

THE TABERNACLE AND CREATION THEOLOGY IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ASIA

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Abstract:

The important question in this article is “How important is the construction of tabernacle, on the sanctuary texts, especially in Exod 39:32-43 (in the larger context of Exod 25-31.35-40), for our church today, especially in Asia – in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic?” Therefore, this article tries (1) to develop some theological thoughts of the Construction of Tabernacle in Exod 39:32-43 for Our Church Today; (2) to explore their theological implications for our situation today – in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic; and (3) to improve some theological thoughts on “Tabernacle” in the Catholic Church, especially regarding to Sacramentum Caritatis 69 which describes the location of the tabernacle in the church by using the strong words, “The correct positioning of the tabernacle”. We try to go deeper on it by examining the richness of theological thoughts behind “the tabernacle” – not just focus on “the location” but try to go beyond.

Keywords:

adoration, asian ways, covid-19, creation, sacramentum caritatis, tabernacle

INTRODUCTION

Dominik Markl¹'s statement is “the central purposes of the sanctuary texts in their latest is to create continuity between the cults of the pre-

¹ Dominik Markl is a Professor of Old Testament in Pontifical Biblical Institute.

and the postexilic temples of Jerusalem.”¹ From that statement, I only try to find some *theological thoughts* by the Priestly Writer (P)² – “How important is the construction of tabernacle, on the sanctuary texts, especially in Exod 39:32-43 (in the larger context of Exod 25-31.35-40) for our church today, especially in Asia – in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic?”

This article will focus:

1. To develop some theological thoughts of the Construction of Tabernacle in Exod 39:32-43 for Our Church Today;
2. To explore their theological implications for our situation today – in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic; and
3. To improve some theological thoughts on “Tabernacle” in the Catholic Church, especially regarding to *Sacramentum Caritatis* 69 which describes the location of the tabernacle in the church by using the strong words, “The correct positioning of the tabernacle”.

SOME THEOLOGICAL THOUGHTS

Making the Tabernacle as a Realization of Divine Relationship between God, Moses and the People of Israel

The first initiative to construct the tabernacle and its furnishing comes from God himself through the mediation of Moses:

- a. This is the thing that the Lord commanded
(זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה) (Exod 35:4)
- b. You shall come and make all that the Lord commanded
(יָבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה) (Exod 35:10).

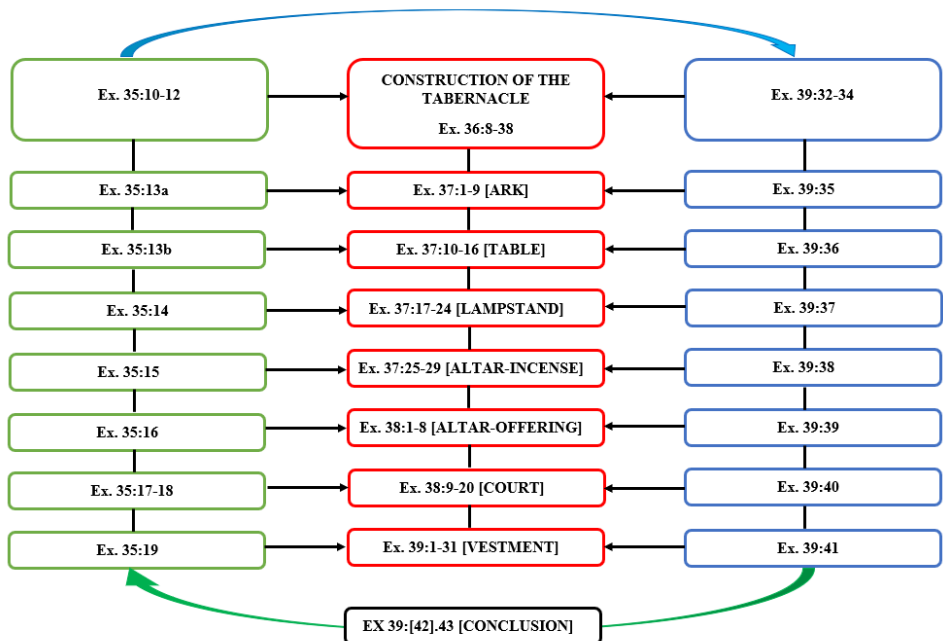
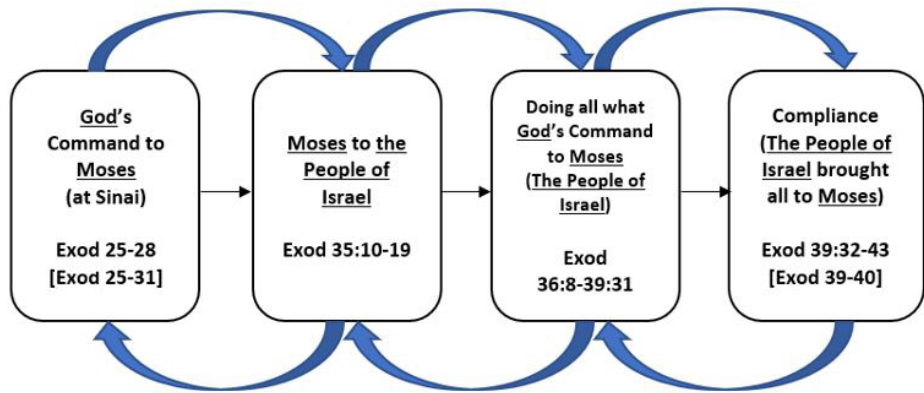
Furthermore, the people of Israel did all God’s commands through

¹ D. Markl, “The Wilderness Sanctuary as the Archetype of Continuity between the Pre- and the Postexilic Temples of Jerusalem” in *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Rise of the Torah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016) 228.

