

Acts 8:37 – A Brief Note about the Text and Believer’s Baptism

This meme compares the KJV of Acts 8:37 to its absence in other modern translations. It seems to allege (or at least strongly insinuate) that modern translations (like the ESV, NIV, NASB, etc.) have removed it due to a desire to follow the Vatican and remove Believer’s baptism from the Bible. But in fact, most modern translations contain the verse;¹ they have simply moved it to a footnote due to its dubious textual support. For example, note the ESV, which does not contain verse 37 in the text, but which reads in a footnote, “Some manuscripts add all or most of verse 37: *And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he replied, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’”*

Of course their note doesn’t really tell the whole story. “Some manuscripts” is a little ambiguous. The truth is, it’s not found at all in the majority of manuscripts. It’s not in the Byzantine manuscripts² for example, and thus not in the Robinson-Pierpont Byzantine Textform.³ It is a distinctly Western reading. It’s not present at all in any of the earliest manuscripts (though it does appear in Greek as early as the 6th century in one majuscule, though in a very different form than the KJV, but still much earlier than many other accidental additions to the text), and in those manuscripts that do have it, it’s sometimes only in the margin as a marginal comment.

I have tried to set out the external evidence for the textual variant in Acts 8:37 in a chart format, using the standard abbreviations. The data comes from the standard textual apparatuses.⁴ The numbers in the “Greek” columns are the standard GA numbers by which we refer to the Greek manuscript copies of the NT. Each number stands for one of our Greek manuscripts of the NT. The other two columns, (Vers. and Pat.) represent its presence or absence in ancient translations of the NT and quotations of the NT by ancient writers, which can serve as secondary and indirect witness to a form of the text. Note that the chart is divided into two basic parts; on the left side is evidence for the shorter reading, where the text goes straight from what we call verse 36 to what we call verse 38, not containing what we call verse 37. But note that the verse divisions didn’t exist until 1551 when Stephanus put them in, thus its not a matter of these manuscripts, “taking out a verse” but rather having a shorter form of the text as opposed to a longer form of the text. On the right side of the chart is the evidence for the longer reading (what we call verse 37). I have further divided this section into two parts, for a simple reason. Technically, instead of two sections examining two readings, the chart should have 23 sections examining the 33 different forms that Acts 8:36-38 is found in. But I don’t know anyone who would claim that verse 37 is authentic, but that the KJV form of it is in error. So basically, there are only two forms of the text being defended – the KJV form and anything that is *not* like the KJV form. One cannot appeal with integrity to evidence which has a form different than the KJV for support, and then demand that that support must be followed where it agrees with the KJV, but must be categorically ignored when it disagrees. Thus, while there is a variety of evidence that has some form of verse 37 in the text, I have divided this evidence into that which supports the KJV/TR form, and that which would demand that the KJV/TR is in error. Simple enough.

¹ One might also note that the HCSB, the NKJV, and the MEV, for example, have the verse in the text, but with a footnote explaining its dubious textual support, much like Erasmus included it in 1516, but noted its dubious support.

² A printed Greek text used by the Greek Orthodox Church does contain the verse, but not on the basis of any Greek Manuscripts, but rather the pedigree of that text being influenced by the Textus Receptus. It would be quite a mistake to assume from its presence in that text that it was a Byzantine reading, which it is not. The Greek orthodox Church is well aware that the text they currently use is not truly the “Byzantine” text which they would venerate as inspired, and requested years ago that the INTF would produce a Byzantine text actually based on the available Greek manuscripts. Currently, the INTF has only completed the gospel of John (an early electronic edition is available here <http://www.iohannes.com/byzantine/index.html>), with future installments hopefully to follow soon.

³ He expressly notes in his introduction that the verse was never part of the Byzantine text.

⁴ The standard apparatuses are those in the NA28, UBS5, CNTTS, and the Greek data comes from the more extensive, “*Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments, III Die Apostelgeschichte, Band I.*”

