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Paul: A “tentmaker”¹

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Because he was of the same trade (τὸ οὐ μὲν ἐκόν), he stayed with them, and they worked together - by trade they were tentmakers (γαρ σκηνωποιοὶ ἐκόντες). (NRSV version of Acts 18:3)

In Acts 18:1, Paul arrives in Corinth and there he finds accommodation in the home of Aquila and his wife Priscilla, recently arrived from Rome. Acts 18:3 offers an explanation for the relationship between Paul and Aquila – “by trade they were tentmakers” (Ac 18:3).² Translators and commentators have understood the word “*skēnopoios*” as a reference to Paul’s “trade” (*tekhne*) and have generally explored the significance of Paul’s trade for his ministry.³ Many exegetes have pointed out that tent making was then what Paul referred to when he spoke about “working with his hands” (1Cor 4:12), a source of pride for him in that he did not have to rely on the charity of the communities he visited.⁴ Others have noted, however, the difficulty of the term “*skēnopoios*” which is a *hapax* in the New Testament, extremely rare in both Biblical literature (used only in the revisions of the

¹ I would like to thank six exegetes, teachers and friends. They have each made suggestions that have greatly enriched this article: Jean-Noël Aletti, Justin Taylor, Alain Marchardour, Francesco Rossi di Gasperis, Odile Flichy and Flavio Gillio. I alone take responsibility for the ideas in this article, including whatever may be excessive or erroneous.

² I have made a summary check on many different translations in English, French, Italian, German, Arabic, Hebrew, Dutch and all the translations I have found translate this verse with reference to a profession or trade and it being tent making.

³ Five major contemporary commentaries on Acts in English all discuss the exact nature of the trade described – tent making or leather working, cf. F. BRUCE, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Leicester, 1990), 392, L.T. JOHNSON, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Sacra Pagina) (Collegeville, 1992), 322, J. FITZMYER, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Anchor Bible) (New York, 1997), 626, C.K. BARRETT, *The Acts of the Apostles* (International Critical Commentary) (Edinburgh, 1998), 863, R. WALL, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New Interpreter’s Bible – vol. X) (Abingdon, 2002), 251. R.F. HOCK, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia, 1980), analyses in depth the implications of tent making for Paul’s mission and the link of this trade with Paul’s native Cilicia. This study makes no reference at all to the problematic nature of identifying the Greek term as a profession. Instead Hock writes confidently: “Luke was dependent here on a tradition, a tradition moreover whose historical reliability is not in doubt” (20). For Paul’s trade of tent making see also J. MURPHY O’-CONNOR, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford, 1999), 85-89.

⁴ Among the texts in which Paul claims to “work with his own hands” are 1Cor 4:12 (“we labor, working with our own hands”) and 1Th 2:9 (“we worked night and day that we might not burden any of you”) as well as in 2Th 3:8 (“with toil and labor we worked night and day that we might not burden any of you”). This is taken up also in Ac 20:34, in his farewell discourse to the Ephesian elders (“You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me”). Never is the type of work described in these texts though.

Septuagint⁵) and classical Greek literature⁶ and never used elsewhere to describe the work Paul claims to have done with his hands. Furthermore, and adding to the consternation, not all the ancient manuscripts contain the mention of the supposed profession shared with Aquila.⁷

I will propose here that there is another way to understand the terms *skenopoios* and *tekhne* and that they might also, in fact, refer to something quite different from what seems evident in the literal translation of the words. I am not proposing a more “correct” translation, simply another level of meaning that Luke might be proposing.⁸ The reference to Paul’s *tekhne* (translated generally as “trade”) might be an important indication of his vocation in addition to referring to the way in which he made his living, especially if understood within the overall context of the Lucan oeuvre. I will suggest that the fullest interpretation of the term *skenopoios* depends on the literary use of the noun *skene* (tent) (often with the verb *poieo* (make) in the two Lucan volumes of the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Furthermore, other biblical references to the terms *skene* and *tekhne* (trade or art) will illustrate a wider application than a simple reference to a particular profession. I will conclude that the term is not only a marginal piece of information about Paul’s profession but, in addition, central to understanding the vocation of the Church and Paul’s own role in edifying this same Church.

The significance of *skene* in the Lukan oeuvre

It is well established the Luke knew the Septuagint well and uses its language and terminology.⁹ The word *skene* is used most often in the Old Testament, and most

⁵ Used by in the Symmachus revision of the LXX, in Is 13:20 and 22:15 and in the Aquila revision in Dt 31:10. In Dt, interestingly, the context is the Feast of Tabernacles.

