

Who Wrote Genesis? Are the *Toledoth* Colophons?

DR CHARLES V. TAYLOR

ABSTRACT

There are basically four theories concerning how Genesis was written and by whom.

- (1) *There are those who say Moses wrote it by an automatic dictation method, entirely supernaturally.*
- (2) *At the other extreme, Mosaic authorship is denied in favour of a late composition during the 4th century BC.*
- (3) *Some say Moses compiled Genesis from ancient sources, oral or written, with toledoth passages ('These are the generations of . . .') marking the boundaries, and that these toledoth are the titles of the segments following them, except for the first segment, Genesis 1:1 to 2:3.*
- (4) *Finally, there are those who accept the toledoth hypothesis, but regard them as colophons, that is, as subscripts or bibliographical references at the end of each segment, including the first one.*

This article favours the fourth theory and argues the case, with particular reference to the creation segment.

INTRODUCTION

The sub-title may sound to non-linguists like a question about dinosaurs, but it is actually concerned with modes of writing history. I shall mention the occasional higher critic in support of some points, much in the same way as creation scientists may quote evolutionists to support their contentions.

There are, of course, many people who think the authorship and mode of writing Genesis is irrelevant, and are content to say: *'The Holy Spirit wrote it'*. This may be acceptable once a person has come to believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, but it can be a cop-out in terms of evangelism and the instruction of young believers, and even frustrate the minds of the mature.

I will be looking at four ways in which biblical scholars have approached the authorship and compilation of Genesis. This is important if we are to assess how carefully God provided and maintained the record of creation in the first 34 verses of Genesis as we know it today. It is very satisfying to discover that God went to some trouble to preserve and provide for us such an important piece of knowledge, and this ministers to the glory of the Creator.

In this connection it is interesting to note that the Lord Jesus Christ used the name of Moses many times when referring to the Pentateuch, but never actually, so far as our New Testament records go, attributed Genesis to the authorship of Moses. This does not, of course, mean that we are not to understand that Moses was heavily involved in its production.

THEORIES (1) AND (2)

We need not stay long with the first theory about Genesis, since it goes with a general view of all Scripture. It claims a mechanical writing of Scripture through entirely passive writers, through visions or some other means. To react against this view we can refer to our Lord's use of expressions like: *'Moses wrote'* or *'Moses commanded'*, emphasizing the authorship of parts of the Pentateuch.¹ God involves his servants in responsibility as well as in supernaturally imparted faith. Thus we acknowledge the human author/compiler, with the implication that the Holy Spirit moved the writer to take up the pen.

The second theory is the 'higher critical' theory, traceable in several forms through such names as Spinoza,

Astruc, Eichhorn, Wellhausen and others down to more recent proponents of lengthy oral traditions. Their theories are often based on the assumption that no Noachic Deluge intervened between early Genesis and ancient Babylonian cultures, and that the Bible begins with refinements of Babylonian myths.

I have been among those who opposed these views,² but those who espoused long oral traditions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were often unaware of confirmations of the existence of very ancient writing forms.

Those who seriously read their Bibles should have noticed a word translated 'book' in Genesis 5:1. In more modern versions it is 'written record'. Of course, if your mind-set is in favour of a late composition for Genesis, this presents no problem, but once you even consider Mosaic authorship, this puts writing into the middle of the second millennium BC. When to this you add the evidence of the *toledoth*, as we shall see, you are forced back into pre-Deluge centuries.

In this connection, P. J. Wiseman's remarks are significant:

*'The centuries before Moses were not dark ages unilluminated by God. God had not left mankind without a written revelation; at sundry times and in divers manners He had spoken to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their records had been written on tablets, in the manner customary at that time.'*³

The verb 'write' occurs 11 times in the Pentateuch. On one occasion it is made more precise:

*'Then the Lord said to Moses: "Write down these words ..." And [Moses] wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant — the ten commandments.'*⁴

The method of writing 'on the tablets' is specified. It is interesting that one Hebrew word for 'write', *cheret*, means 'cut into' or 'engrave', suggesting the method of writing. Its derivatives can mean either 'chisel' or 'pen', or perhaps more accurately, 'stylus'. In Leviticus 19:28 this verb is parallel with the more usual verb 'write', *khethibh*, and concerns cutting or marking the flesh.