External Evidence for Textual Variant in Acts 8:37

Date	Shorter Reading (without verse 37 present)			Longer Reading (some form of vs. 37 present)					
				Non-KJV/TR form			KJV/TR form		
	Greek Evidence	Vers.	Pat.	Greek	Vers	Pat	Greek	Vers.	Pat
1									
2									Iren. Cyp.
3	P45	Cop ^{sa}							Pont. Dio. Tert.
4	01, 03,	Cop ^{bo}							Ambr. Pac., Ambst.
5	02, 04,	Syr ^p ,	Chr		ite,Geo Cop ^{meg}	Spec Chrom		Arm, Geo,	Aug.
6		A, F,		08					
7	P74	Syr ^h	Eth ^{pp}		Eth ^{ch} ,	Bede		Syr ^{h**}	
8	044,	S, Theoph ^a			Slav, it ^p	Theoph ^b		it ^r	
9	014, 020, 025, 049, 33, 82, 1424, 1841, 1862, 1895,	C, G, I, U, K		1851,	It ^{ar} it ^t				
10	056, 0142, 93, 175, 181, 221*, 326, 398, 450, 454, 436, 437, 451, 458, 459, 462, 465, 491, 506, 547, 617, 623, 635, 638, 639, 699, 796, 901, 910, 919, 1162, 1243, 1244, 1270, 1277, 1311, 1521, 1668, 1724, 1734, 1828, 1838, 1847, 1849, 1854, 1870, 1888, 2138, 2191, 2344, 2475, 2587, 2723, 2746, 2833			307, 1735, 1739, 1891, 221 ^{marg} ,					
11	35, 42, 81, 104, 131, 133, 142, 177, 250, 256, 302, 312, 424, 436, 437, 451, 458, 459, 462, 465, 491, 506, 547, 617, 623, 635, 638, 639, 699, 796, 901, 910, 919, 1162, 1243, 1244, 1270, 1277, 1311, 1521, 1668, 1724, 1734, 1828, 1838, 1847, 1849, 1854, 1870, 1888, 2138, 2191, 2344, 2475, 2587, 2723, 2746, 2833			464, 606, 607, 641, 945,					
12	1, 2, 3, 43, 57, 88*, 97, 105, 110, 122, 189, 203, 226, 319, 321, 330, 337, 365, 431, 440, 441, 452*, 618, 625, 637, 656, 911, 916, 917, 922, 927, 1058, 1127, 1240, 1241, 1245, 1315, 1319, 1359, 1360, 1448, 1490, 1505, 1526, 1573, 1611, 1646, 1673, 1718, 1737, 1740, 1743, 1752, 1754, 1850, 1863, 1867, 1868, 1872, 1885, 1893, 1894, 1897, 2127, 2143, 2194, 2242, 2401, 2412, 2541, 2712, 2718, 2815,			88 ^{marg} , 94, 103, 180, 323, 452 ^{marg} , 610, 876, 1853, 2298, 2805, 2818,	it ^{dem} it ^{ph} it ^p			it ^c	
13	5, 6, 38, 51, 141, 172, 204, 206s, 218, 234, 263, 327, 328, 378, 383, 384, 390, 404, 460, 468, 469, 479, 483, 496, 567, 592, 601, 614, 632, 665, 676, 757, 912, 914, 915, 941, 997, 999, 1069, 1070, 1072, 1094, 1103, 1107, 1149, 1161, 1242, 1251, 1292, 1297, 1352, 1398, 1400, 1404, 1456, 1563, 1594, 1595, 1597, 1717, 1719, 1722, 1736, 1742, 1759, 1827, 1839, 1842, 1843, 1855, 1857, 1860, 1864, 1865, 1873, 2180, 2374, 2404, 2423, 2483, 2502, 2516, 2558, 2576, 2627, 2696, 2772, 2774,			455, 1501, 1509, 1609, 1642, 1780,					
14	18, 62, 76, 201, 209, 216, 223, 228, 254, 308, 363, 367, 386, 393, 394, 421, 425, 489, 498, 582, 603, 604, 608, 621, 628*, 633, 634, 642, 680, 794, 808*, 824, 921, 928, 935, 959, 986, 996, 1022, 1040, 1075, 1099, 1100, 1102, 1106, 1248, 1249, 1354, 1390, 1409, 1482, 1503, 1524, 1548, 1598, 1599, 1618, 1619, 1622, 1637, 1643, 1723, 1725, 1726, 1732, 1733, 1741, 1746, 1747, 1753, 1761, 1762, 1831, 1856, 1859, 1877*, 1886, 1890, 1892*, 1896, 2080, 2085, 2086, 2175, 2261, 2279, 2303, 2356, 2431, 2466, 2484, 2492, 2508, 2511, 2675, 2705, 2716,			429, 429 ^{Marg} , 453, 628 ^{marg} , 629, 630, 913, 1678, 1830, 1832, 1877 ^{marg} , 1892 ^{marg} , 2200, 2494,	it ^w				
15	69, 102, 149, 205, 400, 432, 444, 616, 664, 801, 1003, 1105, 1247, 1250, 1367, 1405, 1508, 1617, 1626, 1649, 1656, 1729, 1744, 1750, 1763, 1767, 1876, 2131, 2201, 2221, 2288, 2352, 2495, 2523, 2554, 2652, 2653, 2691, 2704, 2816*			322, 385, 467, 636, 1610, 1751, 2816 ^{marg}					
16	61, 90, 1652, 1702, 1749, 1757, 1861, 2218, 2255, 2501, 2544*,			296, 522, 1704, 1884, 2488, 2737 2544 ^{marg} ,			1883	Vg ^{cl}	
17	1721, 1748, 2243, 2674,			1869, 1903, 2473,					
18				1104, 2619,					
19		Vg ^{ww} Vg st							

The Greek Evidence For / Against the Verse

Since Greek Manuscripts are the primary external evidence which textual critics consider today, it is worth examining them in more detail. We have today 5,839 extant (currently existing) Greek NT manuscripts. But most of them do not contain the entire NT. We have about 660 manuscripts which contain all or parts of the Book of Acts. The verse is found today in only 64 of the later extant Greek manuscripts of the book of Acts. With many variations, it is found in the text of, Papyri – none

Majuscules - 08

Miniscules - 94, 103, 180, 296, 307, 322, 323, 385, 429, 453, 455, 464, 467, 522, 606, 607, 610, 629, 630, 636, 641, 876, 913, 945, 1104, 1501, 1509, 1609, 1610, 1642, 1678, 1704, 1735, 1739, 1751, 1751, 1780, 1830, 1832, 1851, 1853, 1869, 1883, 1884, 1891, 1903, 2200, 2298, 2473, 2488, 2494, 2619, 2737, 2805, 2818.

