

# Giving Martha Back Her House: Analyzing the Textual Variant in Luke 10:38b

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**Abstract:** In Luke 10:38, a certain woman named Martha welcomes Jesus and offers him hospitality while her sister Mary listens at his feet. Although the story is familiar, the text itself contains a number of complex text-critical issues. This paper will focus on Luke 10:38b, which contains a difficult, though often overlooked, text-critical challenge. The issue centers on whether or not Martha welcomed Jesus “into her house” (εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς). Many early manuscripts from different textual traditions (i.e.,  $\aleph$ , A, D) include the phrase. A few early manuscripts, however, omit the phrase ( $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , B) leading the editors of NA<sup>28</sup>, Bruce Metzger, and others to conclude in favor of the shorter reading, arguing that εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς was a later addition to the text, since the verb appears to need an additional phrase. In this paper, I argue that εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς is more likely reflective of an earlier tradition for three reasons: (1) the unlikely addition of a prepositional phrase following the verb, (2) the scribal habits of  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , and (3) theological and culture concerns surrounding Martha as homeowner. This analysis will show ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς is more likely to represent an earlier tradition.

**Key words:** Luke 10; Mary and Martha; textual variant; New Testament papyri

## Introduction

In Luke 10:38–42, we find one of the two gospel stories that record the story of Martha and Mary of Bethany. In Luke’s well-known and often debated account, Martha is found serving while her sister sits Jesus’s feet. Martha’s perhaps justifiable complaint about the situation is met with Jesus’s response that Mary has chosen the better part.<sup>1</sup> Although this passage is famil-

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<sup>1</sup> The exact nature of Jesus’s response is debated, as the text is highly unstable. There are a number of complicated textual variants, particularly surrounding how many things are actually necessary. NA<sup>28</sup> currently lists the following construction for 10:42: ἐνός δέ ἐστιν χρεια· Μαριάμ γὰρ τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα ἐξελέξατο ἥτις οὐκ ἀφαιρεθήσεται αὐτῆς. I believe, however, the following is more accurate: ὀλιγων δε ἐστιν χρεια ἢ ἐνος Μαριάμ γὰρ τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα ἐξελέξατο ἥτις οὐκ ἀφαιρεθήσεται αὐτῆς. Unfortunately, a more in-depth overview of these variants is beyond the scope of this paper, but for a thorough overview of the debate, see Gordon D. Fee, “One Thing is Needful,” in *To What End Exegesis?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 3–16. See also Tommy Wasserman, “Bringing Sisters Back Together: Another Look at Luke 10:41–42,” *JBL* 137 (2018): 439–61.

iar and actually rather short, this text contains a number of complex text-critical issues. While most of the attention is usually paid to the incredibly complicated variant in 10:41–42 over what exactly Jesus intended to tell Martha, the focus of this paper is on the little noticed textual variant found in Luke 10:38. Did this certain woman named Martha (γυνὴ δὲ τις ὀνόματι Μάρθα) simply welcome Jesus (ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν), or did she welcome him into her house (ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς)?

In NA<sup>28</sup>, Luke 10:38 currently reads the following way: “while they were traveling, he (Jesus) went into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha welcomed him.”<sup>2</sup> However, the majority of manuscripts include an additional phrase at the end of this sentence: εἰς τὸν οἶκον (or οικίαν) αὐτῆς (into her house):

Luke 10:38 (NA<sup>28</sup>) Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτοὺς αὐτὸς εἰσηλθεν εἰς κώμην τινὰ· γυνὴ δὲ τις ὀνόματι Μάρθα ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν <sup>†</sup>.

Variant	Important Witnesses
εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς	A D K P W Δ Γ Θ Ψ 070 f <sup>1-13</sup> 1241 700 892 1424 2542 ℣ lat sy bo Bas
εἰς τὸν οικίαν	℣ <sup>3vid</sup> Ⲙ <sup>*</sup> C L Ξ 33.579
εἰς τὸν οικίαν αὐτῆς	Ⲙ <sup>1a</sup> C <sup>2</sup>
txt (omit phrase)	℣ <sup>45</sup> ℣ <sup>75</sup> B sa

