned is none other but the word of God growing up, and drawing sap from the Eternal Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Root of this tree, whereof faithful Abraham was only a type. And that the breaking off the unbelieving Jews was their separation from, {procured by their contempt of,} the doctrine of salvation contained in the Scripture; these, and only these were the children of the kingdom, {as a type of the spiritual seed of Christ,} to whom only the pure oracles of God were committed, to whom only the Gospel was commanded to be preached, {Mt.10:5,6,} and to whom only for a long time it was preached, {Acts 11:19,} until they rejecting this heavenly juice, putting away the sap and fatness of this olive tree, thereby judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. {Acts 13:46} So that this act of theirs in putting from them the word of God, {causing those words of Paul, and Barnabas, "lo, we turn to the Gentiles,"} was the breaking of them off from the Olive Tree, {the eternal word,} and it is worth our consideration, that the Apostle calls it their own Olive Tree, {Rom.11:24,} as the Lord Jesus also calls the word of salvation their bread. {Mt.15:26} They are here said to be cut off from the Olive tree upon which they did grow, and we are grafted upon that stock, or tree from which they were cut; now it is plain that we are built upon the foundation of the apostles, and prophets, {Eph.2:20,} which I am sure are the two Testaments that make out the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the root of this Olive Tree. For the further illustration of this truth {that it was the doctrine of salvation contained in the Scriptures, from which these Jews were broken off, and consequently that this olive tree is none other than the word of God,} let us examine what those two staves in Zechariah are with which the Lord himself fed this stiff necked obstinate people, and this will plainly appear to be the holy Scriptures, or word of God; and lest it should be deemed the human fancy of a conceited brain, take the naked words as they lie in the Scripture. "And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock." "And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people, and it was broken in that day; and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD." {Zech.11:7,10,11} That then from which these stubborn Jews were broken off, is the word of the Lord, or the holy Scriptures; but the Jews were broken off the true Olive Tree; therefore the true olive tree is the word of the Lord, or

the holy Scriptures. All which being compared, it will evidently appear, that the two olive trees in this of the Revelation, and that of Zechariah are none other than the holy Scriptures, or word of God. Secondly, it is as plain that the Blessed Scriptures are the proper food and nourishment of saints. {Rev.12:6} What else is that feast of fat things, that wine on the lees well refined, {Is.25:6,} that fatness of the Lord's house wherewith he satisfies the souls of his saints, those rivers of pleasure that he makes them drink of, and to which the Lord Jesus so freely summons them. "O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." {Song 5:1} But I pass this briefly, as not to be denied, that the holy Scriptures are the proper food and nourishment of the saints; for which employment these holy witnesses are designed, namely to feed the Church in her exiled wilderness estate. {Rev.12:6} But, if any should cavil, that I attribute that to the Scriptures, which is peculiar to the Spirit of God, I have this to say, that I have no thought of the Scriptures without, or beside the Spirit of God; I receive all Scriptures as the Lord Jesus delivered them. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," "quick, and powerful," "able to make wise unto salvation." {Jn.6:63, Heb.4:12, II Tim.3:15} And therefore the blessed Scriptures are the proper, fit, suitable nourishment for the saints, and particularly for the Church in her afflicted despised wilderness estate. Thirdly, that the holy Scriptures are called witnesses, and which is yet more plain, that these very witnesses of Christ, will appear in the examination of several Scriptures; and first that the Law is called so. "Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee." {Deut.31:26} And it appears as clearly to me that the Gospel is so called also. "This is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son." {I Jn.5:9} If it be objected, that it is the Spirit &c., that is here called the witness, it is readily granted; neither dare I call the Spirit one thing, and the word another, {except it be said that the Scriptures are the mind of the Spirit,} it is above noted that the Lord Jesus saith they are both one thing, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life;" {Jn.6:63;} therefore the Scriptures have ordinarily the same appellations and operations ascribed to them, as are to the Spirit itself; the Spirit is called Truth, so also the word is called Truth; {I Jn.5:6;} the Spirit is said to sanctify, so the word is likewise said to sanctify, {Jn.17:17,} and the like; and certain I am, that the properties ascribed to the word are not communicable to any essence below the Spirit of God. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." {Heb.4:12} "Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth; and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth." {Hos.6:5} When I compare these Scriptures with the fifth verse of this eleventh of the Revelation, {Is.11:4 with Rev.11:5,} it doth so wonderfully clear this truth to me, that the Scriptures of the two Testaments, and only these are the two witnesses; that if there were no other ground but this, it would abundantly satisfy and confirm me in the discovery of this abstruse and wonderful mystery. To conclude, this truth so manifest already, is yet further cleared by those blessed lips where never guile was found, the Lord Jesus Christ himself affirming it himself in these words, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." {Jn.5:39} Here it is plain, that they are not only called witnesses, but these very witnesses here spoken of, for the words carry with them this clear sound, "search the Scriptures, for they are my witnesses." Thus, as these blessed witnesses testify of Christ, so Christ also giveth testimony to them, as to

