**TABASCO,** a state of Mexico, bounded N. by the Gulf of Mexico, E. by the state of Campeche and Guatemala, S. by Guatemala and Chiapas, and W. by Vera Cruz. Area 10,072 sq. m. Pop. (1900) 150,834. The surface is generally low and flat, largely covered with lagoons, watercourses and swamps. In the S. and S.E. there is an area belonging to the rough higher formation of Chiapas. Dense forests cover the whole region, and there are valuable fine woods and dye-woods. There are several large lagoons on the coast, two of which are called Sant’ Ana and Tupilco bays. Two large rivers, the Grijalva and Usumacinta, traverse its territory. The Grijalva, also called Tabasco, the upper course of which is known as the Chiapas, has its most distant sources in western Guatemala and flows N.W. across Chiapas to the frontier of Oaxaca, thence N. to the frontier of Tabasco, and thence N.E. to the coast; it is navigable for 93 m. The Usumacinta likewise has its sources in western Guatemala. It forms the boundary between Guatemala and Chiapas until the frontier of Tabasco is reached, where its N.W. course turns to the N. and then N.W. to a junction with the Grijalva—the two rivers having a common outlet. The Usumacinta, including its head streams, is about 500 m. long; excluding them about 330 m. long; for about 270 m. it is navigable, for about 180 m. for large steamers. There are no railways and no good roads, and these rivers and the navigable channels of the Cuxcuchopa, Soledad, Cocohital, Tular, and Tortuguero, are the principal practical thoroughfares in the state. The capital is San Juan Bautista (pop., 1900, 10,548), formerly called Villa Hermosa, on the Grijalva river, about 70 m. above its mouth. The next most important town is Frontera (pop., 1895, 6794), a port 3 m. within the mouth of the Grijalva.

**TABERNACLE** (Lat. *tabernaculum,* a hut, tent), specifically the name given in the English Bible to the portable sanctuary which, according to the priestly sources of the Pentateuch, was erected by Moses in the wilderness as the place of worship of the Hebrew tribes (Exodus xxv. ff.).

(1) *The Tabernacle and its Furniture.—*The Tabernacle proper is represented as standing within a rectangular area, measuring 100 cubits by 50, approximately 150 feet by 75, which formed the centre of the camp in the wilderness. This area, termed the “ court of the tabernacle,” was fenced off from the rest of the encampment by a series of curtains suspended from 100 pillars standing at intervals of 5 cubits, and lay east and west with its entrance on the eastern side. Of the two squares, each measuring 50 cubits by 50, into which the court may be divided, the more easterly was that in which the worshippers assembled. In the centre of this square stood the altar of burnt-offering, a hollow chest of acacia wood overlaid with bronze. The tabernacle itself also stood east and west, with its entrance towards the east, on the edge of the second square. The essential part of the structure, to which everything else was subsidiary, was that termed in the original the *mishkãn, i.e.* dwelling (Eng. Vers. tabernacle, but see Exod. xxv. 9, Rev. Vers. margin). It was formed of ten curtains, in two sets of five, of the finest linen with inwoven coloured figures of cherubim, the whole making an artistic covering measuring 40 cubits by 28. Instead of being suspended on poles after the manner of an ordinary tent, the curtains of the dwelling were spread over a series of open frames of acacia wood overlaid with gold, each 10 cubits in height by 1½ in breadth.@@1 These frames, 48 in all, were so arranged as to form the southern, western and northern sides of a rectangular structure, 30 cubits in length and 10 cubits in breadth and height. Over the frames, as has been said, were thrown the two sets of tapestry curtains above described, while the eastern end, forming the entrance, was closed by a special portiere suspended from five pillars. The dwelling was divided into two parts by a second hanging, the “ veil,” 10 cubits from the western end. These two parts were termed respectively

the holy place, and the most holy place or “ holy of holies.” Within the latter stood, in solitary majesty, the ark of God, in which were deposited the two stone tables of the decalogue or “ testimony.” On the ark lay a solid slab of the finest gold, the propitiatory or mercy-seat, from which rose the figures of two golden cherubim. The propitiatory with its over-arching cherubim formed the innermost shrine of the wilderness sanctuary, the earthly throne of the God of heaven.

