

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Pretentious Governments**    Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time    Wednesday,  
November 18, 2015    8:15 AM    **2Mc 7:1, 20-31;**    Lk 19:11-28    (Dedication of the  
Basilicas of Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles; St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, virgin)    (These stories  
are about state power and the limits of state power.)

Today we are continuing with the stories from Maccabees; this is the **Second Book of Maccabees**. Let me emphasize the fact that these stories are not actually about eating pork. That is simply the device used. Really **these stories are about state power and the limits of state power**. Sometimes people looking at the Old Testament say that it is a theocracy. That is a false understanding; it's quite the opposite. **All the other nations around Israel were theocracies:** Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt; these were all theocratic states where the king imagined himself to be a god having divine rights, having the right to tell people to worship him, to worship his state, to be loyal to him and him alone.

**It is against this that the Israelite religion prevailed.** They had a different idea: **God is Spirit**. So the mother here says, "It was not I who gave you breath of life," nor was it Antiochus. The breath of life does not come from the king, or from the government. It comes from something quite invisible, quite mysterious; and this is what we owe our loyalty to, our obedience, and our worship. "Nor was it I who set in order the elements of which each of you is composed." This is the idea of the living God, the real God. The real God is the one who does this.

Again, in the Book of Genesis, God made his image and likeness out of clay and made it a living being. **Now all the temples of the Middle Eastern world had images.** In fact, temples in general have images, but they are all just images; **they don't live. But when God made his temple in the garden of Eden, he made his image live;** here is the difference. We are talking here about the living God, the God of life, the God who gives life. "Therefore, since it is the

Creator of the universe who shapes each man's beginning, as he brings about the origin of everything, he, in his mercy, **will give you back both breath and life.**" **So this is the beginning of the belief in the resurrection of the dead.** The God who started everything isn't going to end it in a whimper. There must be something more. **God must be about something far more glorious than what we can see here.** We know it isn't about the Assyrian Empire; that's not what God is about, and we know that this so-called god, Antiochus Epiphanes, that he didn't create anything; and, therefore, he is not worthy of any loyalty.

**So this is really about: what is God? How do we find the real God, and how do we worship the real God?** And it's also about how there are pretentious gods, false gods, all around. And, for the most part, this particular book is not concerned with the false images in temples; it's **concerned more with the governments that pretend to be the extension of heaven**, that are not in any way, that are **completely disconnected from the true heaven because they have no sense of justice and no sense of mercy and no sense of right order.**

**Now this story actually replays itself constantly in history, governments trying to tell people what is what.** That is not the role of government. So it's something to think about.