THE CONCEPTUAL DOMAINS AND PROFILES OF DEITY

DEITY. I identify both a domain in reference to the abstract and generic notion of deity, as well as a profile in reference to a concrete instantiation of that notion: a "deity." YHWH was the most common referent for both in the Hebrew Bible, and particularly when terms for deity were used in the titular sense. However, because there were other appellative senses very closely related to the titular sense, there would naturally have been fuzzy usage that could have been understood as referring either to YHWH or to unnamed instantiations. One example is Exod 22:27a: *'ĕlōhîm lō' təqalēl*, which NRSV renders, "You shall not revile God." The KJV, on the other hand, renders, "Thou shalt not revile the gods." Burnett (2001, 60–61) renders, "You shall not revile a deity." While a hearer/reader close to the text's composition and rhetorical context might have an easier time identifying the referent, our expertise and experience is not remotely native enough to be able to arrive at a firm conclusion with the available contextual clues.

This fuzziness would have provided for some flexibility as pantheons were being renegotiated, allowing for earlier references to deities other than YHWH, to humans, or to cultic objects to be accommodated to an increasingly narrowed Yahwistic worldview. All that would have been required for those engaged in renegotiating the pantheon was the conventionalization of a Yahwistic or even a humanistic interpretation of such passages (e.g., Gen 6:2, 4; Exod 22:7–8; Ps 82). This could happen through discourse,[27] through interpolation,[28] or through the production of parallel or allusive traditions that more explicitly identify a reference to deity as YHWH or as something other than a deity.[29] This also allowed authors to curate the boundaries of the category and rhetorically deny that entities commonly referred to as deities actually qualified as deities. The use of substitutions in order to avoid using terms for deity became conventional for many authors, as well (cf. Dick 1999; Smith 2008).

PATRONAGE. Note that roughly half of all the occurrences of terms for deity occur in the construct, mostly marking a genitive relationship with individuals, groups, or territories, as in the following: "deities of the peoples/nations" (*'ĕlōhê hā'ammîm*/*haggôyim*, Deut 6:14; 29:17; 2 Kgs 18:33; Ps 96:5); "foreign deities"

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[27] This would be difficult to identify, but later traditions of vocalization reflected in *qere* variants or in Septuagint renderings might indicate such discursive re-readings of a passage.

[28] For example, YHWH is entirely absent from Gen 14:19–22 in the earliest Septuagint manuscripts but is added to verse 22 by the time of MT, likely to more directly identify El Elyon as YHWH. The interpolation of the "messenger" (*mal'āk*) is another option that will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

[29] Exod 6:3 strikes me as the most explicit example of this.