The furniture of the holy place consisted of the table of shew- bread, the altar of incense—both, like the ark, of acacia wood overlaid with gold—and the golden “ candlestick,” the latter in reality a seven-branched lamp-stand. As a protection the delicate and artistic curtains of the dwelling were covered by two similar sets of goats’-hair curtains, which together measured 44 cubits by 30; these, in their turn, were protected by a double covering, the one of rams’ skins dyed red, the other made of the skins of a Red Sea mammal, probably the dugong (Exod. xxvi. 14).

(2) *The Religious Significance of the Tabernacle.—*The aim of the priestly school, to whom we owe the conception of the tabernacle as above described, was to provide a sanctuary and a ritual worthy of the higher conceptions of the Deity, which had grown up as the fruit of the discipline of the exile. The ideal relation of Jehovah (Yahweh) to the theocratic com­munity of Israel had already been described by Ezekiel in the words “ my dwelling shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people ” (xxxvii. 27). That this was the religious ideal in the mind of the author of Exodus xxv. ff. is evident from the characteristic name which he gives to the essential part of the tabernacle, the *dwelling* (see above, and cf. Exod. xxv. 8). All the arrangements of the camp and of the tabernacle are intended to secure the presence of a holy God in the midst of a holy people. The thought of the almost un­approachable holiness of the Deity underlies not only the grada­tion of the parts of the tabernacle—court, holy place and holy of holies being each marked by an ascending degree of sanctity— but also the careful gradation of the materials employed in its construction. In the proportion and symmetry, which are strongly marked features of the tabernacle, we may further trace the earnest endeavour to reflect the harmony and perfec­tion of the Deity whose glory filled the dwelling (Exod. xl. 34).

(3) As regards the historicity of this elaborate sanctuary modern historical criticism has pronounced a negative judgment. This verdict is based not so much on the many difficulties pre­sented by the narrative itself, or suggested by the unexpected wealth of material and artistic skill, as on the impossibility of reconciling the picture of the tabernacle and its worship, which is found in the middle books of the Pentateuch, with the religious history of Israel as reflected in the older historical books. There is absolutely no place for the tabernacle of the Priests’ Code in the history of the worship of the Hebrews before the exile. It cannot be reconciled with the account of the historical “ tent of meeting ” (Λuth. Vers. tabernacle of the congregation) of the oldest Pentateuch sources in any particular except the common designation, and in the later history of the ark, whether at Shiloh or at Jerusalem, the older records of Samuel and Kings are silent as to the tabernacle.

The sections of the Pentateuch devoted to the tabernacle and its worship, therefore, are not to be treated as history but as the expression of a religious ideal. Building on the traditions of the simple Mosaic “ tent of meeting ” (Exodus xxxiii. 7 ff. and elsewhere), and believing that the temple of Solomon was its replica on a larger scale and in more solid materials, the priestly idealists followed the example of Ezekiel, and elaborated an ideal sanctuary to serve as the model for the worship of the theocratic community of the future. “ Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them ” (Exod. xxv. 8).

See “ Tabernacle ” in Hastings’s *Dictionary of the Bible,* vol. iv., with which may be compared the corresponding articles in Cheyne and Black’s *Encycl. Biblica* by Benzinger, and in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* by König. The views of the first-named article, summarised above, as to the framework of the Tabernacle, have been adopted and reinforced by A. H. M'Neile in his Commentary on *The Book of Exodus* (1908), pp. lxxiii. ff. (A. R. S. K.)

@@@1 For the philological and other arguments in favour of open frames in place of the traditional solid beams—the “ boards" of the English version—as supports of the curtains, see the writer's article “ Tabernacle ” in Hastings’s *Dict. of the Bible,* iv. 659 f., with illustrative diagrams.