

5. His an assayer or tester, a term which is applied to Jer. whose task it is to separate the dross from the precious metal (6.27 cf. 9.7; 15.19)

6. Intercessor for Israel. The Elohist carries back this tradition to Abraham (Gen. 20.7) who as 'prophet' prays for the life of Abimelech. During Samuel's prophetic ministry we hear of his many intercessions (1 Sam.7.5; 12.19-25; 15.11) Amos (7.1-6), Jeremiah (7.16; 11.14; 15.1) and Ezekiel (14.14-20) pray to Yahweh on behalf of Israel. Also Isaiah(53.12). Intercession is an authentic mark of the true prophet (Jer. 27.18)

7. He stands in the council of Yahweh. He listens to Yahweh's announcement of an impending event, and is obedient to the command to go and proclaim to Israel what he has heard (1 Kg. 22.19; Isa. 6.1ff; 40.1-11; Jer. 23.18-22)

The prophet, then, is Yahweh's representative to his covenant people Israel . . . So dynamic and intimate is the relationship that he can use the first-personal pronoun 'I' of himself or Yahweh interchangeably in the same context.

### Prophecy and History

The word which Yahweh reveals to his servants the prophets is not a timeless truth universal in validity and relevant to every historical situation. . . For the word of Yahweh is spoken in concrete historical times and is relevant to those times. It may indeed be relevant to other historical situations, but is meant first of all for the period in which it was addressed to Israel by the prophet. A knowledge of the historical background and environment is therefore essential to an understanding of what the prophet has to proclaim.

### The Literary Character of Prophecy

The prophets of Israel were primarily speakers. . . On occasion we are told that the prophets did put their words into writing (Isa.8.1-4; 30.8; Ezek. 43.11-12) But it must be admitted that these are exceptional cases as the contexts plainly show. In the case of Jer. we have an important account where the prophet is commanded by Yahweh to write all the words he had spoken from the time of his call to the year 605 B.C. . . . and later when the scroll was burned by Jehoiakim he is commanded to make a new record of his prophecies and to add to them (Jer. 36.2,28). Again this may be admitted to be exceptional. . . But the general situation is sufficiently clear: the prophets were not primarily literary men but speakers. Whether Ezekiel transcribed any of his prophecies is debatable though the possibility must not be excluded. Similarly, the question of the original character of Second Isaiah's poetic compositions cannot be answered with absolute confidence. They appear to be so meticulously wrought, however, that at some point they may have assumed literary form.

How then were the oracles and sermons of the prophets preserved? The most plausible explanation is that they were treasured in the memories of the prophet's disciples. . . The next stage would be the collection into small compilations of the prophet's words, either by his disciples or by those who remembered the traditions associated with him; later, probably in the exilic and post-exilic periods, these would be assembled into what is substantially the present form of the prophetic books. It need not be assumed that the period of oral transmission lasted to the time of the Exile or that it was only then that the oral traditions were first put into writing. . . .