Through NA<sup>25</sup>, the prepositional phrase, εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς, was included as a part of 10:38, and indeed, that reading is well supported by many early manuscripts.<sup>3</sup> Upon the discovery of ℣<sup>45</sup> and ℣<sup>75</sup> the editors of NA<sup>26</sup> concluded that the shorter reading was more likely to represent the earlier tradition. Metzger, in his *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, presented the following justification for the change: “No motive is apparent for the deletion of the phrase ‘into her house’ if it were present in the text originally. On the other hand, the bold and bare ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν seems to call for some appropriate addition.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Philip Wesley Comfort argued, in his analysis of the variant that: “Of the three readings, [the shorter version] is the most likely because it is found in three of the earliest manuscripts and because it is quite apparent that the other two readings display scribal additions—inserted to fill out the sentence.”<sup>5</sup> From both of these arguments, one can see that the decision to view the phrase

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

<sup>3</sup> Of particular importance among these manuscripts is Alexandrinus (A), Washingtonianus (W), and Codex Bezae (D) which are all fifth century manuscripts. It is also relevant that one sees that the Latin and Syriac witnesses support it as well. From the church fathers, we see Basil includes the longer variant. Furthermore, there is a second variant εἰς τὸν οικίαν, which omits the third person possessive pronoun. This variant is supported by Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲙ), a fourth century uncial. Interestingly, the first corrector of Sinaiticus inserts αὐτῆς after οικίαν. The first corrector is thought to be a near contemporaneous scribe, also working in the fourth century, making them another important witness to a version of this passage, which includes a version of “her house.” A similar correction occurs in Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C) which is also a fifth century text with its second corrector inserting αὐτῆς after οικίαν. ℣<sup>3vid</sup> (a sixth/seventh century papyrus fragment) is heavily corrupted at 10:38, making it difficult to draw any conclusions. This suggests however that there are several fourth and fifth century manuscripts, which included a longer reading at 10:38, though there is a discrepancy whether or not the αὐτῆς appeared in every manuscript.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1975), 153.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Wesley Comfort, *Early Manuscripts and Modern Translations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 95. The two other readings he is referring to are εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς and εἰς τὸν οικίαν.

as a variant was based on two factors: first, the strength of the two early papyri omitting the phrase, and second, the fact that the so-called “bold and bare ὑπεδέξατο” seemed to call for an addition.

I am arguing, however, that when one studies the verb and its usage within the New Testament and within a few other relevant passages outside of the biblical texts, one finds that the verb almost never includes an additional prepositional phrase. Rather, it is a rarity to find such an addition. Secondly, if one studies the scribal habits of the two early papyri (P<sup>45</sup> and P<sup>75</sup>), one finds a repeated tendency toward omission, particularly when a phrase is awkwardly placed. Both of these suggest that this textual variant is more complicated than previously suggested. Counter to Metzger’s argument that he can think of no reasons for the omission, I am arguing that there are several potential reasons that could have led to it. In fact, my argument is that it is more likely that there was a scribal omission in these manuscripts than a scribal addition and that the longer phrase represents an earlier tradition of the text. It is my contention that this phrase should be reintroduced into Luke 10:38. Furthermore, while it is a notably small difference, I hope to show that its inclusion is exegetically important for properly understanding the character of Martha in Luke.

My argument is divided into three sections: (1) an examination of the verb in question, (2) a discussion of the scribal habits of P<sup>45</sup> and P<sup>75</sup>, and (3) a brief look at the exegetical importance of the phrase and how ignoring it diminishes Martha’s character in the narrative.

## Part 1: Does the Verb Seem to Call for Some Appropriate Addition?

Metzger’s argument for a scribal addition rests solely on the verb and how it appears to need an addition. Thus, we must turn our attention to the verb in question. This verb, ὑποδέχομαι, only appears four times in the New Testament, making it fairly uncommon. François Bovon argues that it should be read as technical term used specifically to indicate an act of hospitality.<sup>6</sup> The BDAG offers the following definition, with a similar emphasis on hospitality: “to receive someone hospitably, receive, welcome, entertain as a guest.”<sup>7</sup> Despite Metzger’s claim, a closer analysis reveals that ὑποδέχομαι is almost never followed by an additional clarifying prepositional phrase. The most common grammatical construction is ὑποδέχομαι + τινα with no prepositional phrase. To prove this, let us briefly examine various appearances of this verb, both in the New Testament and in the wider milieu.

