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## The “Others” Coming to John the Baptist and the Text of Josephus

### *Abstract*

Josephus’s passage on John the Baptist (*Ant.* 18.116–119) contains a much-discussed *crux interpretum*: who are the “others” that are inspired by John’s words and ready to do everything he said (§118), and who are distinguished from those who gave heed to his message and were baptized (§117)? After a brief discussion of the textual witnesses, text, and translation of the passage in question, various interpretations of “the others” are discussed, none of which is entirely satisfactory. In this article a case will be made for accepting the conjecture originally proposed by Benedikt Niese, who assumed that Josephus originally wrote ἀνθρώπων “people” instead of ἄλλων “others.”

### *Keywords*

John the Baptist; Flavius Josephus; Josephus manuscripts; Textual criticism; Conjectural criticism

In scholarly literature on John the Baptist, Flavius Josephus’s passage on the Baptist (*Ant.* 18.116–119) figures prominently, since this is the only first-century source in which he is mentioned outside the canonical Gospels. One of the questions raised by the passage concerns the identity of the “others” in §118. The people referred to are inspired by John’s words, but the word “others” distinguishes them from the people who gave heed to John’s message and were baptized by him. Below, I will discuss the various interpretations of the “others” that have been proposed and show that all of these are unsatisfactory. Instead, I will argue that there are good reasons to accept the conjecture made by Benedikt Niese, who read ἀνθρώπων “people” instead of ἄλλων “others.” Because this solution concerns the Greek text of the passage and its transmission, I will first

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discuss the textual witnesses and provide a Greek text and translation of Josephus’s passage on John the Baptist.

### 1. The Text of Josephus’s passage on John the Baptist

In discussing Josephus’s passage on John the Baptist, scholars in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with only few exceptions<sup>1</sup> and in contrast with scholars of an earlier generation,<sup>2</sup> have hardly paid attention to text-critical issues when quoting and discussing this passage.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, however, a renewed interest in these issues can be seen.<sup>4</sup>

The first and only critical edition available for Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* is Benedikt Niese’s *editio maior* (1887–1895).<sup>5</sup> Subsequent editions, notably Niese’s *editio minor*,<sup>6</sup> Naber,<sup>7</sup> and Feldman’s edition in the *Loeb Classical Library*,<sup>8</sup> all depend on Niese’s *editio maior*, though often evaluating the evidence differently—in fact, each of these editions differ from any of the others in *Ant.* 18.116–119.

At present ten codices have been identified in which Book 18 of the *Jewish Antiquities* has survived, all dating from the 11<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century, three of which belong to Niese’s consistently cited witnesses.<sup>9</sup> In addition to these, several manuscripts include *Ant.* 18.116–119 as an isolated passage apart from its Josephan context, either as an addition to other works of Josephus or in a collection of citations from various sources. A list of Greek manuscripts is included in the appendix to this paper. Today, Niese’s critical apparatus is still regarded as accurate and reliable with respect to the manuscript readings it presents.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nodet, “Jésus et Jean-Baptiste,” 322–6; Meier, “John the Baptist,” 227–33; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 34 n. 10 and 36 n. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Dibelius, *Die urchristliche Überlieferung*, 123–9; Goguel, *Au seuil de l’évangile*, 15–20; Robert Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus*, 245–52; Lohmeyer, *Johannes der Täufer*, 31–36.

<sup>3</sup> Scobie, *John the Baptist*; Schütz, *Johannes der Täufer*, 17–18; Rivkin, “Locating John the Baptizer,” 79–85; Schenk, “Gefangenschaft,” 453–83; Backhaus, *Die “Jüngerkreise”*, 266–74; Lupieri, “John the Baptist,” 449–55; Tatum, *John the Baptist*, 97–100; Taylor, *John the Baptist*, 5–6, 81 (see, however, 235–6); Murphy, *John the Baptist*, 5; Dapaah, *Relationship*, 48; Evans, “Josephus,” 55–63; Tromp, “John the Baptist,” 135–49. Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 251–7 presents an eclectic Greek text of *Ant.* 18.117–119a, but without further explanation.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Hartmann, *Tod Johannes des Täufers*, 256–62; Rothschild, “Echo,” 258–68, 273–4; Nir, “Josephus’ Account,” 37–8 n. 19; Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 82–92.

<sup>5</sup> Niese, *Flavii Iosephi opera: edidit et apparatu critico instruxit Benedictus Niese*.

