Reciprocity, Rejection, and Rhetoric: New Perspectives on the Prophets and the Cult

I. The prophets and the cult: A short review of a long-standing debate

A. Anti-cultic vs. (pro-)cultic prophets
   i. Thesis: The “classical” prophets were anti-cultic reformers
   ii. Antithesis: All prophets were cultic functionaries
   iii. An untenable synthesis

B. Recent developments
   i. Attempts to resuscitate the anti-cultic freelancer
   ii. An emerging consensus without real relevance
   iii. Status quaestionis 2019: Unsolved problems

II. A new approach to sacrifice: Reciprocity and rejection

A. Sacrificial cult as practiced reciprocity
B. The motif of rejected sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible
   Texts discussed: Amos 5:21-24; Isa 1:11-15; Jer 6:20; Mal 1:6-14

IIII. A fresh look at temple cult as a topic in the prophetic books

A. New categorizations; new dividing and connecting lines
   i. Juxtaposition of cult-critical and cult-promoting passages
   ii. Distribution: Which prophetic books show interest in cultic matters?

B. Perspectives and patterns shared by allegedly anti-cultic and pro-cultic writings
   i. Explaining the past; rejection as harbinger of destruction
   ii. Jerusalem bias; promotion of the rebuilding project
   iii. Critique of cult “here and now”
   iv. Contrast I: Idealized foreigners and YHWH-worshipers in the Diaspora
   v. Contrast II: Perfect sacrificial cult in the future
   vi. The centrality of sacrifice

C. Concluding reflection: Prophets and scribes as informed “critics”