Since it only appears four times in the New Testament, it is worth quoting each passage in full to show how the verb is functioning in each sentence. Notably, three of the four references occur in Luke-Acts. The first reference is Luke 10:38, which is the focus of our conversation, but it also appears in Luke 19:6 and Acts 17:7. In Luke 19:6, we find Zacchaeus climbing down the tree in order to host Jesus after Jesus has declared he will eat at Zacchaeus’s house:

καὶ σπεύσας κατέβη καὶ ὑπεδέξατο αὐτὸν χαίρων. And quickly, he came down and **welcomed him** joyfully.

Similarly, in Acts 17:7a, when the Jews in Thessaloniki are accusing Paul and his companions before the rulers of that city, they turn to highlight Jason as well because he welcomed them:

<sup>6</sup> François Bovon, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, 3 vols., Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 2:70.

<sup>7</sup> BDAG, s.v. ὑποδέχομαι.

(6b) Οἱ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀναστατώσαντες οὗτοι καὶ ἐνθάδε πάρεισιν (7a) οὓς ὑποδέδεκται Ἰάσων. These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also and **who Jason welcomed.**

Thus, one can see that within Luke-Acts, the verb ὑποδέχομαι does not call for some sort of additional prepositional phrase. Furthermore, when studying the critical apparatus of both of those passages, one does not find any manuscripts that supply the additional phrase either. Those references did not seem incomplete without the added phrase to supply where they received their guests. That they received their guests into their homes is implied by the verb.

The fourth and final New Testament reference is Jas 2:25, wherein James offers Rahab as example of the relationship between faith and works:

ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ῥαὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἔδικαιώθη ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἑτέρα ὁδῷ ἐκβαλοῦσα Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works **when she welcomed the messengers** and sent them out by another road?

Thus, we can see that in every other occurrence of this verb within the New Testament, it never actually includes an additional prepositional phrase. It also notable that one does not find any scribal correction to add a prepositional phrase within any of the critical apparatuses for these verses. It seems unlikely that it was grammatical concerns that led the majority of scribes to add a prepositional phrase.

If we move beyond the bounds of the New Testament canon, we find that this grammatical construction of ὑποδέχομαι + τινα remains the standard; ὑποδέχομαι usually takes a single object with no prepositional phrase. Time permits us to only look at a few short examples from the Second Temple period. First, in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* (1.180), the verb occurs when discussing Melchizedek's welcome of Abraham:

ἐνθα ὁ τῆς Σολυμαῖ ὑποδέχεται βασιλεὺς αὐτὸν Μελχισεδέκ· σημαίνει δὲ τοῦτο βασιλεὺς δίκαιος· There **he was welcomed by the king of Solyma, Melchisedek**; this name means "righteous king."

And Josephus uses a similar construction in *Against Apion* 1.247:

[ὁ τῶν Αἰθιοπίων βασιλεὺς] ὃς ὑποδεξάμενος καὶ τοὺς ὄχλους πάντας ὑπολαβὼν οἷς ἔσχεν ἡ χώρα πρὸς ἀνθρωπίνην τροφήν ἐπιτηδείων· [The king of Ethiopia] **who made him welcome** and maintained the whole multitude with all the products of the country suitable for human consumption.

Another reference from the Second Temple period can be found 4 Macc 13:17:

οὕτω γὰρ θανόντας ἡμᾶς Ἀβρααμ καὶ Ἰσαακ καὶ Ἰακωβ ὑποδέχονται καὶ πάντες οἱ πατέρες ἐπαινέσουσιν· For thus if we die, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob **will welcome us** and all of our fathers praise us.

As you can see none of these usages of the verb seem to demand the addition of another phrase. The verb stands on its own.

The same trend can also be seen when examining relevant documentary papyri. The verb normally stands alone without the accompanying prepositional phrase in the majority of papyri containing ὑποδέχομαι. For instance, in P.Oslo 2.55, a recommendation letter from Diogenes to his brother, one finds him encouraging his brother to show hospitality to his friend:<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For more examples from documentary papyri, see P.Laur 2.42; P.Mil. 2.64; P.Oxy. 16.1982; SB 1.6000. The phrase appears more frequently in the documentary papyri as it seems to be common to instruct the recipient of the letter to welcome the one who delivers it.

καλῶς οὖν ποιήσεις, ἄδελφε, **τοῦτον ὑποδεξάμενος** Therefore, brother, you would do well **to welcome this one** as you would me.  
ὡς ἂν ἐμέ.