<sup>6</sup> Benedictus Niese, *Flavii Iosephi opera: recognovit Benedictus Niese*.

<sup>7</sup> Naber, *Flavii Iosephi opera omnia*.

<sup>8</sup> Feldman, *Jewish Antiquities, Books XVIII–XX*.

<sup>9</sup> See for helpful introductions to textual criticism of Josephus Leoni, “Text;” Schreckenberg, *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 1–9, 172–81.

<sup>10</sup> Schreckenberg, *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche und textkritische Untersuchungen*, 114; Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship*, 22.

The Baptist passage was also included in the epitome of the *Jewish Antiquities*, which dates from the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century and follows Josephus’s text so closely that it counts as a textual witness to the text of Josephus.<sup>11</sup> Although the best manuscript of the epitome, Codex Vatopedianus 386, was not yet known to Niese, this does not affect his references to the epitome in the Baptist passage.<sup>12</sup>

Another important witness for the Greek text of this passage is Eusebius, since he quotes this passage almost in full in his *Historia ecclesiastica* (*Hist. eccl.* 1.11.4b–6)<sup>13</sup> and in part in his *Demonstratio evangelica* (*Dem. ev.* 9.5.15).<sup>14</sup> Niese’s apparatus is inaccurate with respect to text-critical evidence from Eusebius and one should rather consult the critical editions of Schwartz<sup>15</sup> and Heikel,<sup>16</sup> which were not yet available to Niese. David Levenson and Thomas Martin have recently presented a Greek text of this passage with a critical apparatus that combines Niese’s manuscript evidence with Schwartz’s and Heikel’s evidence for Eusebius.<sup>17</sup>

Usually the Latin tradition is also an important witness to the text of Josephus, because of its early date.<sup>18</sup> However, Levenson and Martin have shown that in this specific passage, the ancient Latin version has adopted Rufinus’s translation of Eusebius so that in fact the ancient Latin is “a witness to the text of Eusebius, and only indirectly relevant to the reconstruction of the Greek text of *AJ*.”<sup>19</sup>

Below, I have reproduced the Greek text and my own translation of Josephus’s passage on John the Baptist.

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<sup>11</sup> Schreckenberg, *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 128–30.

<sup>12</sup> See Schreckenberg, “Zu Flavius Josephus,” 518–9.

<sup>13</sup> Eusebius quotes τισὶ δὲ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ... ταύτη κτίννυται.

<sup>14</sup> Eusebius quotes *Ant.* 18.116–117a (τισὶν δὲ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ... ἀποδεκτὴν αὐτῷ φανεῖσθαι). The text is identical to the quotation in *Hist. eccl.*, except for τὸν Ἡρώδου στρατὸν (*Hist. eccl.* 1.11.4b; cf. *Ant.* 18.116), which in *Dem. ev.* 9.5.15 is replaced by τὸν Ἰουδαίων στρατὸν.

<sup>15</sup> Schwartz, *Kirchengeschichte*; see 1:78 for *Hist. eccl.* 1.11.4b–6. Bardy, *Eusèbe*; see 1:37–8 for *Hist. eccl.* 1.11.4b–6.

<sup>16</sup> Heikel, *Die Demonstratio Evangelica*; see p. 416 for *Dem. ev.* 9.5.15.

<sup>17</sup> Levenson and Martin, “Latin Translations,” 33–34. Levenson and Martin’s text follows Niese’s *editio maior* with a few exceptions (see their p. 13): in §116 they read τινυμένου instead of τινυμένου and in §118 they read ἤρθησαν instead of ἤσθησαν. In the latter case the apparatus (footnote 286) is incorrect, since the evidence from Niese (*editio maior* and *editio minor*) seems to have been displaced and is cited in support of the reading ἤρέσθησαν (which, in fact, is only attested in two manuscripts of *Hist. eccl.* – D<sup>1</sup> and M) instead of ἤσθησαν, to which it belongs, as Levenson and Martin rightly note in their commentary (p. 41). Apart from this misrepresentation (and an occasional typographical error in footnote 290, where one should read “M W” instead of “d W”), Levenson’s and Martin’s apparatus is a very helpful tool for the study of this passage.

<sup>18</sup> Leoni, “Text,” 160–1. The Latin translation of Josephus’s works has survived in at least 230 manuscripts. The translation of the *Antiquities* was commissioned in the middle of the sixth century by Cassiodorus (approx. 485/490 – 584/590). The oldest surviving manuscript for the Latin *Antiquities* is the sixth-century papyrus Cimelio 1, in which only the end of book 5 to the beginning of book 10 is extant. The oldest manuscripts containing Book 18 date from the first half of the ninth century. See Levenson and Martin, “Ancient Latin Translations,” 322–44.