² Schmid argues, “Within the book of Exodus, the Priestly texts are especially prominent and extensive in the second half of the book. The instructions regarding the construction of the sanctuary (Exod 25-31) and the building report (Exod 35-40) are part of P (or its expansions).” [K. Schmid, “Exodus in the Pentateuch” in *The Book of Exodus: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2014) 33.]

Moses (Exod 36:8-39:31). And finally, they brought all what they did to Moses (Exod 39:32-43). In the larger context of Exod 25-31.35-40, we can find some dynamics of divine relationship between God, Moses and the people of Israel on the text:

The dynamics of divine relationship between God, Moses and the people of Israel



From the diagram, we can realize that Moses and Sinai, from the beginning (Exod 25-28), are two important points which cannot be separated – as “the link” between God and his people in the larger context of Exod 25-40. At Sinai, Moses received the God’s command for his people (Exod 25:8-9). Consequently, in this case, the divine relationship only can be realized by doing all what God commanded (Exod 39:32), i.e making the tabernacle (משכן) (Exod 36:8-39:31). Therefore, doing what God commanded is something important to deepen the relationship between God and his people.

The Tabernacle as a “Microcosm of Creation”

In Exod 39:32.43; [40:33], we can read it as an allusion to Gen 1:31-2:3.³

Exod 39:32.43; [40:33]	Gen. 1:31-2:3
<u>וַתְּכַל כָּל־עֲבֹדַת מִשְׁכַּן אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד</u>³² <u>וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה</u> <u>אֶת־מֹשֶׁה כִּן עָשׂוּ</u> Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting (was) finished; and the sons of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so they did. וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת־כָּל־הַמְּלָאכָה וְהָנָה עָשׂוּ אֹתָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה כִּן עָשׂוּ⁴³ וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they did it as the Lord had commanded,⁵ so they have done, and Moses blessed them.	<u>וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל־צַבָּאָם</u>^{2:1} Thus the heavens and the earth are finished and all their host. וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהָנָה^{1:31} טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי^{2:3} And God saw all that he did, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day. And God blessed the seventh day.

³ J-P. Sonnet, “The Dynamic of Closure in the Pentateuch” in *The Formation of the Pentateuch*, ed. J. C. Gertz, B. M. Levinson, D. Rom-Shiloni, and K. Schmid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016) 1130-1131.

⁴ “The pattern ‘X saw, and behold’ can be found in numerous instances (Gen 8:13; 18:2; 19:28; 24:63; 29:2; 33:1; Exod 3:2; Josh 5:13; Judg 9:43; 2 Sam 13:34). But, the pattern ‘X saw Y and behold, Z’ is much less frequent (Gen 1:31; Gen 6:12; Exod 39:43).” [see V. P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011) 613.]

[<u>יִכַּל מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַמִּלְאכָה</u> ^{40:33}] [And Moses finished the work.]	[<u>וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה</u> ^{2:2}] [And God finished, on the seventh day, his work which he did.]
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The Parallelism between Exodus 39:32-43 and Genesis 1:1-2⁵

The Construction of the Tabernacle as a “Microcosm” of Creation

(Exodus 39:32-43 as an Allusion to Genesis 1:1-2:3)

Ex. 39:32-34 → [Ex. 35:10-12]		THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABERNACLE	← Ex. 36:8-38	↔	God created the heaven and the earth	Gen 1:1-2
1	Ex. 39:35 [35:13a]	Making the Ark of the Covenant (<i>Testimony</i>)	Ex. 37:1-9	↔	The First Day	Gen 1:3-5
2	Ex. 39:36 [35:13b]	Making the Table for the Bread of the Presence	Ex. 37:10-16	↔	The Second Day	Gen 1:6-8
3	Ex. 39:37 [35:14]	Making the Lampstand	Ex. 37:17-24	↔	The Third Day	Gen 1:9-13
4	Ex. 39:38 [35:15]	Making the Altar of Incense (Anointing Oil and Incense)	Ex. 37:25-29	↔	The Fourth Day	Gen 1:14-19
5	Ex. 39:39 [35:16]	Making the Altar of Burnt Offering	Ex. 38:1-8	↔	The Fifth Day	Gen 1:20-23
6	Ex. 39:40 [35:17-18]	Making the Court of the Tabernacle	Ex. 38:9-20	↔	The Sixth Day	Gen 1:24-31
7	Ex. 39:41 [35:19]	Making the Vestment for the Priesthood	Ex. 39:1-31	↔	The Seventh Day	Gen 2:1-2

