

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Embracing Providence in a Jaded World Final Advent Days Friday,
December 19, 2014 8:15 AM Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a; Lk 1:5-25 (People do not feel that
God is shaping the events of the present age.)

We who listen so often to the stories of our faith tradition, our Bible, perhaps don't realize how out of sync these stories are with most modern people's understanding of reality or nature, because according to Scripture **nature** is of course created by God and directed providentially and **what we consider laws can be violated or exempted from or excepted from in some way, so that, we can have elderly women giving birth.** We have the mother of Samuel, the mother of Samson, the mother of John the Baptist giving birth way beyond their normal childbearing years. Now this is not actually impossible today. **It happens, but not ordinarily.**

But **here** it's not simply that something happens out of the course of ordinary nature; **it's something happens deliberately because God desires it to happen,** because God directs these events for some purpose that transcends our ordinary understanding of what's happening in life, what's going on. **In fact, it shapes the events.**

This is not the idea that people have today of reality. **People do not feel that God is shaping the events of the present age.** They feel that everything is chaos, violence everywhere, no moderation. **This discord between modern people's perception of reality and our faith tradition has to be bridged somehow.** On the one hand, we have to understand that the story of **nature given by science is very incomplete,** and in its incompleteness it suggests or indicates a nature that is actually very impersonal, driven by blind forces, not concerned at all for human well-being, so that, in a sense **we are thrown back on ourselves;** we have to take care of ourselves. No one cares in the modern story of

science. Whether this is deliberate or not, I do not say, I do not know. But it's the way it turns out.

So people grow up with this sense no one cares and no one is doing anything and ever has done anything for them, **so they have to take care of themselves, and this leads to a very self-centered, jaded sense of life.** There is nothing more contrary to the very idea of Christianity than that, or Judaism for that matter. So this is really a problem we all have to confront if we want **to carry on our faith tradition** and help other people embrace it, and **help other people embrace the care and the love and the providence God has for them.** It's very difficult, as St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out, it's very difficult to respond to divine providence if you don't believe in it. I think he might have even said **it's impossible to respond to divine providence if you don't believe in it.** So this is a really major problem for people today. We live in a very jaded world and **it's precisely this jaded world that is addressed with the good news. How are we going to do that?** Only with God's help, for one thing, but **precisely how, each of us has to think deeply about.**