<sup>19</sup> Levenson and Martin, “Latin Translations,” 11. On p. 28–31 they present a critical Latin text for this passage in the ancient Latin and Rufinus.

<sup>116</sup>Τισὶ δὲ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐδόκει ὀλωλέναι τὸν Ἡρώδου στρατὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μάλα δικάως τινυμένου<sup>20</sup> κατὰ ποινὴν Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἐπικαλουμένου βαπτιστοῦ. <sup>117</sup>κτείνει γὰρ δὴ τοῦτον Ἡρώδης ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις κελεύοντα ἀρετὴν ἐπασκοῦσιν καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἀλλήλους δικαιοσύνη καὶ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείᾳ χρωμένοις βαπτισμῶ συνιέναι· οὕτω γὰρ δὴ καὶ τὴν βᾶπτισιν ἀποδεκτὴν αὐτῷ φανείσθαι μὴ ἐπὶ τινων ἀμαρτᾶδων παραιτήσῃ χρωμένων, ἀλλ' ἐφ' ἀγνείᾳ τοῦ σώματος, ἅτε δὴ καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς δικαιοσύνη προεκεκαθαρμένης. <sup>118</sup>καὶ τῶν ἄλλων<sup>21</sup> συστρεφομένων, καὶ γὰρ ἤρθησαν<sup>22</sup> ἐπὶ πλείστον τῇ ἀκροάσει τῶν λόγων, δέισας Ἡρώδης τὸ ἐπὶ τοσόνδε πιθανὸν αὐτοῦ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις μὴ ἐπὶ στάσει<sup>23</sup> τινὶ φέροι, πάντα γὰρ ἐώκεσαν συμβουλή τῇ ἐκείνου πράξοντες, πολὺ κρείττον ἡγείται πρὶν τι νεώτερον ἐξ αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι προλαβὼν ἀνελεῖν τοῦ μεταβολῆς γενομένης μὴ<sup>24</sup> εἰς πράγματα ἐμπεσῶν μετανοεῖν. <sup>119</sup>καὶ ὁ μὲν ὑποψία τῇ Ἡρώδου δέσμιος εἰς τὸν Μαχαιροῦντα πεμφθεὶς τὸ προειρημένον φρούριον ταύτῃ κτίννυται. τοῖς δὲ Ἰουδαίοις δόξαν<sup>25</sup> ἐπὶ τιμωρίᾳ τῇ ἐκείνου τὸν ὄλεθρον ἐπὶ τῷ στρατεύματι γενέσθαι τοῦ θεοῦ κακῶσαι Ἡρώδην θέλοντος.

<sup>116</sup>But to some of the Jews it seemed that Herod's army was destroyed by God, indeed very justly taking vengeance, as retribution for John, surnamed the Baptist.

<sup>20</sup> Scholarly consensus holds that, against Niese's τινυμένου, the preferred reading is τινυμένου, which is found in all the manuscripts. Elsewhere in Josephus, the verb occurs only in *Ant.* 17.60, where P reads τεινυμένου; A (first hand) M W and the epitome τινυμένου; A<sup>cor</sup> τινυμένου. Niese: τινυμένου. Possibly Niese's judgement in 18.116 is partly inspired by the fact that manuscript P (Codex Palatinus gr. 14) has only one *nu* in 17.60; manuscript P was highly valued by Niese (or rather, according to Schreckenberg, "Niese hat den (zweifelloso vorhandenen) Wert von P zuungunsten der übrigen Textzeugen überschätzt;" *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 39). Book 18 has not survived in this manuscript. Holwerda proposed to leave the participle out altogether since it is superfluous; Holwerda, "Observationes criticae," 125. However, this conjecture cannot explain the presence of the participle in the manuscript tradition and must therefore be rejected.

<sup>21</sup> Instead of ἄλλων, Niese's *editio minor* reads ἀνθρώπων, see below.

<sup>22</sup> Scholars agree that Niese's ἤσθησαν "they rejoiced" should be rejected in favour of ἤρθησαν "they were aroused" (Naber, Feldman), which is the reading of all manuscripts of Josephus and the epitome (In manuscripts of Eusebius's *Hist. eccl.* ἤρθησαν is attested in T<sup>c</sup> E R B D<sup>cm</sup> and the Syriac translation, ἤσθησαν in A and T<sup>1</sup>, and ἠρέσθησαν in D<sup>1</sup> and M). Most likely, ἤσθησαν is a "correction" by Christian scribes (Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 246).