Ex. 39:[42].43 → Conclusion ← Gen 2:3

From this point of view, the tabernacle can be read as “microcosm of creation”. At the same time, the tabernacle can be read as a continuity of creation work of God in Genesis (or as a recapitulating creation⁶).⁷ Moreover, from this way of reading, we can find “the Centrality of

⁵ This table is inspired from Naftali S. Cohn, “The Tabernacle, The Creation, and the Ideal of an Orderly World”, in TheTorah.com, <https://www.thetorah.com/article/tabernacle-creation-and-the-ideal-of-an-orderly-world>, Accessed February 14, 2021.

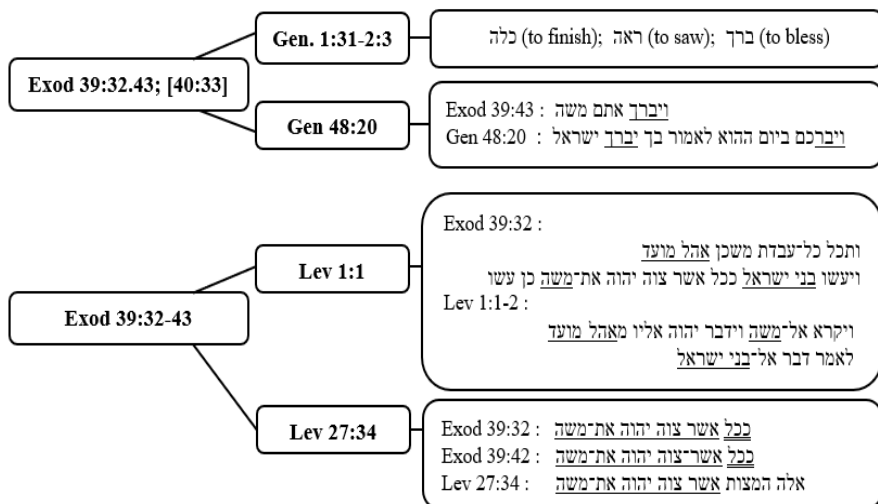
⁶ W. H. C. Propp, Exodus 19-40: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (New York: Yale University Press, 2006) 676.

⁷ Relation between temples and creation is not something new in ancient times, especially in Ancient Near East (ANE). Timmer explains that “The links in the ANE between creation and tabernacle, whether via temple building, paradisiacal imagery, or covenant, have received a good deal of attention. There is no ANE culture in which temples and the cosmos do not bear a significant relation to one another.” Furthermore, Timmer mentions some examples, i.e. (1) Baal Myth (Ugaritic); and (2) Enuma Elish (Akkadian) see D. C. Timmer, Creation, Tabernacle,

Order”: [1] Order in Creation; [2] Order in Sacrifices; and [3] Ordering our Environment.⁸

Exod 39:32-43 [Exod 35-40] and Other Books of Pentateuch

There are some series of thematical, lexical and syntagmatic links between [1] Exod 39:32-43 [and in the larger context of Exod 35-40] and [2] the (a) *beginning* and (b) *ending* of each other books of Pentateuch (Genesis⁹, Leviticus¹⁰, Numbers¹¹ and Deuteronomy¹²).



and Sabbath: The Sabbath Frame of Exodus 31:12-17; 35:1-3 in Exegetical and Theological Perspective (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009) 39-40.

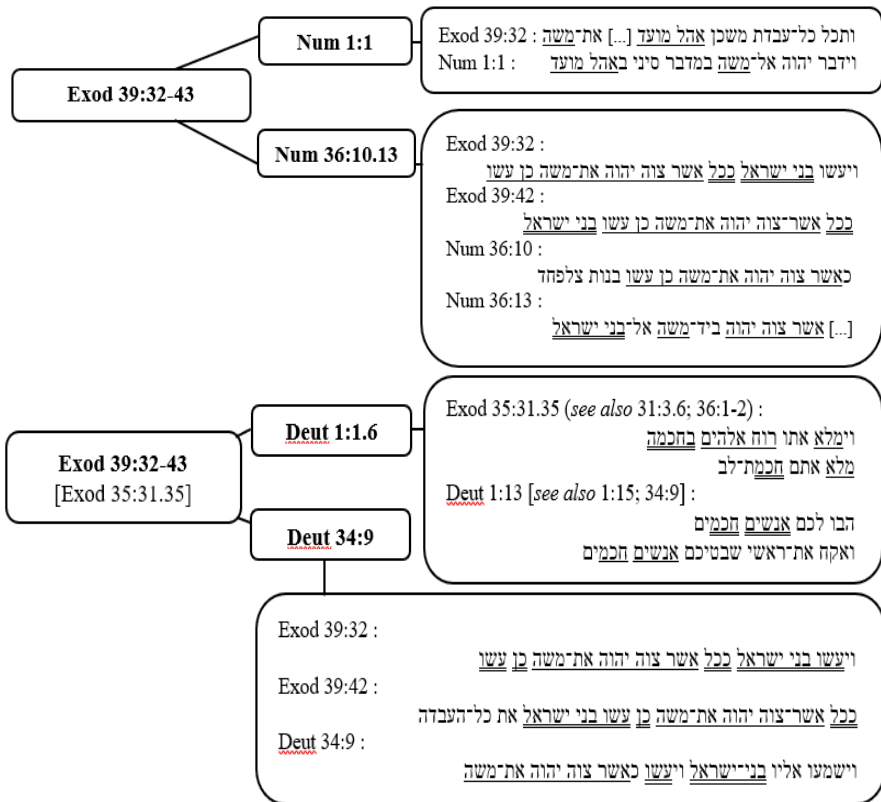
⁸ Naftali S. Cohn, “The Tabernacle”, Accessed February 14, 2021.