It is also found in a variety of different forms in the margins of miniscules 88, 221, 429, 452, 628, 1877, 1892, 2544, and 2816. Note some overlap since some manuscripts have it in one form in the text with a different form in the margin. Further, of these manuscripts that do have it, it occurs in a total of 12 different basic forms, with a variety of minor variations between witnesses to each form. If one counted minor differences like the difference of a single word as a different form, then the count would be 22 different forms.⁵

The entire verse is completely absent from the vast majority of extant manuscripts of Acts.⁶ More important to most textual critics (with some exceptions), the verse is absent from the oldest manuscripts (see the upper left corner of the chart). Of the 660 manuscripts of the Book of Acts extant, (minus those that don't contain this section of Acts) the verse is absent from,

Papyri - P45, P74,

Majuscules - 01, 02, 03, 04, 014, 020, 025, 044, 049, 056, 0142,

Miniscule Manuscripts - 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 18, 33, 35, 38, 42, 43, 51, 57, 61, 62, 69, 76, 81, 82, 88*, 90, 93, 97, 102, 104, 105, 110, 122, 131, 133, 141, 142, 149, 172, 175, 177, 181, 189, 201, 203, 204, 205, 206s, 209, 216, 218, 221t, 223, 226, 228, 234, 250, 254, 256, 263, 302, 308, 312, 319, 321, 326, 327, 328, 330, 337, 363, 365, 367, 378, 383, 384, 386, 390, 393, 394, 398, 400, 404, 421, 424, 425, 431, 432, 436, 437, 440, 441, 444, 450, 451, 452*, 454, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 462, 465, 468, 469, 479, 483, 489, 491, 496, 498, 506, 547, 567, 582, 592, 601, 603, 604, 605, 608, 614, 616, 617, 618, 619, 621, 623, 625, 626, 628*, 632, 633, 634, 635, 637, 638, 639, 642, 656, 664, 665, 676, 680, 699, 757, 794, 796, 801, 808*, 824, 901, 910, 911, 912, 914, 915, 916, 917, 919, 920, 921, 922, 927, 928, 935, 941, 959, 986, 996, 997, 999, 1003, 1022, 1040, 1058, 1066, 1069, 1070, 1072, 1073, 1075, 1094, 1099, 1100, 1102, 1103, 1105, 1106, 1107, 1127, 1149, 1161, 1162, 1175, 1240, 1241, 1242, 1243, 1244, 1245, 1247, 1248, 1249, 1250, 1251, 1270, 1277, 1292, 1297, 1311, 1315, 1319, 1352, 1354, 1359, 1360, 1367, 1390, 1398, 1400, 1404, 1405, 1409, 1424, 1448, 1456, 1482, 1490, 1503, 1505, 1508, 1521, 1524, 1526, 1548, 1563, 1573, 1594, 1595, 1597, 1598, 1599, 1611, 1617, 1618, 1619, 1622, 1626, 1628, 1636, 1637, 1643, 1646, 1649, 1652, 1656, 1668, 1673, 1702, 1717, 1718, 1719, 1720, 1721, 1722, 1723, 1724, 1725, 1726, 1729, 1732, 1733, 1734, 1736, 1737, 1740, 1741, 1742, 1743, 1744, 1746, 1747, 1748, 1749, 1750, 1752, 1753, 1754, 1757, 1759, 1761, 1762, 1763, 1767, 1827, 1828, 1829, 1831, 1837, 1838, 1839, 1841, 1842, 1843, 1845, 1847, 1849, 1850, 1854, 1855, 1856, 1857, 1859, 1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1867, 1868, 1870, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1876, 1877*, 1880, 1885, 1886, 1888, 1890, 1892*, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 2080, 2085, 2086, 2127, 2131, 2138, 2143, 2147, 2175, 2180, 2191, 2194, 2201, 2218, 2221, 2242, 2243, 2255, 2261, 2279, 2288, 2303, 2344, 2352, 2356, 2374, 2401, 2404, 2412, 2423, 2431, 2466, 2475, 2483, 2484, 2492, 2495, 2501, 2502, 2508, 2511, 2516, 2523, 2541, 2544*, 2554, 2558, 2576, 2587, 2627, 2652, 2653, 2674, 2675, 2691, 2696, 2704, 2705, 2712, 2716, 2718, 2723, 2746, 2772, 2774, 2815, 2816*, 2833.

Incidentally, passages like this one (and several thousand others we could look at) reveal that when someone claims that the KJV is based on the majority of manuscripts, or that the majority of manuscripts support the KJV, they are, quite simply, lying. One doesn't have to count well to see that "1" (the number of manuscripts which have the TR/KJV reading) is not a "Majority" of "660" (the number of manuscripts which do not have the KJV reading here).