Wiseman also states:

*'It has been assumed by some that God waited until the time of Moses, or even later, before revealing this account of creation. This assumption implies that God left men in the dark for a considerable period of time.'*⁵

This 'considerable period of time' was at least 2500 years, during which idolatry increased, because they had 'changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man' and 'changed the truth of God into a lie'.⁶ As opposed to the evolutionary view, note that Scripture says they changed truth into a lie. Evolutionary mythologists say the Bible is a refinement of myth. In other words, they hold that men changed lies into truth.

The archaeologists indicate that writing was most commonly performed by cutting the words into soft clay, but

occasionally it would be chiselled into stone.⁷

The 'higher critics' often accused the presumed writer(s) of Genesis of repetition. Thus S. R. Driver pointed to the following so-called repetitions:

Genesis 6:5–8 and 9–13

Genesis 17:16–19 and 18:9–15

Genesis 17:1–45 and 27:46 to 28:9⁸

But if the Bible student recognizes the composition of Genesis as being from sources acknowledged by Moses, it will be realized that the first 'repetition' occurs because the earlier verses were on Noah's tablet and the later on his sons' tablet; the second occurs first in Ishmael's and then in Isaac's tablet; the third set occurs first in Esau's and then in Jacob's tablet(s).

In this view, Moses handled the tablets as reverently as sacred records. He:

*'regards the old wording as so sacred that usually he avoids making unnecessary alterations to the text . . . He leaves the original ancient expressions and place-names just as he finds them, though they are no longer in current use . . . [but] he explains the ancient records by adding the contemporary place names alongside the ancient names, and sometimes he slates that the name is retained 'to this day'.'*⁹

As for the higher critics, unbelief contains the seeds of its own destruction, and many scholars who could not regard Scripture as God's inerrant Word eventually left the theological scene. Today there is, by and large, more acceptance of the supernatural element, especially in God's preservation of Scripture as well as its initial composition.

Perhaps this discussion of the way God appears to have brought the Word down to us will be of some help in convincing people of the wonder and yet the reasonableness of his ways. God appears to use existing means, and only brings in the miraculous at times when He wishes to communicate specially in signs.

THE TOLEDOTH AND ITS USAGE

Having briefly examined two possible ways in which Genesis might have come into existence, we now turn to a third possibility.

W. H. Green is probably the best known proponent of the *toledoth* theory of the composition of Genesis.¹⁰ But like Griffith Thomas,¹¹ Stigers,¹² Davis,¹³ Aalders¹⁴ and many others, the predominant view is that each *toledoth* passage introduces what follows, and is rhetorically *cataphoric*.

For those not familiar with rhetorical terms, the various 'phoric' reference relationships are set out in Table 1, based on Halliday and Hasan.¹⁵

The question now arises with the *toledoth* as to whether the expression, 'these are the generations of . . .', refers back anaphorically to a preceding passage, or cataphorically forward to genealogies and histories following. In effect, the pivotal word is not *toledoth* itself,

REFERENCE TYPE	MEANING	EXAMPLE
anaphora	refers to item in previous text	'this' in 'We've lost all our money. <i>This</i> is the problem.'
cataphora	refers to item in following text	'this' in ' <i>This</i> is the problem: We've lost all our money.'
exophora	refers to item outside text	'this' in Take <i>this</i> with you.'

Table 1. The various rhetorical terms/'phoric' reference relationships.

but the Hebrew word '*elleh*, 'these' (or in one case Hebrew *zeh*, 'this'), rather than the whole sentence in which the words are found. However, there is one aspect of the word *toledoth* to which some attention should be given.

I refer to the psychological factor implicit in translating this plural Hebrew expression into English in the singular. Is *toledoth* (and the referential '*elleh*) correctly translated 'history', 'record' (and correspondingly 'this'), or is it correct to use a plural to translate a plural, as 'generations', 'origins', etc. (and correspondingly 'these')?

Those who know that the Hebrew word is plural may consider it inaccurate and therefore against a literal understanding of the Bible to make such a change as that from plural to singular. Yet this should not disturb our minds unduly.

For example, '*Elohim* in Hebrew is a plural noun, and in almost every place it is rendered 'God' and not 'gods'. This is done to avoid the suggestion of polytheism. We know it should not be translated 'gods', because the verb it agrees with, 'created', is singular.