⁹ For the connection between Exod 39:32.43; [40:33] and Gen 1:31-2:3, the detail can be found in the following page.

¹⁰ Schmid explains that the priestly tradition of Exod 25-40 has a link to Leviticus 1-9: “Lev 1-9 provides an especially close link to Exod 25-40: the establishment of the sanctuary is followed by the instructions for sacrifices (Lev 1-7) and the beginning of the sacrificial cult.” [K. Schmid, “Exodus in the Pentateuch”, 37.]

¹¹ “Blum and Nihan have pointed out that Num 1-10 are to be understood as a complement to Exod 25-40 rather than to Leviticus.” [K. Schmid, “Exodus in the Pentateuch”, 40.]

¹² Sonnet tries to find the dynamic of the completion of the sanctuary in Exod 39-40. He analyses it and try to find some links to Deuteronomy, see J.-P. Sonnet, “The Dynamic of Closure in the Pentateuch”, 1128-1130.



From the diagram, there are some *theological messages* that can be summarized: **(1)** There are extensive linguistic contacts between Exod 39:32.43; [40:33] and Gen 1:31-2:3 – between the narration of *Tabernacle* and *Creation*.¹³ In this context, *making the tabernacle* also means to remember *the creation work of God* in Genesis. Furthermore, **(2)** the tabernacle's account also talks about “ברך” (“blessing” or “to bless”). In this case, (a) in Exod 39:43, “Moses blessed them” (*all* the people of Israel); and (b) in Gen 48:20, Jacob blessed *all* Joseph's sons (Ephraim and Manasseh). Thus, in this context (Exod 39:43 // Gen 48:20), “the blessing” is for *all*.

(3) Between Exod 39:32 and Lev 1:1-2, we can find three important points, i.e. (a) בני ישראל (*the people of Israel*); (b) אהל מועד (*tent of meeting*); and (c) משה (*Moses*). From these verses, we can find a connection and continuity of narration. [a] In Exod 39:32, *the people of Israel* (בני ישראל) has already finished *the tent of meeting* (אהל מועד)

¹³ See also W. H. C. Propp, Exodus 19-40, 676.

according to the Lord's command to *Moses* (מֹשֶׁה); after that, [b] in Lev 1:1, from the *tent of meeting* (אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד), the Lord called *Moses* (מֹשֶׁה) (see also Num 1:1) to send a message to *the people of Israel* (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (Lev 1:2). It shows us that the relation between God and the people of Israel has "two mediators", i.e. *Moses* (מֹשֶׁה) and *the tent of meeting* (אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד). (4) Furthermore, Moses is a person who receives the God's command (אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה) (Exod 39:32.42 // Lev 27:34 // Num 36:10.13 // Deut 34:9).

(5) In Exod 35:31.35 (see also 31:3.6; 36:1-2), we can find that *the spirit of God, in wisdom* (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּחָכְמָה) has filled Bezalel as an artisan (as a representative of *all* Israel). Because of his wisdom (and also the help of Aholiab), the work which God commanded to Moses is brought to completion. The same association of *wisdom* and *spirit* also can be found in Deut 34:9, where Moses had laid his hands upon Joshua, and Joshua was filled with *a spirit of wisdom* (6) (מָלָא רוּחַ חָכְמָה). This *wisdom* (חָכְמָה) also becomes a criteria to choose the leaders of every tribes in Deut 1:13.

Finally, we can find that the *sanctuary text*, especially in Exod 39:32-43 [and in the larger context of Exod 35-40] has some links to another books of Pentateuch, especially in the *beginning* and *ending* of the books (Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). From that point of view, we can say – not to simplify the complexity of the redactional work of Pentateuch – that "the *sanctuary text* in Exodus [especially in Exod 39:32-43 (and in the larger context of Exod 35-40)] also can be read as a *frame* of Pentateuch's messages for the readers."

The God's Will and the Free Will of the People of Israel

In Exod 39:32, we can find that the people of Israel did all that God commanded to Moses. My question is "Is there a kind of *free will* of the people of Israel?"

The answer can be found in Exod 35:21-29 (*Offerings for the Tabernacle*).