How the Verse was Inserted into the KJV

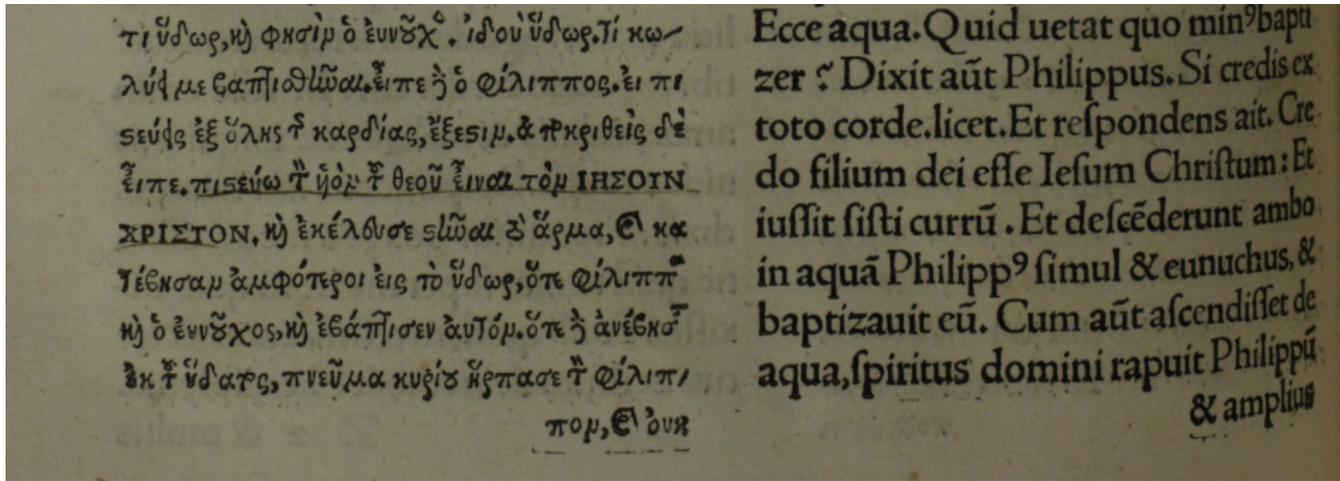
It might be quite instructive to see how it got into the KJV. The 1611 KJV did not translate directly from Greek manuscripts. The 1611 KJV is a revision of the 1602 Bishop's Bible. The Bishop's Bible is (essentially) one of a number of revisions of Tyndale's 1534 NT, which had translated the 1522 edition of the Greek/Latin diglot of Erasmus of Rotterdam (a diglot is a text which contains two languages), first printed in 1516. (The KJV itself of course doesn't always follow the

⁵ The *Text Und Textwert* volume divides these into 12 basic different forms, if one doesn't count the minor differences between the sub-forms (i.e., the presence/absence of a single word, difference in word order etc.). Compare the situation to the textual essays on I John 5:7, and Matt. 6:13, where we explain the importance of such variation in a minority reading as evidence of a late origin.

⁶ It is absent from the remainder of the some 660 continuous text Greek manuscripts of Acts that are extant. The full list of each of these manuscripts can be found in the *Text Und Textwert* Volume, part 1, pg. 475-479.

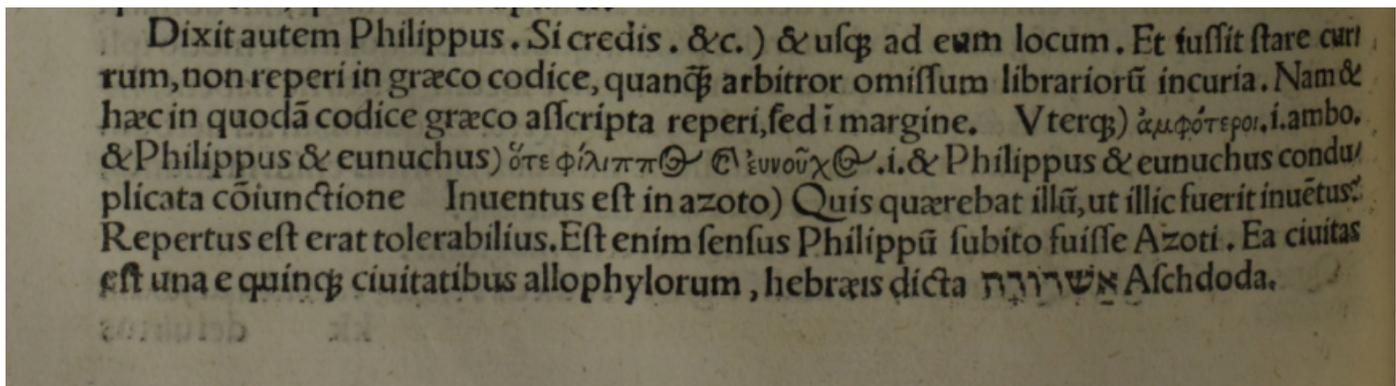
Erasmus text, as it is itself an eclectic combination of readings from different texts.) Thus the KJV form of the text of Acts 8:37 comes from the Greek/Latin text of Erasmus, first printed in 1516. By contrast, the Complutensian Polyglot printed in 1514 did not include the verse,⁷ as it was not in the Greek manuscripts, thus, in terms of the history of printed Greek texts, there is a longer history of ***not*** including it than there is of including it. Here's Erasmus' 1516 text, the first Printed Greek text to add the verse to the text,

http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Erasmus_1516/Erasmus1516_0134b.jpg