<sup>23</sup> Instead of Niese's ἀποστάσει (following codex A and Eusebius), Naber and Feldman read στάσει (following codex M, W and the epitome). The external evidence is slightly stronger for the latter reading (with Taylor, *John the Baptist*, 236, and Hartmann, *Tod Johannes des Täufers*, 259). Most scholars agree that in Josephus treats στάσις and ἀπόστασις more or less as synonyms; see e.g. Dormeyer, "Stasis-Vorwürfe," 63–78, esp. 63: "στάσις kommt in B 80 x vor, in A 69 x; in V 16 x und in C 2x. Das semantische Feld von στάσις umfasst im engeren Sinne die Stammbildungen ... und im weiteren viele Komposita und synonyme Ausdrücke wie ἀπόστασις;" Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 88 n. 255. This is confirmed by the interchangeable use of στάσις and ἀπόστασις in *Ant.* 18.1–10. *Contra* Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 248, followed by Rothschild, "Echo," 1:265.

<sup>24</sup> μὴ is present in all manuscripts of Josephus, but absent from Eusebius's *Hist. eccl.*. In his *editio minor* Niese left μὴ out (cf. Naber), in his *editio maior* he included μὴ in brackets (cf. Feldman). However, Hartmann observed that the absence in Eusebius can be explained from the replacement of τοῦ by ἦ in the preceding phrase; therefore in Josephus's text μὴ should be adopted with all textual witnesses, whereas Eusebius's text without μὴ retains the same sense (Hartmann, *Tod Johannes des Täufers*, 259).

<sup>25</sup> Alternatives have been proposed for the grammatically incorrect τοῖς δὲ Ἰουδαίοις δόξαν, which is, however, present in all manuscripts (followed in Niese's *editio maior*). Niese's *editio minor* has δόξα ἦν (followed by Nodet); Naber reads ἔδοξεν (following Bekker); Feldman follows the epitome's δόξα. Holwerda proposes δόξαν παρέσχεν, based on the Latin *opinionem praeberere*.

<sup>117</sup>For in fact Herod put him to death, (although he was) a good man and was urging the Jews, practicing virtue and employing righteousness in their affairs toward one another and piety toward God, to join together in baptism. For in this manner, in fact, the baptism appeared acceptable to him, not employing (it) for the dismissal of any sins, but for purification of the body, inasmuch as, in fact, the soul has been cleansed beforehand by righteousness. <sup>118</sup>And when the others gathered together, for they were aroused to the greatest extent by listening to his words, Herod, alarmed that his abundant persuasiveness to the people might lead to some sedition, for they seemed likely to do everything according to his counsel, regarded it much better, taking action preemptively to kill him before something revolutionary would come about from him, than, when an uprising had occurred, not to have regrets after encountering troubles. <sup>119</sup>And so he [i.e. John], because of Herod’s suspicion, having been sent in chains to Machaeros, the fort mentioned above, was there put to death. Now some of the Jews were of the opinion that because of retribution for him [i.e. John] destruction came upon the army, since God wanted to harm Herod.

## 2. Who are “the others” in §118?

Now that we have the text and the textual witnesses of Josephus’s passage clearly in view, we can focus on the phrase *καὶ τῶν ἄλλων* “and the others” in §118. The phrase is problematic, since on the one hand these “others” are inspired by John’s words, ready to do everything he says (§118), whereas on the other they are distinguished from “the Jews” who gave heed to John’s message and were baptized by him (§117). However, the phrase is supported by all Greek manuscripts of Josephus (but see below) as well as Eusebius, and is thus supported unambiguously in the textual witnesses. The corrector of Codex Ambrosianus gr. 370 seems to have sensed the problem and changed *ἄλλων* to *λαῶν*, but this cannot be correct. No *λαοί* (plural) can be identified in the context. Moreover, the wording does not match Josephus’s frequent use of *λαός* elsewhere, which is almost exclusively in the singular, referring to the Jewish people.<sup>26</sup>

Scholars have wrestled with the question who the “others” in the transmitted text of Josephus might be. It has been suggested that gentiles are in view.<sup>27</sup> Most scholars who consider this

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<sup>26</sup> In fact, the plural occurs only once in the 20 books of the *Jewish Antiquities*, in a story that is set in the context of the Parthian empire, but without stress being laid on the ethnic aspect (*Ant.* 18.352).