(Exod 35:21)

וַיָּבֹאוּ כָל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׂאוּ לְבוֹ וְכָל אִשֶּׁר נָדְבָה רוּחוֹ אֹתוֹ

הָבִיאוּ אֶת־תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה לְמִלְאכַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד

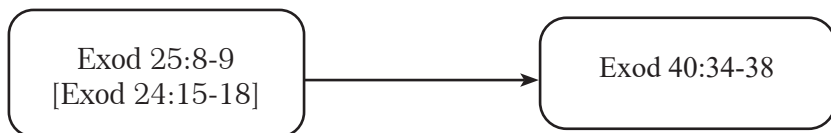
And they came, everyone whom his heart had lifted up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing and they brought the Lord's contribution for the work of the tent of meeting [...]

From this verse (Exod 35:21), we can find that the people of Israel comes and brings a contribution freely – without being forced¹⁴. In the further verses (Exod 35:22-29), we can find that, not *only* man, but *also* every woman brings something to offer. Finally, in Exod 35:29, “the free will” of the people is underlined by the word “נדבה” (*freewill offering*) which people brings for all work which the Lord commanded to the people of Israel through Moses.

In this case, we can find that “the God’s will” to make a sanctuary (the tabernacle), to dwell among Israelites (Exod 25:8-9), is responded by “the free will of the people of Israel” (Exod 35:21-29), and they did it according to the Lord’s commands through Moses (Exod 39:32).

The Presence of God

Priestly tradition of tabernacle wants to transfer the Sinai theophany to the tabernacle.¹⁵



In Exod 24:16-17, we can find that “the glory of the Lord” (כבוד-) יהוה dwells on the mount Sinai. On the eyes of the people of Israel, “the glory of the Lord” (כבוד יהוה) appears like a consuming fire on the top of the mount. Afterward, in Exod 25:8-9, God asks the people of Israel through Moses to make a sanctuary (מקדש) – a tabernacle (משכן) – so that God can dwell among them (the people of Israel). And finally, in Exod 40:34-38, we can find that “the glory of the Lord” (כבוד יהוה) filled the tabernacle (משכן).

¹⁴ Koester describes that “The priestly writer may have attempted to correct certain ideas associated with the temple, since he described a sanctuary that was designed by God and constructed by free will offerings, unlike Solomon’s temple, which was a royal project that utilized forced labor.” (see C. R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament*, CBQ 22 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989) 11.)

¹⁵ C. R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 9.

From these texts (the sanctuary text – Exod 25-31.35-40), there is a possibility to be trapped to “the false theology,” as Sarna argues, “it might encourage an inferential limitation of God’s omnipresence”¹⁶.

Nevertheless, we can find a solution from our text (Exod 39:32-43):

(1) Exod 39:32 : דעומ להא נכשמ תדבע־לב לכתו

(2) Exod 39:33 : וילכ־לכתאנו להא־התא השמ־לא נכשמה־תא ואיבי

In this case, there are two important words, i.e. אהל (tent) and בוא (to bring in). Sarna (1986) explains that “The tabernacle (משכן) is in actually a tent (אהל). It is a nomadic term. Then, the verb ‘to tent’ (שכן) – to reside temporally, moving from place to place – derived from the word ‘tabernacle’ (משכן).”¹⁷ Therefore, (a) behind the idea of “tabernacle” (משכן), there is an idea of “to tent” (שכן) – there is always a movement from one place to another place. The verb בוא (to bring) in Exod 39:33 (*they bring in the tabernacle to Moses, the tent, and all its utensils*) can be a proof that “the tabernacle” in this text can be moved “easily”¹⁸. On the other hand, (b) the tabernacle itself (משכן) is a “fixed-space”.

From that point, we can find that (a) God wants to dwell (וכש) among the people of Israel in the sanctuary, in a “fixed-space”, in the tabernacle (וכשמ) (Exod 25:8-9). At the same time, (b) He is not a static God – not only to be fixed to a particular place¹⁹. He also wants to dwell with the people of Israel “through all their journeys” (מהיעסמ־לכב) (Exod 40:38).²⁰

¹⁶ N. M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1986) 206.

¹⁷ N. M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 206.

¹⁸ Wellhausen says that “the transporting of such a construction in the desert is improbable”, but “there are marks of late post-exilic priestly theology in tabernacle chapters.” [see B. S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974) 531.]

¹⁹ N. M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 206.

²⁰ The difficulty of describing the divine presence is already analysed by Hundley. He tries to explain that “the Priestly writers are careful to distinguish between the ark and תרפכ and YHWH himself”. And, based on Hundley’s analysis, “the Priestly writers also describe the YHWH’s presence is related, if not identical, to YHWH’s glory,” and the Priestly writers try to make some different nuances of the divine presence in the linguistic context. [see M. B. Hundley, *Keeping Heaven on Earth* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 39-52.]