Here's his annotation explaining with the text in 1516 that he didn't know of any Greek manuscripts which had it in the text,

http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Erasmus_1516/Erasmus1516_0358b.jpg



Erasmus notes that the verse (consisting of two sections) "is not found in the Greek Manuscripts,"⁸ but he thinks that the Greek scribes have accidentally left it out (since it is in the Latin Vulgate he is using as a base), and so he suggests, "However, I think the omission was the result of negligent scribes."⁹ He then notes, "On the other hand I did find the reading in a certain Greek Manuscript, but only in the margin."¹⁰ He additionally notes in his later editions (in response to criticism by Stunica and Lee)¹¹ that it's not found in Chrysostom, and not in the Spanish edition, though it was added to the Aldine edition

⁷ Interestingly, since the NT is a diglot presenting the text in Greek and Latin, and attempts to align the lines of text, it makes up for differences in the text length throughout the work by printing what appear to be a long series of consecutive "0"s to make up for the misaligned text. Since the Latin Vulgate text which it prints in the Latin column has the text, but the Greek text (following the Greek manuscripts here) doesn't, the polyglot fills the section on the Greek side with these 0's.

⁸ non reperi in Graeco codice

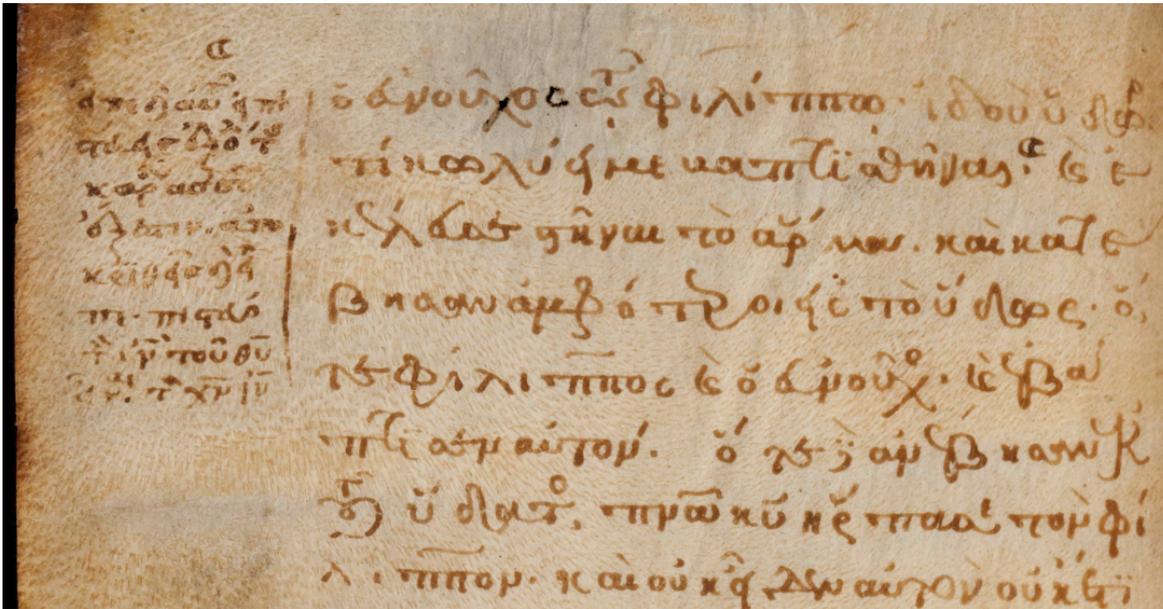
⁹ Quanquam arbitror omissum librariorum incuria

¹⁰ Nam et haec in quodam codice Graeco ascripta reperi, sed in margine.

¹¹ See the edition by Hovingh, *Opera Omnia, Ordinis Sexti, Tomus Sextus*, pg. 238-239, for brief discussion, who prints the full text of Erasmus' annotation (with the later additions) as follows: "Dixit autem Philippus: Si credis etc. usque ad eum locum. Et