From this overview, one can see that ὑποδέχομαι usually stands without an additional phrase within the New Testament and within the larger milieu of Second Temple Judaism and Hellenism more broadly.

It should be noted that in the BDAG, the authors offer an additional construction of the verb that does include the prepositional phrase εἰς τὸν οἶκον. However, the primary example of this usage in BDAG is actually the variant we are currently discussing. There are only a handful of other references, one in 1 Macc 16:15 in which the prepositional phrase introduces a new setting:

καὶ ὑπεδέξατο αὐτοὺς ὁ τοῦ Ἀβούβου εἰς τὸ **ὄχυρωμάτιον** τὸ καλούμενον Δωκ μετὰ δόλου ὃ **The son of Abubus gave them a** deceitful  
ἠκοδόμησεν. **welcome into the little stronghold** called Dok  
which he had built.

This construction certainly appears to be an outlier, suggesting that the addition of a prepositional phrase by no means makes the construction grammatically incorrect, only more uncommon.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, in the above example, one can see that there is a specific reason for the additional phrase. In this case, it is needed to introduce a new setting that is not a household.

Thus, we can see that this verb most commonly does not take a prepositional phrase. The verb is not bold and bare and calling for an addition. In fact, the evidence shows that the longer reading, εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς, should be seen as the more difficult one as it suggests that it is more likely that a scribe would omit the phrase, viewing it as an unnecessary extra then add it in. After all, it is more likely that a scribe would seek to smooth over an awkward construction rather than make it more awkward. At the very least, we can see that Metzger's argument suggesting the verb calls for the addition is improbable.

## Part 2: Scribal Tendencies to Omit in Early New Testament Papyri

If we can set aside Metzger's argument that the verb seems to be calling for some sort of addition, then we can reopen an analysis of why a scribe might add or subtract the prepositional phrase from the text. It would perhaps be easier to assume that the shorter reading in Luke 10:38 should be preferred simply because the shorter reading is almost always preferred. This follows the standard text-critical rule of thumb that a scribe is more likely to expand a text than shorten it. However, I am arguing that, given the large number of manuscripts that do include the longer version, a deeper analysis of the three omitting manuscripts and their scribal tendencies is warranted.

The three early manuscripts that represent the shorter version of this text are P<sup>45</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>, and Vaticanus, and they stand against Sinaiticus, Bezae, Alexandrinus, P<sup>3</sup>, and the others. In particular, the two papyri appear to have been particularly important in influencing the editors' decision to favor the shorter version. Thus, in this section, I argue that there is, in fact, a scribal tendency to omit short phrases, particularly among the early papyri. This could account for how the phrase was dropped from the two papyri. In order to construct this argument, I turn to the work of James Royse in *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*.

<sup>9</sup> Another potential example of this construction is PSI 7.783, in which the author of the letter instructs the recipients to welcome this one into their midst (οὕτως ταῦτα ὑποδεξάμενος εἰς τὸν μεταξύ).

In this important work, Royse studied  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  closely, among his thorough analysis of six early New Testament papyri, and throughout these manuscripts, he observed an interesting trend. These papyri, he argued, reflect a scribal tendency for omission, particularly of small adjectives, short phrases, personal pronouns, et cetera.<sup>10</sup> They are more likely to omit things from the text than to add. In the following section, I briefly summarize Royse's analysis of both  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  in order to show their scribal tendency toward omission.

First, we should focus on  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ , an important third century papyri, whose scribe, according to Royse, exhibited a distinct tendency to omit words and short phrases.<sup>11</sup> On average, he omits words twice as frequently as he adds words to the text.<sup>12</sup> Royse analyzes each one and observes that these omissions are frequently caused by harmonization to the immediate context or leaps, though sometimes, he finds no discernible cause for them other than scholarly error.