EXPLORING THE THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR SITUATION TODAY

In the midst of Covid-19 pandemic, theologians try to arise an important question, “How and what can theology respond our situation today?” When we try to search the keywords “Covid 19 pandemic and theology” in Google, we can find *about 3.500.000 results* that relate to it. Simply, it means that many people try to find the significance of theology in the midst of horror of Covid-19 pandemic. There are more 2.400.000 confirmed death.²¹

Therefore, the main question in this article is “What is the contribution of the Construction of Tabernacle and Creation Theology in this situation?”

First, there is a new encounter with God.²² In Genesis, God instituted the day to rest and to sanctify His creation on the Sabbath day (Gen 2:3). In Exodus, God – through Moses – blessed all of them because they had done all the work as He had commanded (Ex 39:43). Therefore, we can say that “tabernacle” (in Exodus) and “creation” (in Genesis) culminate in the same point, i.e., “The blessing of God”. Thus, in our situation today – Covid-19 pandemic, we can also say to God, “Where is Your blessing for us? Why so many people had passed away? Where is Your love? It is a difficult time for us.”

From the concept of “tabernacle” (in Exodus) and “creation” (in Genesis), we can find a “meeting point” in “our body” – “We are the temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:16; cf. John 2:19-21; 1 Cor 6:19). Therefore, our own body that God created for us is the tabernacle of God himself. His blessing and His love appear in our own body, does not matter we are well or sick, young or old – “This body is His blessing and His love”. Then, it means that SARS-CoV-2 does not change “the image of God” in each of us. We are still the same like before – “God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good (Gen. 1:31)”. Moreover, everyone who is dead because of SARS-CoV-2, they are still “the tabernacle of the living God”. His body becomes a “spiritual tabernacle” – “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”

²¹ It is based on data of World Health Organization (WHO), “Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic: Numbers at a glance”, in www.who.int, Accessed February 23, 2021.

²² It is inspired by Angel Manuel Rodriguez, “Genesis 1 and the Building of the Israelite Sanctuary”, in *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors* (February 2002) 10.

(John 2:19). Finally, we can say that the synthesis of tabernacle theology in Exodus and creation theology in Genesis can direct us to a new encounter with God, where our own body can be a “meeting point” of them (man and God; body and spirit; material and spiritual) in the “one body-one spirit” in God.

Second, our body is a microcosm of creation. If the tabernacle in Exodus can be understood as “microcosm of creation” of Genesis, then, our body – as a “new tabernacle” – can also be understood as a “microcosm of creation”. The tabernacle and the creation are understandable as a command of the divine word of God. The result was harmony, aesthetic balance, elegance, and beauty – everything is in order.²³ On the other side, there is still a mystery in creation. We cannot grasp everything. There is still a gap between God and human being. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord in Isaiah 55:8.

Third, SARS-CoV-2 is also a part of a microcosm of creation. For that reason, the mystery of this virus is a part of “His thought” and “His way” that make us more difficult to understand it. If virus is a part of creation – a part of our world – then, the question is “Where is its place in this creation – in this world?” Maybe, it is our fault to destroy the place where the virus can live quietly.

Coronaviruses have been identified in several avian hosts as well as in various mammals, including camels, bats, masked palm civets, mice, dogs, and cats. Novel mammalian coronaviruses are now regularly identified. For example, an HKU2-related coronavirus of bat origin was responsible for a fatal acute diarrhoea syndrome in pigs in 2018.²⁴

World Health Organization (WHO) made a statement officially (June 5, 2020), i.e.:

All available evidence suggests that the virus causing COVID-19 has a natural animal origin. It most probably has its ecological reservoir in bats. The first human cases of COVID-19, the coronavirus disease caused by SARS- CoV-2, were first reported from Wuhan City, China, in December 2019. Environmental samples taken in

²³ Angel Manuel Rodriguez, “Genesis 1”, 10.

²⁴ Roujian Lu, et al., “Genomic characterization and epidemiology of 2019 novel coronavirus: implications for virus origins and receptor binding”, in *The Lancet: Regional Health*, Vol. 395, Issue 10224, February 22, 2020, 565.

a food market in Wuhan were positive for the virus, concentrated in the area where wild and farmed animal trade was present. The market could be the origin of the virus or played a role as an amplifying setting for the initial spread.²⁵

The human behavior can be a part of this chaos, where the harmony of this creation – this world – was ruined by the destructive behavior of human beings. Animals and plants are only an object for us. Lluís Oviedo describes it very well:

Recent culture had entered a phase of exaggerated confidence in human capacities, supported by technical means, such as Artificial Intelligence, to overcome all our limits, fix every big problem we were finding in our way, and even to achieve immortality. I have read in recent years too many books and papers telling their great expectations based on our scientific-technical capacity to improve the world, to achieve fulfilment. The dreams born during the Enlightenment were finally coming true, and our humanity was facing the true opportunity to overcome every evil, including moral evil through systems of ‘moral enhancement’. All this would render full happiness much more accessible. These grandiose visions had as a clear consequence an increasing marginalization of religious faith and of Christianity in particular as a religion of salvation: we would not need salvation from supernatural instances if we could achieve it by our own means. Almost a feeling of omnipotence was taking over some intellectual sectors, and a highly successful author has even dared to speak of *Homo Deus*. All that hubris of omnipotence, that absurd divinization, has vanished in a few days, and has given way to a sense of great fragility, to the perception that the great western civilization has feet of clay and is very vulnerable to any contingency, to the unforeseen, because we do not have control of the situation at all, no matter how much our science and our technologies, certainly necessary, advance.²⁶