Then there is the word *shamayim*, a plural noun, sometimes translated 'heaven' and sometimes 'heavens'. Recently it has been rendered 'sky'. The word *mayim*, a Hebrew plural form, is not found in the singular anyway. Because of its plural form translators have tended to translate it as 'waters', though in reality it is equivalent to English 'water'. What, indeed, is the difference in English between 'water' and 'waters'? Mainly that the plural form is used more in poetic text. Thus in Genesis 1, which is not poetic in Hebrew, I prefer to translate it as 'water'.

English uses so-called 'mass' or 'uncountable' nouns for substances like water, sand, sugar, etc., where some other languages use plural nouns. It is, in fact, a translator's principle not to necessarily retain plurality in an original language, where the receptor language uses a different number system. Thus Hebrew and Greek plurals are expressed most naturally and without forcing, when it concerns substances in English by using the singular. That is a principle of faithfulness in translation.

For such reasons it is preferable in the interests of clar-

ity and faithfulness in translation, to translate '*elleh toledoth* as '*this is the record of . . .*' and to treat *toledoth* (which, like *mayim*, is always found in the plural in the Pentateuch) as a singular concept, even though we do have words like 'annals' to represent a similar concept in English. One reason for preferring a clearly singular form in English is that this avoids undue association with a plurality of names in a genealogy. And *toledoth* does not mean 'genealogy'.

As for the old word 'generations', it should be noted that *toledoth* is not the commonest word used in the Old Testament for generations as we understand them. The word *dor* is used 123 times, whereas *toledoth* is so translated in the King James Version only 39 times, of which 11 times are those we have under consideration here. The other 28 times all include a possessive pronoun, adding 'his' or 'their' to the noun. In 1 Chronicles 26:31, '*the generations of his fathers*' (King James Version) is rendered '*the genealogical records of their families*' in the New International Version, indicating that genealogy can indeed be included in *toledoth*; such genealogies precede the descendant whose *toledoth* it is. Indeed, the *toledoth* in some cases may begin with a genealogy, but wherever placed it will always precede the name of the author or owner of the tablet, not follow it.

Even in the New Testament, we find the expression in the King James Version, '*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ*', where 'generation' is a translation of the Greek *geneseos*, a genitive equivalent to Hebrew *toledoth*. Note that:

- (a) the King James Version translates it by the singular 'generation', and
- (b) the list contains the ancestry and not the descendants of the human Jesus.

The only difference between this and the Pentateuch arrangement is that in Greek custom the reference is cataphoric, whereas in the Hebrew it is anaphoric.

It was the Greek word *genesis*, used in the Septuagint (abbreviated as LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament), which gave rise to our English title, 'Genesis', to

the book we are examining.

THEORY (3) OR (4)?

Having considered the terms in the Hebrew expression, we should now turn our attention to the differences between the third and fourth theories of the composition of Genesis. Those who support the third view regard ‘these’ or ‘this’ (according to how we translate *toledoth* into English) as cataphoric. They understand Genesis 5:1 as saying:

‘This is the book of the generations of Adam: “When God created man, . . .”’

This also involves them in understanding Genesis 37:2 as saying:

‘These are the generations of Jacob: ‘Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock ...’

I find this to be strangely abrupt, to say the least.

Typical of this view is S. R. Driver:

‘This phrase . . . belongs properly to a genealogical system; it implies that the person to whose name it is prefixed is of sufficient importance to mark a break in the genealogical series.’¹⁶

The problem here is that Terah is included and not Abraham. Are we to say Abraham was not of sufficient importance to warrant a break in the genealogies?

One of the strongest supporters of the cataphoric theory of reference is the creationist E. J. Young,¹⁷ who insists that even the lexicographer Gesenius is unreliable in translating *toledoth* as ‘origin’. He points to the fact that *toledoth* is derived from the verb *yalad*, ‘beget’, hence it must refer to something following or begotten by the person whose *toledoth* is being set forth. However, this sort of argument is linguistically unsound.

Take, for example, the English phrase ‘iron filings’. I think it unlikely that the association of ‘filings’ with ‘file’ has any bearing on the use of the term to describe minute pieces of metal. How they were produced is by now irrelevant to their description and use. Or, to take another example, do we gather the meaning of ‘impartial’ from its root, ‘part’? Again, who ever understands the word ‘peculiar’ with reference to its root *pecus*, meaning ‘cattle’ in Latin?