According to Royse's careful analysis, the scribe behind  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  generally leads toward making the text more concise or more readable. For instance, he only eliminates four adjectives (Luke 12:27, Acts 13:33, Mark 6:39, and Acts 10:39) in his text, and yet each four are forms of  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ , in locations where the word was redundant (but not incorrect) making the text more readable.<sup>13</sup> Another brief but relevant example is Mark 9:28:

<p>Καὶ εἰσελθόντος αὐτοῦ εἰς οἶκον οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ κατ' ἰδίαν ἐπηρώτων αὐτόν· ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἠδυνήθημεν ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό;</p>	<p>And after Jesus went out of the house, his disci- ples asked him privately, "Why were we not able to cast it out?"</p>
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The scribe of  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  omits the phrase, εἰς οἶκον, even though in that instance, the verb, εἰσελθόντα, clearly requires the additional phrase.<sup>14</sup>

This tendency had previously led Ernest Colwell to conclude: "As an editor the scribe of  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  wielded a sharp axe. The most striking aspect of his style is its conciseness. The dispensable word is dispensed with. He omits adverbs, adjectives, nouns, participles, verbs and personal pronouns without any compensating habit of addition. He frequently omits phrases and clauses. He prefers the simple to the compound word. In short, he favors brevity."<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to conclude as strongly as Colwell that all the omissions reflect the intentional hand of the scribe, but nonetheless the evidence does bear out the scribal habit of  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  is one of omission.

Turning now to  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , one finds that the scribal tendency to omit is similar to what we have already seen in  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ . Royse finds that the scribe of  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  omits material (usually individual words or short phrases) three times more frequently than he adds to the text.<sup>16</sup> One of these generally agreed upon omissions can be seen in the passage at hand, this time in Luke 10:39, where he

<sup>10</sup> James Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, NTTSD 36 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> I need to clarify that when one studies the actual sheet of  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ , which includes this passage, one finds that the relevant section we are discussing today is actually corrupted. The line ends on the right with ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν and then the beginning of the next line on the left is missing, meaning the first readable word on that line is τῆδε. That said, I agree with the editors that it is unlikely that the entire phrase εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς or some variation thereof could fit in the disintegrated portion. It is more likely that simply καὶ is missing. However, I think this corruption of the text should be acknowledged in critical apparatus with the marking *vid.*

<sup>12</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 103–97.

<sup>13</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 134.

<sup>14</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 135.

<sup>15</sup> Ernest C. Colwell, "Method in Evaluating Scribal Habits: A Study of P45, P66, P75," in *Studies of Methodology in Textual Criticism on the New Testament*, ed. Boyd L. Daniels (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 116–17.

<sup>16</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 704.

omits the τοῦ before Ἰησοῦ.<sup>17</sup> Other brief examples can be found in Luke 14:8 (where εἰς γαμοὺς is omitted), John 4:47 (πρὸς αὐτον), and John 12:38 (ὄν εἶπεν).<sup>18</sup> Thus, one can see that  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  also shows the overall tendency toward omission and leans toward the more concise reading.

This tendency in these early papyri (which we have seen in  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , and Royse finds in all six of the early papyri he studies) leads Royse to conclude that there is a stronger scribal tendency to omit words and short phrases than there is to add phrases.<sup>19</sup> He argues that this calls into question the practice of privileging shorter readings over longer ones because scribes in the first several centuries of the transmission of the New Testament tend to omit rather than add. He writes,

The investigation pursued here would seem to make it impossible any simple preference for the shorter text within the New Testament. In particular, as long as the competing readings are early, the preference must lie with the longer reading ... What seems to follow from this analysis is that the burden of proof should be shifted from the proponents of the longer text to the defenders of the shorter text. There does not need to be a reason for omission; rather omission is a natural error for these early scribes.<sup>20</sup>

Applying this idea to the textual variant at hand, one can see that there is significant early support of a longer version of this text. Most of the early uncials, including Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, and Bezae, include a version of εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς. Following Royse's conclusion, this makes it more likely that the two papyri in question omitted the passage for whatever reason and that the other manuscripts preserve the earlier tradition. This is true, particularly when we take into account how unnecessary the prepositional phrase is in the text. This goes against Comfort's and Metzger's claim that the prepositional phrase represents a clear scribal addition. There is no reason to add the phrase since the verb does not call for it, and there is evidence to suggest that the scribes of the papyri were known to omit for clarity and conciseness. In this instance, one could easily envision a situation in which these scribes dropped the phrase, viewing it as an awkward addition. Thus, the shorter reading is not to be preferred in this instance simply because it is shorter.