⁶ See entry for “*skenopoios*” in W. ARNDT and F. GINGRICH, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, 1979) 755.

⁷ I thank Justin Taylor for pointing out that in Codex Bezae (Greek and Latin), supported by the Latin ms. Gigas Holmiensis (g) the words “for by trade they were tent makers” are omitted. As he points out, this is one of the rare cases where the D text is shorter than the other texts. For a discussion of another view of the connection between Aquila and Paul according to the reconstituted text of Acts, see E. NODET AND J. TAYLOR, *The Origins of Christianity: An Exploration* (Collegeville, 1998), 298-302).

⁸ J.-N. Aletti, O. Flichy and A. Marchadour have pointed out in personal communications that the original sense of the terms *skenopoios* and *tekhne* must be retained in their classical usage as references to a trade. However, they have both pointed out that Luke as a master writer is gifted at using two levels of meaning in his narrative.

⁹ Cf. W. L. CLARKE, “The use of the Septuagint in Acts” in F.J. FOAKES-JACKSON AND K. LAKE, *The Beginnings of Christianity* Part 1, vol. 2 ed. (London, 1922) 66-105; E. RICHARD, “The creative use of Amos

importantly in the Pentateuch, to refer to the Tent of Witness¹⁰ (*he skene tou marturiou*).¹¹ The making of the Tent of Witness¹² and the sacrifices that must be offered there are at the center of the Pentateuchal law (taking up much of the second part of Exodus and much of Leviticus). The Tent and its rites and rituals prefigure the Temple which appears in the narrative only at the time of Solomon (1K 5-8). More than the other Gospel writers, Luke has a great interest in the Temple and Temple worship. He begins his Gospel in the Temple (with Zachariah and the angel, Lk 15-23), ends it in the Temple (with the disciples blessing God, Lk 24:53) and then in Acts slowly moves from the Temple in Jerusalem to the extremities of the earth.¹³ The importance of the *skene tou marturiou* in the Lucan oeuvre is not only connected to the conception of *skene* (tent) but also to the conception of *marturion* (witness). In the Old Testament, it is the Tent prefiguring the Temple in Jerusalem that situates the witness to the living God. In the Lucan oeuvre it is this Temple in Jerusalem that will slowly be transformed into a new form of a Tent. The new form is a Tent constituted by those who make up the community of Christ in the world. It is the members of this community that are called to be *marturioi* (witnesses) (cf. Ac 1:8), thus significantly reconstituting a *skene tou marturiou* not “made by human hands” (cf. Ac 7:49, 17:24).

The Greek word *skene* is used five times at four different points in the Lucan narrative that stretches from the Gospel to the Acts, before the reader reaches Acts 18. I propose that the four contexts in the Lucan narrative are linked and that by taking them into account one can understand another level of meaning of *skene* (tent) perhaps hinted at in relation to Paul and his “co-workers” (cf. Rm 16:3) in Acts 18. Here, I will briefly review the four contexts in which the term *skene* is used.

by the author of Acts,” *NT* 24 (1982) 37-53; J. TYSON, “The Gentile mission and the authority of Scripture in Acts,” *NTS* 33 (1987) 619-631.

¹⁰ The Hebrew term *ohel mo'ed* (Tent of Meeting) is translated *he skene tou marturiou* (Tent of Witness) in the Septuagint. In Nm 9:15, the Hebrew uses the term *ohel 'edut* which would translate like the Greek, Tent of Witness.

¹¹ This is true in the New Testament too where half the usages of the term *skene* are in the Epistle to the Hebrews, referring there to the Tent of Witness (ten times), and another three usages are in the Book of Revelation with the same referent.

¹² The constant repetition of the verb “*poieo*” (make) in God’s word to Moses is particularly striking, used 105 times in Exodus 25-31, the chapters which contain the divine instructions for the making of the holy place and all its contents. For example, Ex 26:1: “you shall make (*poieseis*) the tabernacle (*ten skenen*)”. Furthermore, the use of the same verb “*poieo*” is repeated in the verses that describe the making of the Golden Calf.

¹³ Chapter 3 of Acts describes the first act of power done by Peter as taking place in the Temple (the healing of the crippled beggar) and then the martyrdom of Stephen in chapter 7 introduces an exodus from the Temple and Jerusalem towards the extremities of the earth.

1. Lk 9:33: “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make (poi h,swren) three dwellings (tents) (skhnaj t rei / j), one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”.