Clearly the use of *toledoth* in Hebrew is not restricted to things begotten and their effect on the future. It normally refers to how one came to be begotten, as it were. It may, indeed, be idiomatic and refer to written records ‘begotten’ by the writers out of the events they are recording. Indeed, the begetting of something is its origin, so that ‘origin’ is in fact a quite reasonable translation, derived though it may be from a verb ‘beget’. Gesenius, as a competent scholar, appreciated this.¹⁸

I therefore believe that the fourth theory is the correct one. Supporters of this understanding are of varied backgrounds, some liberal and some conservative: Buhl, Boettcher, Havernick, Ewald and H. E. Ryle. However,

though all of these agree in regarding *toledoth* as indicating origins, history or chronicles, not all are clear on the phoric reference of ‘this’ or ‘these’. Thus they do in a sense support the fourth view semantically, but some fail to apply this cohesively and grammatically.

WISEMAN’S DISCOVERIES

It was left to Wiseman, the archaeologist,¹⁹ to unearth evidence from ancient documents to show the methods by which the layout of Genesis could be reasonably accounted for, and at the same time reveal Moses’ meticulous care as a man of God in preserving the very words of God for his contemporaries, and eventually for us today.

Henry M. Morris²⁰ seems to have been the first modern creationist to take up Wiseman’s ideas and apply them to the Genesis account. The present writer has also set them out in a semi-popular work on creation.²¹

Wiseman has shown that ancient Middle East records were produced on clay tablets (and only rarely the stone tablets referred to by Morris²²), using a metal or wood stylus which made wedge-shaped indentations on the damp clay during production. The tablets were then either sundried or baked for permanent storage. All this had been known for a century, but what Wiseman points out is the actual textual form of the tablets. (It is interesting that similar processes are used by vandals who impress graffiti in wet concrete and so produce well-nigh indelible marks.)

The characteristic format is that:

- (a) The record begins straight away, without a heading as title, though in fact a tablet may be referred to by its opening words.
- (b) Each tablet ends with a *toledoth* statement, referring to what has been written above. It is therefore anaphoric.
- (c) A name in the *toledoth* statement refers either to the writer or to the owner of the tablet.

It must also be true that everything recorded on a tablet must have been known by the writer or owner. Thus the information in each segment of Genesis should represent conditions that ended before the death of the person named in the record. Hence it is most likely that the *toledoth* is a colophon, that is, a subscript and not a heading.

In the libraries Of the Middle East there are exceedingly numerous copies (including a small number of originals) of records similar to those that lie behind Genesis. They include distorted accounts of creation and the Flood. The signature in the colophon confirms the (supposed) truth of the contents.

TABLETS AND SIGNATURES

In the light of these discoveries, it is reasonable to see the Genesis *toledoth* as colophons confirming the actual truth of what was enumerated above the signatures. In

effect, then, they are bibliographical details relating to the passages preceding them.

We note that above Adam's 'signature' in Genesis 5:1–2 we have been told of people as far down the line as the sons of Lamech of the Cainite line. This was the eighth generation from Adam, and these men were born before Adam died. In a similar way, Shem's descendants go down to the fifth generation, including Joktan's sons, born before Shem died. Incidentally, such data confirms the age-ranges of the patriarchs too.

The brief Noahic tablet (Genesis 5:3 to 6:9a) only goes to the birth of his three sons. Terah's tablet ends with the death of his father Nahor, and if we understand the dating correctly, he signed it in his seventieth year. This also explains why his age at Abram's birth is not recorded, but may be calculated from other Scriptures.²³

The joint records of Isaac and Ishmael take us to Abraham's grandsons and great-grandsons through his wife Keturah, because they were probably born just before Isaac's death, 57 years after the death of Ishmael. The joint records of Esau and Jacob go as far as Isaac's death, and appear to be dated at the time when Jacob was living in Canaan. Otherwise, why mention that Jacob lived in Canaan at that time, anyway?

The very first record shows no writer's or owner's name, apart from the significant expression, '*when they were created*', which suggests that this set of tablets only concerned God's work in creation. The title of this record is taken from the opening words, '*In the Beginning*', for this is how records were referred to in those days, it seems. At any rate, the Jews still call Genesis '*In the Beginning*'. The word 'Genesis' is taken from the Greek form of the Hebrew word *toledoth*, which is *geneseis*, the plural of *genesis*.

Who, then, was the writer of the first record? Was it Adam, instructed by God, or could it even be God himself, writing as he wrote the ten commandments?²⁴

As for the compilation, it becomes clear that Moses was very reliable and faithful in not changing these old sources. He left them, as far as reasonable, in their original textual state, with all the awkward joints visible. He knew he was dealing with a sacred set of documents, and beyond translating, he made no changes.