(which he does not realize is in fact simply his own 1519 Greek text reprinted by others without his authorization). However, it was in the copy of the Latin Vulgate that Erasmus had. We even know the exact form of the Vulgate Erasmus used, since he print it alongside his own Latin translation and Greek text in his 1527 edition.¹² In his edition of the Greek/Latin text of Erasmus for Acts, Brown notes of the verse, “Erasmus did not find this verse in his codd. 1 or 2815, but derived the wording¹³ from the margin of cod. 2816: see *Annot.*, where he suggests that it was originally omitted by scribal error (“*librariorum incuria*”). Consequently, he inserted a caret mark at the end of vs. 36 in cod. 2815, accompanied by a symbol in the margin, to indicate that an addition was required. The subject was further discussed in his *&sp. ad annot. Ed. Lei, LB IX, 207 CE.*”¹⁴ Thus, Erasmus added it to his Greek text, not on the basis of a single manuscript (none of the ones he had access to had it in the text), but on the basis of its presence in the Latin Vulgate, which he felt was vindicated by its presence in the marginal note of a single Greek manuscript which he had, (Minuscule 2816). The manuscript which Erasmus had which has the text in the margin is viewable here,

<http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/community/modules/papyri/?site=INTF&image=32816/undefined/580/10/336>



Note the absence of Verse 37 from the text, and its presence in the margin. Erasmus made a rather premature judgment that its omission in the few Greek manuscripts that he had access to was an accidental scribal error. He should be forgiven for such a judgment, as he was working with less than 1% of the amount of manuscript evidence we have available today.

When Lee criticized him for including the verse here, even though it wasn't the reading of the Greek manuscripts, Erasmus responded, [with some necessary explanation from me in brackets],¹⁵ “In this issue of Greek Manuscripts Lee has no grounds for his attack. I already noted in my annotation that in the Greek manuscripts one or the other part of the verse is

iussit stare currum non reperi in Graeco codice. Quanquam arbitror omissum librariorum incuria. Nam et haec in quodam codice Graeco asscripta reperi, sed in margine. [C] Caeterum apud interpretem Chrysostomum haec non adduntur. [D] Nee in aeditione Hispaniensi. In Aldina fuit additum.”

¹² His edition of the late Latin Vulgate read, “*Dixit aute Philippus: Si credis ex toto corde, licet. Et respondens, ait: Credo Filii Dei esse Iesum Christu*” which is the exact form he put into his Greek text, and the exact form which then came to be translated in the KJV (Erasmus, *Novum Testamentum*, 1527 “VVLG. Editio” column, viewable here http://www.e-rara.ch/bau_1/content/pageview/838798).

¹³ Brown is actually slightly mistaken at this point, for it is clear that Erasmus derived the “wording” for his insertion from the Vulgate. What he derived from 2816 (in its marginal note) was the boldness to think the Vulgate reading had some basis.

¹⁴ Brown, Andrew, *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi, Oridinas Sexti, Tomus Secundas*, pg. 293.

¹⁵ I am more than willing to be corrected in this translation of Erasmus response, as I have had to lean on my own amateur understanding of the Latin text, “having no man to guide me” as Tyndale might say. I suspect I am on the right track, but I could just as well be quite mistaken.

lacking, but that I had added it to the text, as it seemed to me that it had been omitted through the carelessness of scribes. And I had after all discovered it in another manuscript written in the margin. What is Lee's complaint? Nothing is lacking that was not in the previous edition." In other words, from my very first edition I gave both readings through the use of the annotation, so how can he complain? One or the other reading is surely right. This is the basic point of using marginal notes – to make sure the reader has the right reading either in the text or note. He continues, "My note gave my opinion that in this place manuscripts had been mutilated, but he ran to the aid of the other [i.e., Lee was too concerned about the Greek manuscripts]. Or are we supposed to believe that if one or another place is found faulty it should not be the Greek manuscripts? But who is so foolish, that he in this kind of business places confidence in the manuscripts? But in the situation of this note as in other places, we can confidently refuse the Greek manuscripts, if we discover Jerome [that is, the Vulgate] or someone else ancient doesn't agree with them. Besides, we take this action throughout the whole work. Yet, we ought to add: unless there is support from the older copies of the Latin." In other words, Erasmus has no problem ignoring the reading of the Greek manuscripts on the basis of the Latin Vulgate or patristic citations alone in constructing his text. He does this through his whole New Testament. In fact, he thinks it silly to demand that one follow only the Greek manuscripts. With one caveat: if the oldest copies of the Latin Vulgate (the ones he regarded as truly representing Jerome's text, as opposed to the later corrupted form) agree with the readings of the Greek manuscripts, that combination is his most certain witness that the reading is correct.¹⁶

However, when Erasmus added it to his text, since he added it in the form found in his copy of the late Latin Vulgate,¹⁷ not from the marginal note in minuscule 2816, he actually perpetuated a form of the text almost unknown in Greek.¹⁸ This is the form that then became transmitted in the various editions of the TR, and then translated into the KJV. But this actual form of the text has only ever been found in 1 Greek manuscript, from the late 16th century, miniscule 1883 (and if one were technical about "every jot and tittle," like the movable v, then even Ms. 1883 differs from the TR form). It does have some early support from Patristic citations and from some of the ancient versions (some Latin manuscripts, for example, as well as the later Armenian and Georgian versions), but the KJV/TR form of the verse is not now and never was the reading of the Greek manuscripts.