Before continuing to the exegetical implications of the phrase, I should note that outside of the two papyri, Codex Vaticanus (B) remains as the last source that omits the phrase entirely. This manuscript, which is an important uncial from the early fourth century, is the strongest evidence in favor of the omission. It is notably early and viewed by most New Testament textual critics to be a highly reliable text. That said, standing on its own against the majority of other manuscripts (including some of other highly reliable, early uncials like Sinaiticus), it was not enough to sway the editors of the Nestle-Aland to exclude the phrase. It was not until the discovery of the early New Testament papyri that the editors decided in the favor of the omission.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, while the three manuscripts that support the editors' decision to omit the phrase are early, my argument for including the phrase is threefold. First, contra Metzger, the additional phrase is a more awkward grammatical construction, and the rules of text criticism suggest that scribes are more likely to smooth over awkward constructions than complicate them. Second, a close study of  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  reveals that there is a tendency toward omission, rather than toward addition. Third, there are a number of reliable manuscripts, such as Vaticanus, Alexandrinus and  $\mathfrak{P}^3$ , that include some version of the longer phrase, which shows that this

<sup>17</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 662.

<sup>18</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 666.

<sup>19</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 717.

<sup>20</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 734–35.

<sup>21</sup> One can see this change by comparing NA<sup>25</sup> and NA<sup>26</sup>. Published in 1979, NA<sup>26</sup> reflects the discovery of these New Testament papyri as previously noted.

version of Luke 10:38 is also early. Taken together, one can see that there is a legitimate case for including the longer version back into the Lukan text.

### Part 3: The Effects of the Omission

Finally, it is important to discuss the cultural factors that could have contributed to the omission of the phrase. Originally, I was tempted to ascribe this particular omission to an antifeminist intent. The omission of the entire phrase, as well as the omissions of αὐτῆς from certain other manuscripts, could be driven by a concern over Martha being so explicitly given homeownership. This is, of course, already assumed by the verb (ὑποδέχομαι), which is why the phrase is grammatically unnecessary. In most every instance, it is the head of household that does the welcoming, but the addition of her house makes this more explicit. Turid Seim notes that even if one decides to omit the additional phrase, viewing it as a later addition, the construction of the entire sentence suggests that “Martha is receiving him into her own home. Combined with her name, which means ‘ruling lady,’ this introductory sentences emphasizes Martha as autonomous, well-off and hospitable.”<sup>22</sup> It is important to stress here that the omission of the phrase by itself does not exegetically rule out the possibility that Martha is the homeowner. By omitting the phrase, however, the explicit argument of her homeownership becomes a more implicit one, and the omission could have been intended to diminish her character. The omission weakens, rather than removes entirely, the concept of Martha as homeowner.

However, upon further study, I realized I am hesitant to ascribe such intent or motivations to the scribes. Rather, following the lead of Michael Holmes, I think it is better to discuss the effects of the omission. In his essay on “Women in the Western Texts of Acts,” Holmes argues after studying the well-documented tendency of the Western texts to omit or diminish women characters that:

The alterations noticed above likely reflect a cultural mindset shaped by that well-documented, widely shared (and often unconscious) cultural bias toward women that is known to have existed in the late 2nd and later centuries ... an attitude so widely shared, so taken for granted, did not always require conscious effort to leave evidence of its existence or to achieve its effects.<sup>23</sup>

For our purposes, this means that the omission of Martha’s house could have been an unconscious omission driven by a cultural bias toward women within certain Christian communities.<sup>24</sup> Thus, when one takes the potential effects of this cultural bias and places it next to scribal tendencies toward omission of small and potentially awkward phrases, one can see how in a few manuscripts the phrase, εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς, could easily drop out.

Having discussed the textual evidence in favor of the longer variant, I will now briefly discuss what is gained for us as readers of this story when we readmit the variant back into the text. I am arguing that the omission of Martha’s house has contributed to an overall diminishing of Martha’s character in Luke, as it subtly minimizes her position as a self-sufficient woman engaged in all the responsibilities and privileges of homeownership. The author of

<sup>22</sup> Turid Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke and Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 112.

<sup>23</sup> Michael W. Holmes, “Women and the ‘Western’ Text of Acts,” in *Apostelgeschichte als Kirchengeschichte: Text, Texttraditionen und antike Auslegungen*, ed. Tobias Nicklas, BZNW 120 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 203.

<sup>24</sup> This sort of unconscious bias, which led to a small error by some original scribes, could explain the tendency to insert αὐτῆς back into the manuscript that we saw in both Sinaiticus and Ephraemi Rescriptus.