The narrative context of these words of Peter to Jesus is the scene of the Transfiguration. Of particular interest here is that the noun *skene* is present together with the verb *poieo*. Peter is suggesting here that the disciples become tentmakers (*skenepoiioi*). In the light of the Lucan presentation of Peter and Paul in parallel narratives in Acts, this usage here is relevant to our discussion of the meaning of the term *skenepoiios* in Ac 18. Luke’s presentation of the Transfiguration scene retains Mark’s presentation of Peter who seeks to fix the scene of the glory on the high mountain and prevent a quick descent from the mountain to the Passion Jesus has already announced a few verses earlier (Lk 9:22). Peter’s suggestion is not positive and the “tents” he proposes to make are a counter model for the witness that Jesus must give first in his Passion and death. The disciples as apostles will be called to give the same witness when Jesus is no longer among them. Jesus must take up his cross and not stay on the high mountain.

Luke has changed an interesting detail of the Transfiguration scene that he received from Mark. Whereas Mark (and Matthew) introduces the scene with a time specification “after six days”, Luke has altered this to “after eight days”. The change has provoked much speculation but I would like to suggest that this change to eight days evokes an important passage in the Pentateuch when the *skene tou marturiou* (the Tent of Witness) becomes fully functional and the divinely ordained cult begins. Leviticus 9:1-6 describes the “glory of the Lord” appearing to the people at the initiation of the cult. The passage begins with a time specification “on the eighth day” (Lev 9:1) when Moses calls Aaron and his sons to fulfill the priestly service before the Tent.¹⁴ Moses proclaims then to the people: “This is the thing that the Lord has commanded you to do so that the glory of the Lord may appear to you” (Lev 9:6). The dramatic narrative ends with blessing and the promised theophany: “Moses and Aaron entered the Tent of Witness and then came out and blessed the people; and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people” (Lev 9:23).

Luke’s first usage of the noun *skene* and the verb *poieo* in the Transfiguration scene evokes then the Leviticus description of the initiation of the worship in the Tent of Witness.

¹⁴ Aaron and his two sons constitute a group of three, called by Moses to service. This too is a parallel with Jesus who calls three apart, one Peter, more prominent than the other two. Aaron’s sons fail in their task and meet their death by offering “strange fire” at the beginning of chapter 10, a parallel to the disciples failure to understand the nature of the events in which they are participating.

It is on that day that the glory of the Lord appears to the people, just as it appears now in Jesus to the three disciples. Peter's desire for the disciples to become *skenepoi* is the desire to hang on to the glory and avoid the passion. The time has not come for the making of tents, it is rather the time to be disciples on the move, as Jesus begins his descent of the mountain and his ascent to Jerusalem in the Lucan Gospel.

2. Lk 16:9: And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth (poi h,sat e fi ,ouj evk tou/ mamna/ th/j avdi ki ,aj) so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes (tents) (ei vj t aj ai vwni ,ouj skhna,j).

This saying of Jesus follows a parable that is difficult to make sense of although its general message seems clear enough: a teaching on the proper use of wealth. I will not attempt to solve the difficulties in trying to make the details of the parable coherently fit together but I will, rather, insist on how the use of *skene* (and *poieo*) in this saying fits into the general context of the term *skene* in the Lucan oeuvre. Luke's Jesus is teaching about money and earthly possessions in chapter 16 of the Gospel. Two parables about the use of money (16:1-13 and 16:19-31) enclose a polemical retort to the Pharisees who are described as being "lovers of money" (16:14).

What is interesting is in Luke 16:9 too the word *skene* (tent) is used within a context that contains the verb *poieo* (make) too. Making friends by means of dishonest wealth leads to a welcoming into eternal tents when the wealth runs out. In the parable, the disgraced household manager wants to ensure his reception with honor in the homes of the people who have honored him until the moment of his disgrace (cf. Lk 16:4). The "eternal tents" would be then parallel to these homes. I suggest here that the use of the word *skene* (tent) instead of "home" (*oikos*) suggests a link with the other uses of the word *skene* in the Lucan oeuvre. In particular, in Stephen's speech, he will compare a Mosaic *skene* and a Solomonic *oikos* (cf. Ac 7:43-48).

It is worth pointing out here that administration of money and possessions is a central concern in Luke's description of the primitive community in Acts.¹⁵ This is particularly evident in the summaries of community life offered by Luke in Acts (cf. Ac

¹⁵ The making of the Tent of Witness in Exodus 25-31 also begins with a redistribution of wealth as the entire text begins with a call by God to contribute to the making of the Tent, cf. Ex 25:1-9. Furthermore, the parallel is extended when Aaron initiates a similar call for contributions in the making of the Golden Calf in Ex 32:1-6.

