355 Tent (*Tabernaculum*)

We read about a certain material and historical tent which was made under Moses.[[1]](#endnote-1) Concerning a certain allegorical tent, namely, concerning the Church militant. Concerning a certain tropological tent, namely, concerning the sojourning soul. Concerning a certain anagogical tent, namely, concerning the Church triumphant.

The first tent, namely, of Moses, according to Isidore[[2]](#endnote-2) and Hugh,[[3]](#endnote-3) the tent was portable from place to place. Or the house consecrated to God was square and oblong closed in by three walls, namely, northern, southern, and western. At the eastern side in truth free and open to entry, as thus only from the east can it be illuminated. Also, it was separated in two parts. Because to the west it extends ten cubits, which part was entirely square in length, breadth, and height, which part is called the sanctuary or holy of holies. In the forward part, that is, in the eastern part, there was a candelabrum, at the southern part a table, at the northern part in the middle a veil having before that was an altar of gold for this mobile tent. About which it is treated in Exod. 26.

And next the children of Israel used this through the desert up to the time of Solomon when the fixed and stable temple was made. It designates the status of the penitent, but by the temple the status of future life. Nothing even in the first tent designated the Church militant which transferred into heaven and the triumphant. Thus, we ought in the present life live in this tabernacle and flee to it until the king of peace reigns over us in the kingdom of heaven.

¶ Concerning this tabernacle the Apostle says in Heb. 9[:2]: “A tabernacle was made, wherein were the candlesticks, and the table, and the setting forth of loaves, which is called the holy.” After the veil or covering, after which, the second tabernacle which is called the holy of holies. So, in the Church militant are candelabra for illuminating the table for supporting the loaves to be restored.

In the second tabernacle was the arc of the covenant which certainly was “a tabernacle for a shade in the daytime from the heat, and for a security and covert from the whirlwind, and from rain,” Isai. 4[:6]. For just as in cathedral churches are images which are outside the church and frequently, they are disfigured by the storms.

¶ For what things are inside the tent of the world are guarded, so those who are outside the merits of the Church are conquered by temptations than those who are inside are preserved, Gen. 25[:27]: “Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents.” Therefore, he received the paternal blessing which Esau lost who was a hunting man and an outdoorsman and a wanderer, Num. 24[:5]: “How beautiful are your tabernacles, O Jacob,” etc. But in Job 8[:22] it is said, “The dwelling of the wicked shall not stand.” Because according to Gregory, book 8, *Moralia*,[[4]](#endnote-4) the lovers of this fleeting life, while they studiously build for themselves in the present, suddenly they will be taken to eternal pain. Wherefore also rightly Peter was reprehended by Christ because not yet was he perfectly strengthened on earth to know how to make a tent, [Luke 9:33].

¶ Concerning the second, and meritoriously it is called a tabernacle, Apo. 21[:3]: “Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and he will dwell with them.” God made the human soul capable of divinity according to Augustine, 15 *De Trinitate*.[[5]](#endnote-5)That nothing other can fill it except God. Wherefore also the human mind naturally prefers that state in which God dwells, Job 29[:2, 4]: “Who will grant me, that I might be according to the months past,” and it follows “When God was secretly in my tabernacle?” When the work was with me, Eccli. 24[:12]: “He that made me, rested in my tabernacle.”

¶ And it is to be known that a tent is called the place of soldiers, pilgrims, and watchmen. Wherefore also in tents dwell soldiers, travelers, and shepherds, so the Church is served in good ways by the laity and secular persons, it goes on pilgrimage in good ways with clerics and religious, and it watches in good ways with pastors and prelates.

Concerning the first, Can. 1[:4]: “I am black but beautiful, as the tents of Cedar.” Black because darkened by the outdoor work, but beautiful changed by the purity of the divine image.

Concerning the second, 2 Cor. 5[:4]: We are as if “in this tabernacle, do groan, being burthened; because we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” The cleric groans whose part of heredity is God alone. The religious person groans who has been cast down by the weight of earthly things, feels in himself the contrary motions, when the flesh drags him down from corruption, the spirit tends upwards out of devotion.

¶ Concerning the third, Job 39[:5-6]: “The wild ass to whom I have given a house in the wilderness, and his dwellings in the barren land.” This wild ass, that is, the prelate stays in the place of solitude out of singular devotion and holiness, in the barren land out of fervent charity, and on the mountain of solitude and subordinates under instruction.

1. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*  Ia-Iiae q. 102 a. 4 ad 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 15.10.1-2 (PL 82:551): Tabernacula tentoria sunt militum, quibus in itinere solis ardores tempestatesque imbrium, frigorisque injurias vitant. Dicta autem tabernacula, quod cortinae distentae funibus, tabulis interstantibus appenderentur, quae tentoria sustinerent.

Tentorium vocatum quod tendatur funibus atque palis. Unde et hodie praetendere dicitur. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Hugh of St. Victor, *Adnotatiunculae elucidatoriae in threnos Jeremiae...* (PL 175:267-268, 274-276). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory, *Moralia* 8.54.92 (PL 75:858): quia vitae fugientis amatores, dum studiose se in praesentibus construunt, repente ad aeterna rapiuntur. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 5.1.2 (PL 42:912): Nihil certe istorum invenimus in eo, quo in natura nostra nihil melius invenimus, id est, in nostro intellectu, quo sapientiam capimus quantum capaces sumus. Quod ergo non invenimus in meliore nostro, non debemus in illo quaerere, quod longe melius est meliore nostro: ut sic intelligamus Deum, [↑](#endnote-ref-5)