<sup>27</sup> E.g. Tatum, *John the Baptist*, 99.

solution, however, reject it, and rightly so, because there is no indication in the text or context of this passage that a Jew/gentile contrast is in view.<sup>28</sup>

Most scholars think that the “others” consists of a wider Jewish (or Jewish/gentile)<sup>29</sup> audience, those who were not virtuous, just and pious and did not come for baptism (§117), but who were nevertheless sympathetic to him.<sup>30</sup> John Meier, for instance, suggests that “the others” refer to “the larger group of ordinary people who, as in most other societies, neither rejected their religious heritage nor engaged in the heroic feats of virtue and religious observance that marked sectarians,”<sup>31</sup> and he suggests that, “if traditional,”<sup>32</sup> Luke’s tax collectors and soldiers might be in view.<sup>33</sup> However, Joan Taylor rightly observes that “since they are described as being prepared to do anything he advised, they cannot have stayed nonvirtuous for very long.”<sup>34</sup> For this reason, Rivka Nir claims that these “others” are Jews who previously were unrighteous, but now, “inspired by John’s words, determined to follow him.”<sup>35</sup> This explains insufficiently, however, why Josephus—if *καὶ τῶν ἄλλων* are indeed his words—keeps these groups separate.

A somewhat different approach is taken by Joan Taylor: the “others” must be identified with “some of the Jews” (§116) who came to believe that Herod’s defeat was an act of divine retribution.<sup>36</sup> On the basis of *καὶ τῶν ἄλλων* “[t]hese Jews are to be distinguished from ‘the Jews’ in general whom John exhorted.” However, this interpretation only raises new questions: how can the attitude of “the others” have inspired Herod’s fear for rebellion which, according to Josephus, led to John’s execution, if these others can only be identified after Herod’s defeat against the Nabatean king Aretas? Furthermore, if anyone considered Herod’s defeat as divine retribution, we would certainly expect John’s followers to be the first to do so – but if Taylor’s interpretation of “the others” is correct, this is not the case.

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<sup>28</sup> Meier, “John the Baptist,” 231; Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 88 n. 254. Cf. Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 247: “a manifest absurdity.”

<sup>29</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 36; Nir, “Josephus’ Account,” 40.

<sup>30</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 36; Lupieri, “John the Baptist,” 451; Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 271; Rothschild, “Echo,” 264. Theißen and Merz, *historische Jesus*, 177 n. 3 (“mit weniger guten Motiven”); Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 88 n. 254 (“unrighteous’ people”).

<sup>31</sup> Meier, “John the Baptist,” 232; cf. Foakes Jackson and Lake, “Varieties,” 102–3.

<sup>32</sup> Meier, “John the Baptist,” 236.

<sup>33</sup> Meier, “John the Baptist,” 236–7.

<sup>34</sup> Taylor, *John the Baptist*, 235 n. 40.

<sup>35</sup> Nir, “Josephus’ Account,” 40.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, *John the Baptist*, 235.

To summarize our findings, none of the interpretations proposed for τῶν ἄλλων is satisfactory. Each of these interpretations raises new questions. It is not surprising, then, that the difficulty of the phrase is widely recognized.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. The Case for Conjecture

All of the interpretations discussed above are based on the transmitted text of *Ant.* 18.118. In discussing this passage from Josephus, scholars of the past 70 years or so only seldom consider the possibility that something might have gone wrong in the transmission of the text. And even scholars who refer to emendations that have been proposed, more often than not simply reject these as unnecessary,<sup>38</sup> which is, however, at odds with the interpretative difficulties discussed above. An exception is Étienne Nodet, who observed that “[I]’archétype est donc corrompu” and accepted the conjecture πολλῶν “many” instead of the transmitted text.<sup>39</sup>

Scholars of an earlier generation, by contrast, generally assumed the text to be corrupt and in need of emendation. Niese read ἀνθρώπων “people” (followed by Dibelius and Thackeray),<sup>40</sup> and I will argue below that this is our best guess to what Josephus originally wrote. Another conjecture that has found acceptance to some extent is that of Holwerda. On the basis of the Latin *per plurima multitudo* (ancient Latin and Rufinus) he proposed to read πολλῶν “many” and this solution was followed by Eisler and—as has been observed above—by Nodet.<sup>41</sup> However, if the Latin version of Josephus depends on Rufinus rather than on the Greek text of Josephus itself (see above), the Latin cannot be used for reconstructing the text of Josephus prior to Eusebius. The conjecture πολλῶν is, therefore, not *a priori* more likely than Niese’s ἀνθρώπων (though, of course, still possible). In his critical edition of Eusebius, Schwartz, though cautiously, assumed that Josephus wrote Γαλιλαίων,