2:44-47, 4:32-35). The summary in Acts 4:32-35, emphasizing that the proceeds of the sale of property in the community were “laid at the apostles’ feet and distribution was made to each as any had need” (Ac 4:35), is followed by the parallel stories of the good administrator of possessions, Joseph Barnabas (Ac 4:36-37), and the bad administrators, Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11). What is being constructed by the good administration and distribution of possessions is a community in which salvation is preached and lived and here the tents are eternal.

In Luke 16:9, Jesus is describing a type of “tent making” that will be central to the life of the community in Acts. Luke’s persistent concern with the poor is well known and community building that administers well possessions is a central instrument to rectify the problem of poverty within the community. Tents that are eternal become homes into which we are always welcomed when we do not worship Mammon but rather worship God (cf. Lk 16:13).

3. Ac 7:43-44: ⁴³ No; you took along the tent of Moloch (t h,n skhnh,n t ou/ Mo,l oc) and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship (evpoi h,sat e proskunei / n); so I will remove you beyond Babylon.’ ⁴⁴ "Our ancestors had the tent of testimony (H skhnh,t ou/ nar t ur i ,ou) in the wilderness, as God directed when he spoke to Moses, ordering him to make (poi h/ sai) it according to the pattern he had seen.

These words of Stephen are within the polemical speech that precedes his death by stoning in Acts 7. Stephen responds, in the longest speech of Acts, to two sets of accusations made against him. The first is that he speaks against the Holy Place (the Temple) and the second is that he speaks against the Law, both accusations, of course, echoing the accusations made against Jesus in the Gospel. Stephen refers almost solely to the subject of the cult in the Temple in his speech though. Kilgallen points out that Stephen’s main concern is that: “if one rejects the savior, redeemer, prophet, one’s worship must necessarily become unacceptable if not idolatrous”¹⁶. Stephen, a Hellenistic Jew, is expressing a theological distancing from the Temple, which has played such an important part in the development of the intrigue until now.

Towards the end of his speech, Stephen underlines the difference between the *skene* made (*poieo*) by Moses and the house (*oikos*) built by Solomon. In between the two is the

¹⁶ J. KILGALLEN, *The Stephen Speech* (Rome, 1976) 92.

habitation (*skenoma*) which David asks leave to find (*eurisko*). What is of interest here is the use of the word *skene* in the speech. It appears twice, in verses 43 and 44, and both times with the verb *poieo*, and there is a strong contrast between the two. The first usage refers to a tent of idolatry – “the tent of Moloch”¹⁷ whereas the second usage refers to a tent of true worship – “the Tent of Witness”.

Verse 43, which is a citation from the Book of Amos, is a point of important transition in the speech.¹⁸ After a long survey of the history of Israel, from Abraham through Joseph to Moses (Ac 7:2-34), Stephen seeks to introduce his criticism of those who are practicing the Temple cult (Ac 7:35-43). This criticism is related to the fact that Israel is in the habit of rejecting her redeemers. The citation of Amos 5:25-27 ends the Moses cycle, Moses too having been rejected by the people as evident in the sin of making a Golden Calf (Ac 7:41). Luke here creates a neologism - *moskhopoieo* (calf-make) that will be echoed later in the speech. The rejection of Moses results in a descent into idol worship, the true prophet having been rejected, the worship of the rejecters thus becoming unacceptable. Within the context of the book of Amos, the verses cited describe the punishment for idol worship as exile (the Assyrian destruction of Israel). However, for Stephen, the punishment for the false worship of God (this being for him the refusal to accept Moses or Jesus) is idol worship itself. Whereas for the book of Amos, the sin was Israel’s worship of idols (resulting in Exile), for Stephen, the sin is the rejection of Moses and Jesus (resulting in the Temple becoming a place of false cult). The activity of “tent making” – the “tent of Moloch” here is a consequence of the rejection of the true prophet, Moses (and in parallel fashion, Jesus).

However, there is a divinely ordained “tent making” that initiated a true cult.¹⁹ The following verse, verse 44, refers back to Moses as one who been instructed to make (*poieo*) the “Tent of Witness” (*he skene tou marturiou*). Moses had made the *skene* according to the vision he had seen (7:44) and it was carried into the Land by the fathers (7:45) and so it

¹⁷ Luke cites Amos 5:25 from the Septuagint and there is a significant difference here between the Septuagint tradition which reads “tent of Moloch” and the Massoretic tradition which reads “Sikkut your king”. Both traditions are referring to the sin of idolatry.