F. H. A. Scrivener (the man who edited the first printing of the Greek text behind the KJV in 1881) suggested long ago that it was likely simply a marginal explanatory note that was accidentally inserted into the text, (using it as an example of this class of textual additions), noting, "A shorter passage or mere clause, whether inserted or not in our printed books, may have appeared originally in the form of a marginal note, and from the margin have crept into the text, through the wrong judgment or mere oversight of the scribe. Such we have reason to think is the history of 1 John v. 7, the verse relating to the Three Heavenly Witnesses, once so earnestly maintained, but now generally given up as spurious. Thus too Acts viii. 37 may have been derived from some Church Ordinal..."¹⁹ Whether it is or isn't original is not actually the point here. My point here is that it is not a majority text reading, and that one should be consistent in how one employs evidence. Further, one should be especially careful (when selectively presenting only evidence that favors one position) all making accusations of malice. And even more, one should be careful of accusing someone of trying to delete a Bible doctrine, when they are actually simply trying to follow evidence. Moses required 2 or 3 witnesses to establish an accusation, and there is wisdom in such a practice.

Perhaps more pertinent to that accusation is a separate issue altogether, that of the duplicitous nature of such an accusation. Claiming that modern versions remove Acts 8:37 in order to remove the doctrine of Believer's Baptism is nothing short of absurd. Erasmus, the editor of the Greek text that essentially (though not exactly) lies behind the KJV, was a Roman Catholic who believed in Infant Baptism. His Greek text was endorsed by the Roman Catholic Pope, who affirmed infant

¹⁶ See edition of his response edited by Rummel, ASD IX-4, pg. 211. The Latin text is, "*Hic prorsus praeter omnem causam incessit Leus exemplaria Graecorum. Admonueram in quibusdam Graecis codicibus deesse versus vnum aut alterum, sed addo mihi videri omissos incuria librorum et eosdem in alio codice cum reperissem ascriptos in margine, adieci. Quid hic queritur Leus? Nihil deest, ne in priore quidem editione. Annotatio testatur codices illie fuisse mutilos, sed succurrit alius. An ideo non est credendum Graecorum exemplaribus, si in vno quopiam aut altero reperiatur locus mendosus? Quis autem tam stultus vt in tali negocio fidat vni codici? Sed ciuiliior est in cake huius annotationis quam solet alibi, negans fidendum Graecis codicibus, ni comperiat Hieronymus aut alius quispiam veterum cum illis consentire. At istud agimus hoc toto opere. Debebat tamen addere: aut nisi suffragentur exemplaria vetusta Latinorum.*"

¹⁷ The later form Erasmus had was not actually the form Jerome had written. The earlier form which represents what was actually written by Jerome is represented by the Vg^{ww} or Vgst in the chart, the edition of Wadsworth-White, which used the most comprehensive amount of Latin manuscripts of any of the Vulgate texts, and which follows the earliest manuscripts of the Vulgate, like A, F, S, C, G, I, U, K, etc., in having the shorter reading.

¹⁸ While 2816 in the marginal note reads, "εἶπε δὲ αὐτῷ, Εἰ πιστεύεις ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου, ἔξεστιν. ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπεν: Πιστεύω τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν," Erasmus, putting into Greek the form found in his Latin Vulgate text, included the text in the form, "εἶπε δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος, Εἰ πιστεύεις ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας____, ἔξεστιν. ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπε, Πιστεύω τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν." Even had Erasmus followed the form in 2816 rather than the late Latin Vulgate form, that form is only found in two Greek manuscripts.

¹⁹ See F.H.A. Scrivener, "A Plain Introduction to Textual Criticism", pg. 39. He notes on page 411 the same Greek manuscript that Brown noted (using the older numbers) that has the verse as a marginal addition from which Erasmus inserted it into the text

baptism. Every one of the KJV translators was an Anglican (many of them were Anglican priests), who all affirmed as their statement of faith “The 39 Articles” of the Church of England, which practiced infant sprinkling. That statement of faith had responded against the Anabaptists of the day in two points; first in rejecting the communal living the Anabaptists urged, and second in affirming the infant baptism which the Anabaptists had rejected,

“Article XXXVIII - The Riches and Goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same; as certain Anabaptists do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

Article XXVII - Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or New-Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed, Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.

The Baptism of young Children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.”

Puritan translations had often departed from the traditional ecclesiastical language of the Catholic Church like “baptism” which had long had connotations of Infant immersion to prefer “washings” or “immersions;” and “Church” which had now long had connotations of in institutional gathering only legitimized by a representative of the Pope, in favor of “congregation.” Puritans had provided translations like “washing” and “congregation” to prevent what they saw as the mistaken connotations of tradition. But the translators believed in infant sprinkling, and wanted this tradition retained. As they wrote in their preface, *The Translators To The Reader*, “Lastly, we have on the one side avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old Ecclesiastical words, and betake them to other, as when they put *washing* for *Baptism*, and *Congregation* in stead of *Church*...” In this they are following the rules set out by Archbishop Bancroft, whom King James had appointed over the translation work. His third rule specifically stated, “The old ecclesiastic words to be kept, viz.: as the word ‘Church’ not to be translated congregation etc.” The Anglican Church still practices infant baptism by sprinkling, and the KJV translators intentionally made sure that the KJV translation would not oppose this view.