Luke is introducing her in the same light as he introduces other female patrons of Jesus and his ministry. While, as Seim argues, this point is still made implicitly without the additional phrase, it means that in exegetical discussions this point rarely comes up, except perhaps in feminist-critical studies of the text. Too often, exegetes of this passage skip over Martha's position as a woman of means in order to depict her as a stressed-out homemaker. By including the phrase, one is explicitly alerted to Martha's position as the head of the household, and thus her character should be read in the same light as other heads of household who welcome Jesus and offer him a meal (i.e., Luke 7:36–50; 11:37–52; 19:1–10).

Secondly, from an exegetical perspective, the additional phrase and the fact that Martha welcomes Jesus εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς creates an important literary connection to earlier reference in the travel narrative found in Luke 9:51b–19:28.<sup>25</sup> While there is scholarly debate over the form and function of this passage, it is clear that throughout this section, one continually finds Jesus doing the work of a prophet and a teacher. In particular, Luke has constructed the travel narrative so that Jesus's own words are at the forefront as he engages with his disciples, the crowds and his opponents.<sup>26</sup> Too often, however, the story of Mary and Martha and its appearance within this section of Luke has been minimized.<sup>27</sup> I should note that the travel narrative motif has already been invoked in this verse, which begins “while they traveling” (Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτούς), suggesting that its location is no accident.<sup>28</sup> This becomes particularly important when one connects what happens earlier in Luke 10. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus sends out the Seventy ahead of him and gives them specific instructions for their missionary journey. In Luke 10:5–7, he gives the following instructions:

<sup>25</sup> There is continued debate over the proper ending of the travel narrative. Suggested endings also include 18:30, 18:34, 19:10, 19:44, 19:46, 19:48, 21:38. For a discussion of the different scholarly opinions on the question, see Filip Noël, *The Travel Narrative in the Gospel of Luke: Interpretation of Luke 9:51–19:28*, *Collectanae biblica et religiosa antiqua* 5 (Brussel: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België Voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten, 2004), 249–328. Noël concludes in favor of 19:28 because 19:29–46, he marks as the introductory section of the entry to Jerusalem, which he argues represents the beginning of a new section.

<sup>26</sup> For some key scholarly voices on the form and function of the travel narrative in Luke see David Paul Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lucan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989). For other scholars who develop this idea in various forms, see Craig F. Evans, “The Central Section of the St. Luke's Gospel,” in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 37–53. This work was the first substantial analysis of the Septuagintisms of this section. See also J. M. Dawsey, “Jesus's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem,” *PerpRelSt* 14 (1987): 217–32; Ulrich Busse, *Die Wunder des Propheten Jesus: Die Rezeption, Komposition und Interpretation der Wundertradition im Evangelium des Lukas*, *FzB* 24 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1997); William Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels: Story Shaping Story* (Peabody, MA: Baker Academic, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, Joseph Fitzmyer, who argues that this passage has nothing to do with the stories that precede and follow it. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X–XXIV*, AB 28B (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1984), 891.

<sup>28</sup> Thematically, different sections within the travel narrative are marked with the repeated references to Jesus and his disciples' journey, as Luke tells us that they are on the way (9:52, 53, 56, 57; 10:1, 38; 13:22, 31, 33; 14:25, 17:11; 18:31; 19:1, 11, 28), which serves to bring the reader's attention back to this motif.

εἰς ἣν δ' ἂν οἰκίαν εἰσέρχησθε, πρῶτον λέγετε  
**Εἰρήνη τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ** καὶ ἂν μὲν ἦ ἐκεῖ υἷος  
 εἰρήνης ἐπαναπαύσεται ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἢ εἰρήνη ὑμῶν  
 εἰ δὲ μήγε, ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἀνακάμψει ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ  
**οἰκίᾳ μένετε ἐσθίοντες καὶ πίνοντες** τὰ παρ'  
 αὐτῶν ἄξιός γάρ ὁ ἐργάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ  
 ἐστὶν μὴ μεταβαίνετε ἐξ οἰκίας εἰς οἰκίαν.

**Whatever house you enter**, first say, **“Peace to this house!”** And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. **Remain in the same house, eating and drinking** whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. (NRSV)

This passage led Jutta Brutscheck, in her dissertation *Die Marta-Maria Erzählung*, to argue that internal evidence supports the additional phrase of “into her house.”<sup>29</sup> Earlier in the same literary unit, one sees a discussion of the blessing a person should receive when they welcome a missionary into their home, and here, we see Martha doing exactly that by receiving not just a missionary, but Jesus himself into her home.<sup>30</sup> In this sense, when Luke introduces Martha by describing her as welcoming Jesus into her home, the audience recognizes that she is a positive figure. Such hospitality is the expected response for a follower of Christ following the criteria set out by Jesus earlier in the travel narrative.