¹⁸ Cf. D. MARGUERAT, *Les Actes des Apôtres* (Genève, 2007), 225-268. Marguerat divides the speech into two parts, the first part ending in verse 43 and the second part beginning in verse 44. He does mention the significance of the term *skene* as a link between the first part of the speech and the second, cf. 259.

¹⁹ Again, the contrast between the false cult of the Golden Calf and the true cult of the Tent of Witness as contrasted in the second half of the Book of Exodus is evoked here. Both the Calf and the Tent were made (*poieo*) but one by divine initiative and one by human hands.

remained until the time of David. This was a tent that gave true witness to the presence of God among the people. It was then David who, having found favor in the sight of the Lord, asked to find a “*skenoma*” (7:46), translated “habitation”, for the Lord. This word, derived from the word *skene*, is used in the Septuagint mostly for a tent that has no religious purpose – a human dwelling place.²⁰ The ambiguity of David’s request is quite clear in the Old Testament narrative in 2 Samuel 7, a text that was fundamental in forming the image of the long awaited messianic king. David expresses the desire to build a suitable habitation for God. God responds to David’s request by pointing out that “I have not lived in a house (*oikos*) since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent (*kataluma*)²¹ and a tabernacle (*skene*)” (2Sam 7:6). God then promises to build David a house, implying here the stabilization of the David dynasty. He will give David a son who “will build a house for my name” (2Sam 7:13) and he will rule for ever. It seems that reference is being made here to Solomon who will indeed build a house for the Lord... but he will hardly reign for ever. In fact, later judgment on the reign of Solomon (in 1K 10-12) is extremely negative and portrays Solomon as the king who incarnates a living contrast to the laws for a king in Deuteronomy (cf. Dt 17:14-20), startlingly similar to a Pharaoh.

The passage from the Mosaic tent to the Solomonic house will serve as an introduction to Stephen’s strident critique of the practice in the Temple of those that reject the prophet, a critique he projects back to the days of Solomon. A clearly discordant note is introduced in 7:47. Solomon constructs (*oikodomeo*) a house (*oikos*). Of this God seems to disapprove²²! Stephen reaches the peak of his criticism of those practicing Temple cult with the citation of Is 66:1 (Ac 7:49) in order to show that God does not dwell in that which is made by human hands (*kheiroipoieo*). “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.

²⁰ There are some exceptions to this (eg. in 1K 8:4) but the difference is particularly clear in the Pentateuch, where *skene* is used every time the Tent of Witness is mentioned and *skenoma* is only used twice (Nm 16:27 and Dt 33:18), both times for a human dwelling place. Marguerat also points out the gradation in terminology from *skene* to *skenoma* to *oikos* in the speech, cf. MARGUERAT, *Les Actes*, 260.

²¹ The word *kataluma* which here translated the Hebrew *ohel* in the Septuagint (usually translated by *skene* in Greek) is particularly significant in the Lucan narrative. In Lk 22:11, Jesus sends his disciples to prepare the *kataluma* (guest room) where he will celebrate his last Passover meal. This is also the word used in Mk 14:14. At Jesus’ birth in the Lucan Gospel though, there is not even room in the *kataluma* for his parents at the time of his birth (Lk 2:7).

²² In this connection one may note that Paul, in Gal 2:18, has a similarly negative usage of the word *oikodomeo*, referring there to the restoration of the Law by Peter in the Antioch incident which constitutes a transgression against the grace of God. It is interesting to note that the negative tone about Solomon and his activity of building in Acts is echoed in certain Samaritan literature, leading some to propose a Samaritan link here, see J.D. PURVIS, “The Samaritans and Judaism,” *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters* (Philadelphia, 1986) 83.

What kind of house will you build (*oikodomeo*) for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make (*poieo*) all these things?" The Isaiah text puts into strong contrast the human activity of building (*oikodomeo*) and the divine activity of making (*poieo*). In Ac 4:11, Peter has already cited Ps 118,22 in order to show that the builders (*ton oikodomon*, which refers to the high-priests of the Jerusalem Temple) have rejected the cornerstone put in place by God.

