

When I had wandered into the seductive fields of late antiquity and Syriac hagiography, the invitation from Professor Cross to return to the war-torn Maccabean times was a challenge I could not resist. Since I had worked on 2 Maccabees in the 1970s, much of the terrain had changed. New inscriptional material from Asia Minor had transformed what we knew of how Seleucid monarchs interacted with their subjects, and the Tyriaion inscription showed how the status of *polis* could be obtained. The Heliodorus inscription made one rethink the events of 2 Maccabees 3. I am indebted to the work of John Ma and Nigel Kennell on these topics. The role of the gymnasium in civic life has been illuminated by the work of Andrzej Chankowski and Angelos Chaniotis. I thank all these scholars, as well as Christopher P. Jones, for patiently enduring my questions via e-mail on all these topics. In addition, I have benefited from many fruitful interactions with Jan Willem van Henten and Daniel R. Schwartz. The generous support of Amherst College and Deans Lisa Raskin and Gregory Call, as well as the inimitable expertise of reference librarians Margaret Groesbeck and Michael Kasper, is most appreciated. I was extremely lucky to have had such an insightful and helpful editor as Harry Attridge. Of course, no words can express my indebtedness to my wife, Susan Niditch, whose incisive sense of the larger tradition of Judaism and her humor kept me sane and in balance.

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