In the presence of this mystery of virus SARS-CoV-2, theologically, we can see this mystery in God’s eyes:

Together with our obligation to use the earth’s goods responsibly, we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God’s eyes: “by their mere existence they bless him and give him glory”, and indeed, “the Lord rejoices in all his

²⁵ WHO, “Covid-19 – a global pandemic: What do we know about SARS-CoV-2 and Covid-19?”, in https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/risk-comms-updates/update-28-covid-19-what-we-know-may-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=ed6e286c_2, June 5, 2020, 3.

²⁶ Lluís Oviedo, “Theology in Times of Pandemic”, in *Studia Humana*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2021) 4.

works” (Ps 104:31). By virtue of our unique dignity and our gift of intelligence, we are called to respect creation and its inherent laws, for “the Lord by wisdom founded the earth” (Prov 3:19). In our time, the Church does not simply state that other creatures are completely subordinated to the good of human beings, as if they have no worth in themselves and can be treated as we wish. The German bishops have taught that, where other creatures are concerned, “we can speak of the priority of being over that of being useful”. The Catechism clearly and forcefully criticizes a distorted anthropocentrism: “Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection... Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God’s infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things”.²⁷

“ASIAN WAYS”: A SOLUTION IN THIS CHAOS SITUATION (COVID-19 PANDEMIC)

A solution to understand this chaos situation – Covid-19 pandemic – is “To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God’s love and hope.”²⁸ *Laudato Si* quoted this sentence from the Bishops of Japan. It is not just a “spontaneous statement” but a “deep statement” which is born from their appreciation of their own culture. Therefore, it can also be realized by reviving our culture – Asian Culture. Asia has a lot of forms of culture that express their admiration and amazement to the nature.

For example, in Indonesia, there are some local wisdom which relate to the nature²⁹:

1. Papua

There is *te aro neweak lako* (nature is me). Erstberg and Grasberg Mountains are believed as a “head of mother”. Land is a part of their live. Therefore, they are very careful in the use of natural resources because nature is a part of their live – their own body.

2. Undau Mau, West Borneo

They have a local wisdom to arrange their land for settlement and agriculture. It is called *masa bera*, which arrange and determine the rotation of period of cultivation in their area. Moreover, they

²⁷ *Laudato Si*, 69.

²⁸ *Laudato Si*, 85.

²⁹ Sartini, “Menggalai Kearifan Lokal Nusantara: Sebuah Kajian Filsafati”, dalam *Jurnal Filsafat*, Vol.37, No. 2 (2004) 113. Cf. Maridi, “Mengangkat Budaya dan Kearifan Lokal dalam Sistem Konservasi Tanah dan Air”, dalam *Seminar Nasional XII Pendidikan Biologi FKIP UNS* (2015), 25.

have *taboo* to limit the use of agricultural technology that can destroy their land.

3. Dayak Kenyah, East Borneo

There is a *tana' ulen* tradition. This tradition is about organizing, cultivating, and management their customary land by their customary law.

4. Serawai, Bengkulu

They have belief that is called *celako kumali*. It relates to a system value of *taboo* in farming and *tanam tanjak* tradition – relates to the planting process.

5. Kasepuhan Pancer Pangawinan, Kampung Dukuh, West Java

They have *taboo*, traditional ceremony, and myth to cultivate their land and to preserve their own forest.

6. Sundanese, West Java³⁰

In the manuscript *Sanghyang Siksakandan Karesian*, Sundanese had already 19 categories of land which cannot be used for construction. It is called *lahan kotor bumi* (the earth's dirty land).

7. Javanese, Semarang, Central Java³¹

They have a local ceremony for the balance of the nature. They called this ceremony as *Sesaji Rewanda* (an offering to the monkey). They bring their offering in front of *Goa Kreo* where a lot of monkeys live there.



Photo credit: www.seputarsemarang.com

³⁰ Johan Iskandar, "Etnobiologi dan Keragaman Budaya di Indonesia", dalam *Umbara: Indonesian Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 2016) 36.

³¹ Rinitami Njatrijani, "Kearifan Lokal Dalam Perspektif Budaya Kota Semarang", dalam *Gema Keadilan*, Vol. 5, Edisi 1 (September 2018) 24.

Laudato Si can express this harmony and beauty of our universal communion with the earth:

The created things of this world are not free of ownership: “For they are yours, O Lord, who love the living” (Wis 11:26). This is the basis of our conviction that, as part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect. Here I would reiterate that “God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement”.³²

TABERNACLE, CREATION, AND SACRAMENTUM CARITATIS (SC)

In the document Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (Benedict XVI, 2007), we can find a chapter which discusses “Adoration and Eucharistic Devotion” (SC 66-69). In this article, we will try to explore these three points – tabernacle, creation, and SC – and try to find the theological connection among them in order to enrich our theological perspective on tabernacle, creation and SC.