Stephen's criticism of the Jews who reject Jesus in Acts 7, which echoes Peter's in Ac 4:11, will be repeated by Paul in relation to the pagans in Athens. Paul proclaims to the philosophers: "The God who made (*poieo*) the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands (*kheiropoieo*)" (Ac 17:24). The conclusion is God does not dwell in what man constructs. God must raise up the dwelling place himself by instructing His servants in "tent making". From this moment onwards the apostles move in ever widening circles away from the Temple and Jerusalem on their way to the ends of the earth. The "tent of Moloch" must be abandoned and a "tent of witness" must be raised up again. This tent will be composed of witnesses to Jesus who move from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

4. Ac 15:16 After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling (tent) of David (t h n sknhh n Dau i d), which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up...

This citation of Amos is from the speech of James at the "Council" of Jerusalem that is described in Acts 15. Stephen's death provokes the exit from Jerusalem that will lead to the description of the first Gentiles' coming to the faith. Paul's journeys will increase the outreach to the Gentiles. James' decision cements the opening to the Gentiles and puts in place the principles by which Jews and Gentiles can constitute one community of witnesses to Jesus as messiah and savior. In James' speech in Jerusalem there is a second long citation from the book of Amos, a part of which is quoted here. Stephen and James are two very significant secondary characters in Acts.²³ Luke underlines the links between

²³ James is clearly a secondary character in Acts. He is first mentioned by name in 12:17 where Peter tells the disciples to inform "James and the brethren" that he has been miraculously liberated from prison. In 11:1 two groups are mentioned in Judea, "apostles and brethren", but this seems to be an equivalent term to "apostles and elders" mentioned in chapter 15 (2, 4, 6, 22, 23). In 21:18, James, who would seem to be the pre-eminent elder in Jerusalem, receives Paul. These two indications are the only ones aside from James's appearance in chapter 15. Many assume that James is the brother of Jesus although this is not made explicit by Luke, (he is so called by Paul who also refers to him as an apostle in Gal 1:19). In this case, James is present from the beginning of Acts although he is not specifically named, as in 1:14 Acts mentions that the apostles constituted a group together with "the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers".

Stephen's use of Amos in Acts 7 and James' use in Acts 15. Both introduce the citation with the words "as it is written".²⁴ Both underline the origin of the citation, "the prophets". Both mention the role of David. Both have a "turning" of God (7:42, 15:16). However, for our purposes, the most interesting link is the repetition of the term *skene*, used only in these two contexts in Acts. Stephen speaks of the past *skene* and James speaks of a future *skene*.

Although the verb *poieo* is absent in James' citation of Amos, there is a series of verbs (return, rebuild (twice), set up) that evokes the reconstruction of the "tent", identified by Amos as David's. The verb "rebuild" (*avoikodomeo*) is used twice and God is the subject of the verb. The "tent" that is being rebuilt is being rebuilt by God himself who has become the *skenopoios*. Within the context of the book of Amos, this tent would seem to be the extended kingdom of David.²⁵ In Acts, it is an extended community of witnesses to the resurrection and lordship of Jesus. In the Acts narrative, it is clear that the moment for tent making has arrived. We are no longer on the high mountain of the Transfiguration when Peter's desire for tent making was the desire to escape the cross. We have already passed through the cross and the resurrection, and full of the spirit given by Jesus in Jerusalem, the project of making the tent of witness to Jesus as messiah and savior is developing.

James's speech in Acts 15 is of central importance to the entire narrative of Acts. In the narrative, this is a moment of crisis within the community concerning the integration of Gentiles. Luke's Gospel does not explicitly mention any mission to the Gentiles and only hints at the universal implications of Jesus' earthly life. It is at the end of the Gospel that the Risen Jesus insists on a mission "to all nations" (Lk 24:47) but it is only in Acts that Luke tells the story of the development of this mission. Right at the beginning of Acts, Luke tells us that the Risen Jesus began to alter the apostles' expectations regarding the promises of the Old Testament. It is not a kingdom that is to be restored, but rather a witness that is to be borne as Jesus says to his disciples: "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Ac 1:8). James's

²⁴ This formula is only used in these two instances in Acts. Fitzmyer has compared this particular introductory formula with the formula used to introduce the citations of Amos in the Qumran literature, see J. FITZMYER, "The use of explicit Old Testament quotations in Qumran literature and in the New Testament," *NTS* 7 (1961), 297-333:

²⁵ James' citation, derived from the Septuagint, is quite different from the Hebrew text. This difference is particularly dramatic in the citation of Amos 9:12. The Hebrew text speaks of a conquest of Edom whereas the Greek text speaks of a searching out by the rest of humanity. For a fascinating discussion of the relationship between the two versions cf. F. ANDERSEN and D. FRIEDMAN, *Amos* (Anchor Bible) (New York, 1989).

speech comes after a short speech of Peter (15:7-11) and an intervention of Paul and Barnabas (15:12) which is not reported. James then makes the concluding speech, having here the last and authoritative word after the two central figures of Acts, Peter and Paul.