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Nodet, “Jésus et Jean-Baptiste,” 325; “*laôn* et *allôn* des mss créent des effets de sens étranges;” Theißen and Merz: “Es ist nicht klar, wen Josephus hier genau meint” (*historische Jesus*, 177 n. 3); Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 88 n. 254: “The identity of ‘the others’ is difficult to determine.”

<sup>38</sup> Robert Webb and John Meier do refer to emendations, but reject these because they are unnecessary; see Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 36 n. 13 (“unnecessary because the text makes good sense as it stands”); Meier, “John the Baptist,” 232 n. 23 (“a failure to understand Josephus’s own movement of thought”). See, however, Martin West’s objection against rejecting emendations solely on the basis that these are “unnecessary” (*Textual Criticism*, 59).

<sup>39</sup> Nodet, “Jésus et Jean-Baptiste,” 323, 325 (quotation taken from 325). Nodet’s preference for πολλῶν is partly based on the Latin *per plurima multitudo* (but see below).

<sup>40</sup> Niese, *editio maior* (apparatus) and *editio minor* (text); Dibelius, *urchristliche Überlieferung*, 123–4 n. 3; Thackeray, *Josephus*, 132. Goguel translates “Comme d’autres gens,” but does not elaborate on the text (*Au seuil de l’évangile*, 16).

<sup>41</sup> Holwerda, “Observationes,” 126; Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 247 (“or possibly even ἀμπολλῶν”); Nodet, “Jésus et Jean-Baptiste,” 323.



and this suggestion was followed by Bardy.<sup>42</sup> Each of these proposals in its own way removes the difficulty, either by removing the contrast between §117 and §118 (ἀνθρώπων, πολλῶν), or by making explicit what contrast is in view (Γαλιλαίων, in contrast to τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις in §117).

Given the problematic character of ἄλλων, these alternatives must be seriously considered. Of course, ἄλλων is the harder reading, but West is probably right when he states that “[t]here is an important difference between a more *difficult* reading and a more *unlikely* reading.”<sup>43</sup> In fact, I will argue below that in my opinion Niese’s conjecture (ἀνθρώπων) is to be preferred above ἄλλων as our best guess of reconstructing what Josephus wrote.

According to Martin West, for a conjecture to be convincing it must correspond to what the text intends to say and to the author’s language and style. Furthermore, it must be possible to explain how the conjecture corrupted into the readings found in the textual evidence.<sup>44</sup> For example, in Josephus’s works Γαλιλαίος is never contrasted with Ἰουδαίος,<sup>45</sup> and for this reason the conjecture proposed by Schwartz is not convincing and must be rejected. However, in my view Niese’s conjecture ἀνθρώπων meets these criteria (and even better so than Holwerda’s conjecture πολλῶν).

First, with respect to the passage’s context, we should note that in the second part of §118 Josephus refers to the people influenced by John as ἄνθρωποι (δείσας Ἡρώδης τὸ ἐπὶ τοσόνδε πιθανὸν αὐτοῦ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις; “Herod, alarmed that his abundant persuasiveness to the people might lead to some sedition, ...”). If the first words of §118 are read as καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, Josephus’s picture of “the people” gathering around John anticipates Herod’s fear that John would lead “the people” into rebellion. Of course, this in itself does not prove that Josephus wrote καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων as the opening phrase of §118. It does demonstrate, however, that καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων perfectly fits the logic of §118.

Second, regarding Josephus’s language and style, even though πλῆθος and its cognates are far more common, there are several instances in Book 18 of the *Antiquities* in which ἄνθρωποι is used in the sense of a crowd of people or “the masses.” For example, in *Ant.* 18.6 the crowd inspired by the views of Judas the Gaulanite and Saddok the Pharisee is referred to as οἱ ἄνθρωποι, and in *Ant.*

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<sup>42</sup> Schwartz, *Kirchengeschichte*, 78 (“vielleicht”); Bardy, *Eusèbe*, 1:37 (“peut-être”).