In fact, their views on infant baptism had more influence than just that. For example, John Bois was one of the KJV translators. (If you hear people talk about “child prodigies” who knew Greek and Hebrew as children, who were KJV translators, it is likely Bois they are talking about. His linguistic skills were the stuff of legends). He kept occasional notes during the translation process. His good friend, Anthony Walker, wrote a brief biography of his life (including his involvement translating for the KJV). In showing the love Bois had for those in his congregation, he records an interesting story about a woman in John’s congregation. They could not locate the “record of baptism” from her infancy. This distressed John to no end, since he was convinced that apart from baptism she could not enter heaven. Thus, he entreated the church, importunately, for years, to be able to baptize here to make sure of her salvation. They continued to refuse, since they didn’t want to baptize adults, and concluded that she was too old for baptism. But John’s constant fight for soul her won the day.

Bois is interesting in this regard because of his notes as well. When translating I Pet. 3:21 for the KJV, Bois notes that the translators settled on the translation, “answer” in the controversial passage in I Pet. 3:21 precisely because they accepted the interpretation of Tertullian in his treatise on Baptism, echoed by Erasmus, that while there is nothing magical in the water of the laver which cleanses the body that saves, the vow of baptism is what brings spiritual regeneration. Tertullian had written,²⁰ “Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free *and admitted* into eternal life!” and “There is absolutely nothing which makes men’s minds more obdurate than the simplicity of the divine works which are visible in the *act*, when compared with the grandeur which is promised thereto in the *effect*; so that from the very fact, that with so great simplicity, without pomp, without any considerable novelty of preparation, finally, without expense, a man is dipped in water, and amid the utterance of some few words, is sprinkled, and then rises again, not much (or not at all) the cleaner, the consequent attainment of eternity is esteemed the more incredible.” And finally, “Thus, too, in *our* case, the unction runs carnally, (*i.e.* on the body,) but profits spiritually; in the same way as the *act* of baptism itself too is carnal, in that we are plunged in water, *but* the *effect* spiritual, in that we are freed from sins.” Bois explained that rather than the previous renderings, like “request,” “promise,” “agreement,” or Tyndale’s, “consenteth,” the translators choose to render the word, “answer” in order to propagate the interpretation which says that it is the baptismal vow that saves, and they felt that “answer” would naturally call this to mind.²¹ Allen notes how the note by Bois explains this intention of the translators and explains, “The revisers [the KJV translators] had intended that the reader understand, by the answer [*i.e.*, the thing that saves], the baptismal vow; and certainly the meaning is clear once it is pointed out. The subject of the verse is baptism, which

²⁰ See ANF volume III <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.vi.iii.i.html> (especially chapters V-VII, and XII “*On the Necessity of Baptism to Salvation*”).

²¹ See discussion of Bois’ note in Allen, “*Translating for King James*,” pg. 27-28, the note itself is on page 93.

“doth also now save us.” The soul is not saved by “the putting away of the filth of the flesh.” *Answer* then, is obliged to refer to the baptismal vow.” Bois explains that the KJV translators translated I Pet. 3:21 the way that they did so that it would affirm baptismal regeneration.

This is in contrast, for example, to the views of Kurt Aland. Most of the modern translations listed in the comparison chart of versions that allegedly “remove believer’s baptism” above are translating the Nestle-Aland Greek text. Kurt Aland was the major editor for that text. But he also was one of the most ardent defenders on Believer’s Baptism of our age. While the standard academic works defending Infant Baptism are those of Joachim Jeremias, Kurt Aland rose to answer him, and wrote in reply a strong defense of Believer’s Baptism, that has been for years the standard academic work defending Believer’s Baptism (<http://www.amazon.com/Did-Early-Church-Baptize-Infants/dp/1592445411>).

Further, such allegations at some points amount to simple slander. Many of the ESV and NIV translators for example have contributed to standard works today defending Believer’s Baptism (for example, Kostenberger and other ESV translators helped to write a major modern work in defense of the doctrine <http://www.amazon.com/Believers-Baptism-Covenant-American-Commentary/dp/0805432493>). Note that such a work presents a well-reasoned, biblical defense of the Doctrine of Believer’s baptism, and yet not one of its authors think that Luke wrote what we now call Acts 8:37. But the possibly spurious verse is not at all important to the doctrine.

Allegations that modern translations are trying to remove the doctrine, while the KJV is trying to keep it, actually have the situation exactly backwards. Such allegations are simply not honest. One may certainly argue that the verse is genuine if they so choose. But the meme isn’t just arguing that the verse is genuine. It is presuming the verse to be genuine, then making accusations and insinuations against modern translations and their translators for “removing” it without any actual knowledge of what it is talking about. I recognize that those that share it likely have good intentions. They believe they are spreading truth and supporting Scripture. But the meme is based on misinformation, and its accusations are simply false. Spreading this meme is spreading not only misinformation, but slanderous misinformation which is intentionally divisive. I implore you to delete the meme, and to stop sharing it. There is nothing wrong with ignorance. But a platform of ignorance is a poor platform from which to make accusations against others.