In chapter 15, the problem which has come about because of the progressive opening of the mission to the Gentiles is broached: is the Law a condition for life in a community that is witness to salvation coming through Jesus? The speech of James is meant to answer this question, thus resolving the dispute which is hindering the spread of the gospel “to the ends of the earth”. Richard has shown the importance of the Amos citation for James’s speech²⁶. James is talking about the divine plan of God and, for him Amos is proof of God’s intention. Clearly, the Septuagint text is the one that serves the message Luke wishes to introduce in James’s speech. James has made a startling claim: that God has taken a people from among the nations “for his name”. God did that once before, in the Old Testament, choosing Israel as a people (*laos*) consecrated to God from among the nations (*ethne*). Can it be that He has chosen again? It is in including them in the promises of the Old Testament that God will rebuild the *skene* of David, through the tent making of the apostles (represented by Peter) and Paul.²⁷

5. Ac 18:3 Because he was of the same trade (τὸ οὐ μὲν ἐκόν), he stayed with them, and they worked together - by trade they were tentmakers (γαρ σκηνοποιοὶ τῆς τέχνης).

After Acts 15, Luke concentrates the rest of his narrative on Paul and his missionary travels. The Gentile mission has received its authoritative justification in James’s speech as an integral part of the reconstruction of the *skene* and the message of Jesus can now be preached “to the ends of the earth”. In this, Paul, who had approved the stoning of Stephen and who had provoked the ruling of James, would play the central role.

The question proposed at the beginning of this article can now be reformulated in more precise terms: Could it be that Luke is not only referring to a trade by mentioning Paul and Aquila’s (and Priscilla’s too?) *tekhne* as being *skenopoioi*? Paul, who arrives from the East, and Aquila and Priscilla, who arrive from the West, meet in Corinth. There they

²⁶ E. RICHARD, “The creative use of Amos by the author of Acts”, *NT* 24 (1982) 37-53.

²⁷ The question of whether Paul is an apostle for Luke is a thorny one. Paul does not meet the criteria established at the beginning of Acts (cf. Ac 1:21-22) and Luke only names Paul (and Barnabas) apostles explicitly in Acts 14 (cf. 14:6.13).

are “tentmakers” and in fact are all also builders of Christian communities, carrying out the holy plan of God to restore the *skene tou marturiou* (the Tent of Witness), echoing Jesus (in the Gospel), Stephen and James? In this sense Paul and Aquila and Priscilla too are following in the prophetic line which goes back to Moses, David and Jesus.²⁸

If the word “tentmaker” is understood in this way and not only as literally referring to a profession, its use in Acts can be compared to a similar figure of speech in Paul’s own letters. In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Paul uses extensively the image of a skilled master-builder to describe his own apostleship. There the “construction” Paul is building is clearly the body of Christ, the Christian community. Moreover, the terms Paul uses there evoke the construction of the Tent of Witness as described in the Pentateuch. Also, in 2 Corinthians, Paul uses a similar vocabulary to talk about the body: “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in (h` evpi ,gei oj h` mw n oi vki ,a tou/ skh,nouj) is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands (oi vki ,an avcei r opoi ,ht on), eternal in the heavens” (2Cor 5:1).

Some comments on the word *tekhne*

This discussion not only has implications for the understanding of the word *skenoipoios* (tentmaker) in Acts 18:3 but also for the term *tekhne*, usually translated “trade” in Ac 18:3. *Tekhne*, however, can also refer to an art, a skill, a vocation or a kind of wisdom. The use of the word *tekhne* in Acts 18:3 does not stand alone in this section of the narrative. In Acts 17:29, a few verses before the use in 18:3, the same word is used in reference to the making of idols and is translated “art” in the NRSV. What is particularly significant is that it is Paul who uses the word in his speech to the philosophers on the Areopagus in Athens, which echoes the critique of Stephen in Jerusalem in chapter 7. “The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands (*kheiropoiotois*)... Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art (*tekhnes*) and imagination of mortals” (Ac 17:24.29). The derivative *tekhmites* (craftsman or

²⁸ Luke, in presenting Paul and Aquila as makers of *skennai*, evokes a comparison between the holiness of this “profession” and the profanity of the profession of the pagan Demetrius of Ephesus in 19:24ff. Demetrius’s profession is to make shrines to Artemis and his attack on Paul leads to a great disturbance in the city.

artisan) is used in Acts 19:24 and 19:38 to refer to the artisans who make idols in Ephesus and who instigate the riots against Paul.