<sup>43</sup> West, *Textual Criticism*, 51 (his emphasis).

<sup>44</sup> West, *Textual Criticism*, 48.

<sup>45</sup> On the contrary, when Galileans and Judeans are referred to in the same context, Josephus tends to identify the Galileans as Judeans in contrast to others (e.g. *J.W.* 2.232 in contrast to the Samaritans; 3.229 in contrast to the Romans, see 3.233; *Ant.* 13.154 in contrast to the Tyrians).

18.56–57 οἱ ἄνθρωποι and πλῆθὺς are used more or less interchangeably with reference to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (see also οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in *Ant.* 18.58). Admittedly, similar examples can be given for οἱ πολλοί in the sense of “the people, the masses” (e.g. *Ant.* 18.24), but the examples given above at least show that Josephus could have written καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων (or καὶ τῶν πολλῶν) in *Ant.* 18.118.

Third, if at a certain stage in textual transmission ἀνθρώπων was abbreviated as ANΩN (a so-called *nomen sacrum*),<sup>46</sup> it is perfectly understandable from a palaeographical point of view that this was changed into ΑΛΛΩN by a scribe who either misread and unconsciously changed or misunderstood and thus “corrected” the text as he found it (such a change would simpler than a change from ΠΟΛΛΩN to ΑΛΛΩN).<sup>47</sup> This assumes, of course, that in the transmission of Josephus’s work predating the archetype of the extant witnesses, in which the corruption took place, *nomina sacra* were used. This is admittedly tentative, since no manuscripts prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> century have survived. Moreover, we must assume that the corruption took place at an early stage of textual transmission, since the reading καὶ τῶν ἄλλων is not only attested in the Greek manuscripts of Josephus (the earliest of which dates to the 11<sup>th</sup> century), but also in the text of Eusebius. However, the hypothesis that at an early stage of textual transmission ANΩN was changed to ΑΛΛΩN fits with the fact that from early times onwards *nomina sacra* are attested in all sorts of literary texts transmitted by Christians, not only Biblical manuscripts,<sup>48</sup> and that the use of such abbreviations is not restricted to divine referents,<sup>49</sup> especially in the case of ἄνθρωπος.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, evidence for the use of *nomina sacra*, including ἄνθρωπος, has survived in at least one manuscript of Josephus (Codex Eliensis, containing Josephus’s *Life*).<sup>51</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

In the transmitted text of Josephus’s passage on John the Baptist (*Ant.* 18.116–119) a distinction is being made between the Jews who gave heed to John’s words and were baptized by him (§117) and

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<sup>46</sup> See on *nomina sacra* Traube, *Nomina Sacra*; Roberts, *Manuscript*, 26–48; Christopher M. Tuckett, “Nomina Sacra,” 431–58; Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 95–134.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Nodet, “Jésus et Jean-Baptiste,” 325: “Niese conjecture *anthrôpôn* (= ANΩN), plausible.”

<sup>48</sup> Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 98.

<sup>49</sup> Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 126.

<sup>50</sup> Tuckett, “Nomina Sacra,” 450: “[I]t is notable how many of the occurrences of ἄνθρωπος as a *nomen ‘sacrum’* are in fact what could only be called a ‘profane’ sense.” Cf. Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 127–8.

<sup>51</sup> Siegert, *Flavius Josephus*, 2:10 (description of Codex Eliensis).

“the others” who were inspired by his words and were ready to do everything he said (§118). The reason for this distinction is not clear. Several interpretations of these “others” have been proposed, but none of these is entirely satisfactory. I have argued that the observation of an earlier generation of scholars, who assumed that the transmitted text is corrupt, still holds. Furthermore, I have argued for accepting Niese’s conjecture ἀνθρώπων “the people” instead of ἄλλων “the others” in *Ant.* 18.118. This solution agrees with the logic of the passage and fits Josephus’s usage elsewhere in Book 18 of the *Antiquities*. Moreover, corruption from ἀνθρώπων to ἄλλων is not unlikely to occur in the process of textual transmission, especially if the archetype made use of *nomina sacra*. All emendations are tentative to some extent, and this applies to Niese’s emendation as well. Yet, as I have argued above, καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων is our best guess to what Josephus originally wrote in *Ant.* 18.118.