his witnesses, and so puts the point in hand beyond all dispute; that the holy Scriptures of the two Testaments, and only these, are the two witnesses here spoken of; and yet one word more for the more ample discovery of the transcendent excellency of these heavenly witnesses, {the Scriptures of truth,} from the clear evidence the Apostle Peter gives; who having declared the excellent glory of Christ in the mount which he saw; and the audible voice, from the highest Majesty, giving invincible testimony of his Son saith, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." {II Pet.1:17} What; the Scriptures more sure than the voice of God Himself from heaven? Yes, a more certain infallible voice now in these Gospel days, than any miraculous extraordinary voice whatsoever; and here we may admire the wisdom, care, and faithfulness of our Royal Lawgiver, who knowing that many false prophets would arise, and deceive many; and considering how Satan usually transforms himself into an angel of light; {II Cor.11:13,14;} and that his eldest son antichrist would come after the working of this prince of darkness, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders. {II Thes.2:9} To detect this detestable wickedness, and most dreadful blasphemous abomination, so frequently belched forth in these days of Satan's power, hath our eternal King left his royal will and pleasure upon Record, as a certain rule {Gal.6:16} for his subjects to walk by, till his second personal appearance, denouncing anathema to all such as shall presume to prescribe any other rule, or pretend any voice or vision, revelation or inspiration, beside or against this sure word of prophecy. {Gal.1:8} Here we see the transcendent excellency and unparalleled dignity of these glorious Witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ; upon this sure foundation we are built; to this sure word we do well if we take heed, {as setting forth the glories of Him in whom the Father is well pleased,} it being the character of a truly blessed man, {Ps.1:2,} to make these testimonies his delight, and to meditate herein continually, abominating the witchcrafts, sorceries, and cunningly devised fables of such as come with all plausible and sweet carriage, and mild pleasant behavior, lying in wait to deceive. Thomas Tillam {Two Witnesses, 1651}

Note

This exposition is not brought forth to make a dogmatic statement in regards to the "two witnesses" mentioned in Revelation chapter eleven, as being explicitly the word of the Lord; but to show the excellency and preciousness of that sacred word, especially as it relates to the doctrine of Christ, and a believers persuasion to hold fast the form {pattern} of sound words. We cannot but distance ourselves from those wild prophetic interpretations that we constantly come across, even by otherwise able expositors of the Word; and especially those that would interpret the book of Daniel, and the book of Revelation by current events, or in the light of worldly conflicts; which cannot but sicken any truly grace taught child of God, who has been made to realize that these things have little, if anything to do with the spiritual conflict {Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and that warfare in which his subjects are engaged is not in the flesh, but in the spirit} in which the church of God is engaged whilst in her pilgrim state; and we believe that there are many that are grieved and wearied by the blatant extravagancies of this religious sensationalism; and there is no doubt in our minds that the actual events which precede the second coming of Christ will confound most all these crystal ball gazers, just as the Jews were dazed and confounded in

the manner in which the prophecies concerning the first advent of our Lord were brought to pass.