Significantly, the word *tekhne* is used in Exodus 28:11 and 30:25 (for making the anointing oil) in the context of the setting up of the Tent of Witness as well as in 1 Kings 7:14 to describe Hiram's work on the Temple. However, it is in the Book of Wisdom, in the Old Testament, that we most frequently find the word *tekhne* and its derivative *tekhmites* within the Old Testament. The last part of Wisdom deals specifically with the problem of idolatry, comparing Israel and the nations in the history of the world in relation to the manifestation of Wisdom. In chs. 13 and 15, which focus on the cult of idols, makers of idols and true worshippers of God are contrasted.²⁹ A brief account of the terms used in these chapters provides a basis for comparison with the vocabulary in Acts. We note here not only the use of the word *tekhne* but also that it refers to the making of objects with human hands which are then worshipped as gods. In the whole section, Wis 13-15, the term *tekhne* and its derivatives are used at least 8 times (13:1.10.11; 14:2.4.18.19; 15:4). The opening verse of this section, Wisdom 13:1, refers to God as the *tekhmites* who has created the world.³⁰ The first use of *tekhne* in the section, in Wisdom 13:10, is particularly striking as a comparison with Acts: "But miserable, with their hopes set on dead things, are those who give the name "gods" to the works of human hands, gold and silver fashioned with skill (*tekhne*), and likenesses of animals, or a useless stone, the work of an ancient hand". The last use of the word *tekhne* in this section, in 15:4, refers to the "evil art" (*kakotekhne*) of making idols rather than recognizing God.

Perhaps the use of *tekhne* in Acts, Wisdom and in Exodus again raises the question of the divine mandate for making tents in the Lukan oeuvre. There is a tent making that is desired by God through his holy prophets Moses and Jesus and there is a tent making that opposes the divine mandate, founded on a rejection of God's prophets, and leading to idol making and false worship. Discerning between the two is essential in making the "tent of witness" which the community of witnesses must become.

Conclusion: Paul, a maker of tents?

²⁹ This section in the Book of Wisdom is comparable with chapter 1 of Paul's Letter to the Romans, both texts being a strong argument against idolatry.

³⁰ This usage of *tekhmites* for God is also found in Hebrews 11:10 with reference to the city God constructs, a heavenly one.

Although the word *skenopoios* (tent maker) is understood to be Paul's trade (*tekhne*) in Acts 18:3, I have tried to show that it might mean something additional (and even more central to Acts' chief concern), the making of communities of witnesses that constitute the Church. Noting the importance of the term *skene* (tent) in the Old Testament and its significant locations in the Lucan oeuvre suggest that a different understanding of the term in Acts 18:3 is usefully informed by a reading of the term *skene* elsewhere in the Lucan oeuvre.

Paul defines his own apostleship as community building: "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord" (1Cor 9:1-2). In his letter to the Romans, Paul refers to a couple named Prisca and Aquila. Most exegetes do believe that this couple is the same one described by Luke in Acts 18. In his letter, Paul addresses them as his *sunergoi* (co-workers, collaborators) (Rm 16:3). This term, often used by Paul in his epistles, refers not to a sharing of a profession but to a sharing of a vocation and a mission. He thanks the couple for having risked their lives for him. Most importantly, Paul writes of a church that met "in their house" (Rm 16:5). Might this not be the "tent" that they made? When they move to Corinth and Paul lives with them there, might not this be the kind of "tent" they made with their shared "trade": they all being masters of community building and thus makers of "a tent of witness". The "tents" they make that are significant for the narrative in Acts are tents made up of witnesses to the Resurrected Lord and Messiah.

Finally, an additional and different translation of Acts 18:3 might be proposed which focuses attention not on a socio-economic detail, the shared trade of Paul and Aquila, but rather on a central aspect of the vocation of Paul, Aquila and Priscilla in Acts (and in Romans 16:3):

Kai . di a . to . o` nōtecnōn ei _nai e;reñen parV auvt oi / j kai . hvrgazet o\ h_san gar skhnopoi oi . t h / | t e ,cnh|E

Because he was of the same vocation, he stayed with them, and they worked together - by vocation they were builders of communities (Acts 18:3).