Furthermore, in contrast to Martha’s act of welcoming Jesus into her home after he enters her village (κώμη), the Samaritans are presented negatively in 9:52–53, when they do not receive him into their village (κώμη). As Warren Carter argues:

Martha appears in 10:38 as an embodiment of the positive responses named through chapter 10. In receiving Jesus, Martha is a child of peace (10:6) who has encountered God’s reign (10:9). She is not subject to the curses and eschatological warnings of 10:12–15 ... She appears as the model disciple in contrast to those in the previous verses who do not receive Jesus’s messenger (9:52–53; 10:10).<sup>31</sup>

Thus, by including the prepositional phrase, which is not grammatically necessary, Luke is constructing Martha in such a way that one sees that she is a positive figure. She is a disciple, who is doing what Luke has prepared his audience to expect from Jesus’ followers. She physically receives Christ into her home. Thus, it can be seen that Luke is intentionally trying to draw this comparison to the previous instructions by including the extra phrase “into her house,” even though grammatically, he does not need to do so. The phrase represents a linguistic connection to the themes already being developed throughout the travel narrative more broadly and specifically being developed within this section of Luke 10. The omission of the phrase diminishes that thematic connection, allowing interpreters to lift this passage from its narrative setting and treat as though it stands alone.

Therefore, when one accepts the omission as earlier, two different aspects of this story are diminished. First, Martha’s position as a self-sufficient woman is minimized, allowing her characterization to be less rich. It has often led to her being seen as a simple homemaker and not a head of household with all the responsibilities and privileges attached to that fact. Second, the omission of the phrase has led to an overall tendency to remove this story from its Lukan context within the travel narrative, which frames hospitality and the welcoming of Jesus

<sup>29</sup> Jutta Brutscheck, *Die Marta-Maria Erzählung: eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung zu Lk 10:38–42*, BBB 64 (Frankfurt: Hanstein, 1986), 18.

<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the textual variants that only include εἰς τὸν οἰκίαν without the additional personal pronoun also can be read in support of this argument. It is the linking of the reception of Jesus and his followers into a home that connects the passage to the blessing Jesus discusses in the beginning of Luke 10.

<sup>31</sup> Warren Carter, “Getting Martha Out of the Kitchen,” in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, ed. by Amy-Jill Levine (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 219.

and his followers as a key virtue that leads to blessing. These two aspects being minimized within the story has led to an overall marginalization of Martha as hospitable homeowner, who, like the patron women who support Jesus in chapter 8 and the other homeowners who welcome Jesus to their table for a meal, should be viewed as a positive character participating in a virtuous act. Thus, even though the phrase is small, its inclusion within Luke 10:38 does have important exegetical ramifications for properly understanding and interpreting Martha.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that we should give Martha her house back. As opposed to Metzger's claim that there are no reasons for such an omission, I argue that there are several. First, ὑποδέχομαι is not a bold and bare verb that seems to call for addition. In fact, the addition can be seen to be somewhat awkward when placed against most other appearances of the verb in other contexts, particularly not in the New Testament and only rarely in other contexts. Considering there is a scribal tendency to omit among early New Testament papyri as shown by Royse, it should not be surprising that it was omitted for conciseness. This tendency is the second reason this phrase could get omitted. Furthermore, while the texts that omit are early, we can see that there are other early uncials that include the phrase and that, in fact, the majority of the texts have some version of the phrase. The shorter reading should not simply be preferred because it is shorter.

Finally, by including the phrase back into the text, we can see that Luke is introducing this somewhat awkward phrase to draw a connection to his earlier discussion of people who receive followers of Christ into their villages and homes. Martha is filling that role. She is showing hospitality out of her own means to Jesus and following the logic of Luke's argument, she should receive Jesus peace for her efforts. Luke intentionally is depicting Martha in a positive light. He is setting up a tension between competing good actions. Martha welcomes him, and Mary listens to his word. Both are the acts of disciples. This leads to the tension in the text over which is better. By omitting the phrase, Martha's character is somewhat diminished, and considering the textual evidence does not support the omission being original, I think the longer version should be restored.