We will begin with SC 66:

As Saint Augustine put it: “*nemo autem illam carnem manducat, nisi prius adoraverit; peccemus non adorando*” – no one eats that flesh without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it. In the Eucharist, the Son of God comes to meet us and desires to become one with us [...] Receiving the Eucharist means adoring him whom we receive [...] The act of adoration outside Mass prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself. Indeed, “only in adoration can a profound and genuine reception mature. And it is precisely this personal encounter with the Lord that then strengthens the social mission contained in the Eucharist, which seeks to break down not only the walls that separate the Lord and ourselves, but also and especially the walls that separate us from one another.”

In this point, we can find some important points: *First*, the document (SC) invites us to adore Jesus (the Son of God) in the eucharist. *Second*, the act of adoration can prolong and intensify the personal encounter with the Lord. *Third*, it can strengthen the social mission contained in

³² *Laudato Si*, 89.

the Eucharist. These three points can be read in the light of Revelation 21:3-4:

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be *any* death; there shall no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

From this point of departure, we can find that the act of adoration can be prolonged and intensified also in our daily lives. The challenge is “How to find ‘the tabernacle of God’ in our lives today – in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic?” The book of revelation reveals us that “the tabernacle of God” is a “verb”. It means “the tabernacle of God” relates to action (active) rather than to a “noun” (passive), “God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.” It also invites us to do the same thing to our neighbour. It can be understood as a caring one to another. It is full of respect, honour, and love. This is “the correct positioning of the tabernacle” (SC 69), where the other (and also the nature) becomes a “centre of the apse” (SC 69) in our life. Because of that, it will bring great results: “*and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away*” (Rev 21:4). Finally, it brings us back to the book of Genesis – back to “the beginning”, back to “the creation” – “God saw that it was very good” (cf. Gen 1:31).

CONCLUSION

Back to the initial question in this paper, “How important is the construction of tabernacle, on the sanctuary texts, especially in Exod 39:32-43 (in the larger context of Exod 25-31.35-40) for our church today, especially in Asia – in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic?” I think that Exod 39:32-43 also tries to show some *theological thoughts* beyond the construction of tabernacle: **(1)** “Making the tabernacle” can be read as a realization and continuity of divine relationship between God, Moses and the People of Israel; **(2)** The tabernacle can be read as a “microcosm of creation”, a “continuity of creation work of God in Genesis”, or as a “recapitulating creation”; **(3)** The *sanctuary text* in Exodus [especially in Exod 39:32-43 (and in the larger context of Exod 35-40)] also can be read as a *frame* of Pentateuch’s messages. In other words, the *sanctuary text* brings a *collection* or *summary* of Pentateuch’s messages in *general*;

Furthermore, (4) there is no contradiction (or problem) between “the God’s will” and “the *free will* of the people of Israel”. The *command of God* does not eliminate the *free will* of the people. So, making the tabernacle does not only depends on God’s will, but also it depends on the *free will* of the people of Israel; Finally, (5) on the text, we can find that God wants to dwell (שכן) among the people of Israel in the sanctuary, in a “fixed-space”, in the tabernacle (משכן) (Exod 25:8-9). At the same time, God also wants to dwell with the people of Israel “through all their journeys” (בכל־מסעיהם) (Exod 40:38).

In our situation today (Covid-19 pandemic), there are some contributions of the Construction of Tabernacle and Creation Theology in our daily lives: **First**, there is a new encounter with God. SARS-CoV-2 does not change “the image of God” in each of us. We are still the same like before – “God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Our own body – as a tabernacle of God – can be a “meeting point” (between man and God; body and spirit; material and spiritual) in the “one body-one spirit” in God. **Second**, our body is a microcosm of creation. There are harmony, aesthetic balance, elegance, and beauty – everything is in order. On the other hand, there is still a mystery that we cannot understand 100% all of our body – this tabernacle of God – included “the mystery of Covid-19” in the body of human beings. **Third**, SARS-CoV-2 is also a part of a microcosm of creation. Therefore, theologically, we are invited to see this mystery in God’s eyes: “Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection... Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God’s infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things”.³³ For that reason, “**Asian Ways**” – back to respect the nature – can be a **solution** of our situation today.

Finally, the construction of tabernacle and creation theology (in Exodus and Genesis) can be used to enrich our theology as “the act of adoration” (SC 66-69) – first of all as “the act of adoration of God himself” who wants to *wipe away every tear from our eyes* (Rev 21:4). It also invites us to do the same thing to our neighbour. This is “the correct positioning of the tabernacle” (SC 69), where the other (and also the nature) becomes a “centre of the apse” (SC 69) in our life that brings us back to the book of Genesis – back to “the beginning”, back to “the creation” – “God saw that it was very good” (cf. Gen 1:31).

³³ *Laudato Si*, 69.

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