

Self-righteousness. I have such a difficult time judging something relatively simple, such as are my skills good enough to teach life-saving for the American Red Cross, that I can only fear and tremble about the self-righteousness of my own conscience. Simple rudeness is the risk of misplaced self-righteousness. The need is for the Advocate and the mercy of God.

## Isaiah 25:6-10a

Isaiah 25:1-5 immediately precede the Liturgy and have some scholarly commentary. Those verses, 1-5, are,

Yahweh, you are my God,  
I shall praise you to the heights, I shall praise your name;  
for you have accomplished marvels,  
**plans** long-conceived, faithfully, firmly.  
For you have made the town a heap of stones,  
the fortified city a ruin.  
The foreigners' citadel is a city no longer,  
it will never be rebuilt.  
Hence mighty peoples will honour you,  
the city of pitiless nations hold you in awe;  
For you have been a refuge for the weak,  
a refuge for the needy in distress,  
a shelter from the storm,  
shade from the heat;  
for the breath of the pitiless  
is like a winter storm.  
Like heat in a dry land  
you calm the foreigners' tumult;  
as heat under the shadow of a cloud,  
so the song of the pitiless dies away.<sup>1</sup>

Following the scholarship,

In 25:1 Yahweh is praised for having “fulfilled your wonderful **plans**,” and the conjunction of *pele* and *esa* reminds us of the Isaian passages 9:5; 28:29; and 29:14. The broader context for the verse is **25:1-5**, and from it we learn that *pele est* refers to the destruction of “the city” (v 2a; again it is a matter of Yahweh’s

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, The New Jerusalem Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

judgment of punishment, and again for pride (v 2b). Since Yahweh's **plans** are said to have been "from of old," in its present context the poem may suppose the judgment oracles of Isaiah as well as the collection of the "oracles against the nations" that immediately precede the so-called "apocalypse of Isaiah" in which this poem is found. The counterpart to Yahweh's judgment on "the city" is his now being made a refuge for the poor and needy (*dal, ebyon*—v 4, introduced by *ki*, just as v 2 is); and we are reminded of 14:30, 32 and of Fichtner's and Wildberger's discernment of a positive aspect in Yahweh's **plan** in the form of salvation for a needy remnant.<sup>2</sup>

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This rapid survey of OT texts confirms the originality and uniqueness of Isaiah in some uses of *esa/ys* terminology and his consistency with other traditions in others. There is unanimous agreement that Yahweh can undo the **plans** of all others, something he may do because they are the **plans** of wicked men or sometimes, it would seem, simply to underline the limitations of all that is merely human. There is also total agreement that Yahweh's **plan(s)** will always be accomplished. In general there is little that resembles Isaiah's use of this terminology to designate Yahweh's control of **history**, except in Deutero-Isaiah and some other later sections of the Isaiah collection. There are some prophetic texts which use such terminology of judgments Yahweh brings (Isa 19:16-17; 23:8-9; Jer 49:20; 50:45; cf. n. 3); some texts present a more positive aspect (Mic 4:11-13; **Isa 25:1-5**). Of particular importance is the development that can be seen in Deutero-Isaiah, where *esa* now comes to designate the salvific **plan** that the prophet sees Yahweh bringing to pass, a development all the more significant because Deutero-Isaiah relates this to the preaching of the earlier prophets (44:26; 46:10-11). Thus, although the *iesa* terminology was used in Isaiah primarily for the negative aspects of Yahweh's action in **history**, it does come to cover the salvific aspects of God's work, too. This is a development whose significance extends beyond the OT, for

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Jensen, O.S.B., "Yahweh's Plan in Isaiah and the Rest of the Old Testament," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July 1986) 450.

it may well lie behind those NT texts which speak of God's *boule* as both comprehensive and salvific (such as Eph 1:11).<sup>3</sup>

The idea is that God has his own **plans**, kind, loving **plans** that do not always fit our expectations.

## **Psalm 23:1-3a; 3b-4, 5, 6**

"The Lord is my shepherd" and so he might be to guide me through my own self-deceit.

## **Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20**

Verse 14 it was kind of you to share in my distress.

## **cf. Ephesians 1:17-18**

[no comment here]

## **Matthew 22:1-14**

Verse 12 The king said to him, "My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding **garment**?" But he was reduced to silence.

The Fathers of the Church have had a lot to say about this parable.

Saint Augustine: For He Who asked could not be deceived. And this **garment** is seen in the heart, not on the body: were it worn outwardly, even the servants would have noticed him.<sup>4</sup>

Saint Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor: ... Seven deacons were ordained by the Apostles (Acts 6:5); and while six persevered in true faith, one was the author of error (Apoc. 2:6).

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph Jensen, O.S.B., "Yahweh's Plan in Isaiah and the Rest of the Old Testament," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July 1986) 455.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor, *The Wedding Garment: Meditation*, Migne's Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina, Edition Paris 1844-66; Vol. 38, col. 559, as cited in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Four: From the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost to the Twenty-fourth and Last Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 219.

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... But let no one, when he loves someone, think to himself that he now begins to possess charity, until he has first examined the motives of his love. For if one loves another, but does not love him for God's sake, he has not charity, but thinks he has. But when we love our friend in God, and our enemy because of God, this is true charity. He loves for God's sake, who loves those whom he knows do not love him. Charity is proved true solely by means of its opposite: hate. ... Now the King comes in to the marriage, and looks at the **garment** of our heart ... For in the dread severity of that final Judgment, of which we can scarce speak without tears, all making of excuses is at an end; for He outwardly rebukes us, Who, as the voice of conscience, inwardly accuses the soul.<sup>5</sup>

Acts 6:5 names the seven Deacons, one of whom was Nicolaus of Antioch. Apoc. or Revelations 2:6 writes of loathing "the way the way the Nicolaitans are behaving." If one of the Deacons of Acts falls by Revelations, how much more ought I to fear my own self-righteousness.

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<sup>5</sup> St. Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor, *On the Gospels*, Migne's *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, Edition Paris 1844-66; Vol. 38, col. 559, as cited in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Four: From the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost to the Twenty-fourth and Last Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 230 and 233.