## Appendix

The list below is an exhaustive list of manuscripts of the *Jewish Antiquities* in which the passage on John the Baptist has survived,<sup>52</sup> based on the data collected by Heinz Schreckenberg.<sup>53</sup>

- A Codex Ambrosianus gr. 370 (F 128 sup.). Parchment, 11<sup>th</sup> century, containing *Ant.* 11–20 and the *Life*. Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, Milan.
- M Codex Mediceus Laurentianus plut. 69, cod. 10. Paper, 14–16<sup>th</sup> century, containing *Ant.* 1–20 and the *Life*. Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence.
- W Codex Vaticanus gr. 984. Parchment, 1354, containing the epitome of *Ant.* 1–10, the text of *Ant.* 11–20, the *Life* and the *War*.

Codex Saragossa nr. 253. Paper, 15<sup>th</sup> century, containing *Ant.* 1–20. Pilar Library, Zaragoza.

Codex Marcianus 380. Parchment, 1469 in Rome, containing *Ant.* 1–20 and the *Life*. Bibliotheca Nazionale di San Marco, Venice. The *Vorlage* for *Ant.* 15–20 and the *Life* in this manuscript is Codex Vaticanus gr. 984 (W). The text is also acquainted to that of Codex Parisinus gr. 1420.

Codex Vossianus gr. F 26. Paper, 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century, containing *Ant.* 12–20 and the *Life*. Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Leiden. This manuscript is an *apographon* of Ambrosianus gr. 370 (A).

Codex Parisinus gr. 1420. Paper, 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century, containing *Ant.* 11–20 and the *Life*. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

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<sup>52</sup> Codex Berolinensis gr. 265 (fol. 27), dating from the 14th–15th century, originally contained *Ant.* 11–20 and the *Life*, but only parts of Books 14–19 have survived. Schreckenberg does not indicate which part of the book is present, but according to Niese’s *editio maior* (vol. 3, p. XI) the extant section of Book 18 begins with 18.149b (vol. 4, p. 167 line 13 in his *editio maior*). For this reason codex Berolinensis gr. 265 is not included in this list.

<sup>53</sup> Schreckenberg, *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 13–47. Schreckenberg’s survey of manuscripts contains “nicht nur Haupt- oder Primärzeugen, sondern alle mir bekannt gewordenen Handschriften” (*Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 10).

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Codex Schleusingensis gr. 2 (Hennebergensis). Paper, 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century, containing the epitome of *Ant.* 1–10, the text of *Ant.* 11–19.247 and *War* 7.393–455. Heimatmuseum, Schleusingen.  
Codex Escorialensis gr. 307 (304). Paper, 1542, containing *Ant.* 1–20 and the *Life*. Bibliotheca de San Lorenzo del Escorial, Escorial.

The following (non-exhaustive)<sup>54</sup> list of manuscripts contain Josephus’s passage about John the Baptist (*Ant.* 18.116–119) either as an addition to other works of Josephus, or included in a collection of citations from various ancient writers.

Codex Parisinus gr. 961. 14<sup>th</sup> century. Containing various citations, among which the Testimonium Flavianum (*Ant.* 18.63–64) and the passage about John the Baptist (*Ant.* 18.116–119). Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Codex Parisinus gr. 1630. 14<sup>th</sup> century. Containing various citations, among which the Testimonium Flavianum, the passage about John the Baptist, and that of James the brother of Jesus (*Ant.* 20.200). Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Codex Coislinianus gr. 131. Paper, end 14<sup>th</sup> century. Containing parts of Pseudo-Josephus, followed by the Testimonium Flavianum, the passage about John the Baptist, that of James the brother of Jesus, and *War* 1–7.

Codex Bononiensis gr. 3568. Paper, 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> century. Containing a table of contents of *War*, followed by the Testimonium Flavianum and the passage about John the Baptist (folio 4–5), the text of *War*, and the *Life* (followed by Philo’s *Legatio ad Gaium*). Bibliotheca Universitaria, Bologna.

Codex Ambrosianus 290 (E 64 sup.). Paper, 15<sup>th</sup> century. Containing various citations, among which *Ant.* 3.179–187; the Testimonium Flavianum, the passage about John the Baptist, and *War* 5.393ff. (folio 125–126).

Codex Vindobonensis gr. 91. Paper, 15<sup>th</sup> century. Containing various citations, among which the Testimonium Flavianum and the passage about John the Baptist (folio 164<sup>r-v</sup>). Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.

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<sup>54</sup> I have omitted seven manuscripts which, according to Schreckenberg, contain parts of Books 11–20 of the *Antiquities* or the *Life*, since it is not clear from the information he provides whether or not the Baptist passage is present.

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