He did, however, add a few explanatory notes, especially in place names. This would help the Israelites (and others) to recognise some of the areas where the major events were happening. Thus what they knew as Bethel was originally known as Luz,²⁵ and so with many more.

The Babylonian system enabled the ancient peoples to make multiple copies. Once impressed, all you had to do was to produce another slab of soft clay and take a reverse impression, then a third slab placed over the second one after it had dried, would produce on the third a copy of the first one. A simple copying machine!

These tablets would be strung together to make continuous narratives or official records or whatever. Some-

one like Adam could have made a set or sets and passed them on to Noah within three generations. These could then go via Noah's three sons down the patriarchal line to Terah. Terah would make his **own tablet** and pass everything on to his sons. Abram would get a copy, or maybe he asked for a copy?

The next set belonged to or was written by Isaac. But after Jacob had put together his set, the family went into Egypt and the system would most probably change to papyrus rolls. However, it is still possible that there is a colophon to the last set of records. If you read Exodus 1:1–5, it reminds us dimly of the style of the colophon, though the word *toledoth* is missing.

As to whether Adam could write or not, in the light of Genesis 5:1, let us realize that he was created perfect in intelligence and lived 930 years. He was no Rousseauvian naked savage. Rousseau certainly got his Genesis garbled. Adam was an adult for about as long as Methuselah, the oldest patriarch, who was born as a baby and not created a man.

THE GENESIS 2:4 TOLEDOTH

Does it matter whether the *toledoth* were anaphoric or cataphoric? Yes, because it has a bearing on the accuracy with which Genesis was put together. It also solves the critical problem of the first *toledoth* in Genesis 2:4a.

German liberal scholars of the 19th century, as well as the English Spurrell,²⁶ and Carpenter and Harford-Battersby,²⁷ wanted to move Genesis 2:4a from its place to before Genesis 1:1, because it seemed a better title to Genesis 1:1 to 2:3. In those days it was not general knowledge, even in academic circles, that ancient records used subscripts called colophons.

When James Moffat produced his translation of the Bible he actually put 2:4a before 1:1, because it seemed more appropriate there. This again shows an underlying confusion about the whole verse 2:4, which does seem to produce an artificial repetition. If our theory is right, this repetition is due to Moses' faithfulness in leaving the records exactly as they had come down to him.

Wiseman lists the usual contents of the colophons. They normally contained:

- (a) the name of the scribe or author or owner,
 - (b) some reference to the date of production, and
 - (c) some geographical idea of the place of compilation.²⁸
- In other words, publication details.

Now as a creationist, I cannot subscribe to Wiseman's theory of a '*revelation to Adam of creation*' lasting six days, instead of an actual creation which took God six days. This theory was produced at the height of the evolution mania even among evangelicals, so perhaps it is not so surprising. However, I do accept his statement that

*'there is good and sufficient evidence to show that the first page of the Bible is the oldest document which has come down to us.'*²⁹

I can also agree that:

*'It may be asked, why did God talk to man about creation? Just because it was the one subject about which man could know nothing with certainty except God revealed it to him. Other things he may be able to find out for himself, and his accumulated human experience and acquired knowledge could be handed down'*³⁰

Of course, I would interpret his 'talk to man' as the indirect 'talk' of the written word of Scripture.

THE GENESIS RECORD

At this point it is appropriate to introduce *the toledoth*-divided passages as shown in Table 2.

Writers disagree as to the number of self-contained segments that go to make up Genesis, though they are not divided as to the actual number of *toledoth* dividers present. There are 11 mentions of *toledoth*, but the Ishmael one and the two from Esau are encapsulated within those of Isaac and Jacob respectively. One could make of this a total of 12 passages, but I have regarded those of Ishmael and Esau as parts of their brothers' records.

My reason for this layout is that the Ishmael and Esau passages seem to be cataphoric, or else it was that their godly brothers placed their colophons out of the way to avoid confusion, or perhaps in this case Moses did so. But as Ishmael went to Egypt, he may not have used the Babylonian system. Likewise Esau/Edom, who had an Ishmaelite wife and lived close to Egypt, may have also favoured that system.

However, if we take it that Exodus 1:1–5 is a sort of

colophon, this could be explained in anaphoric terms as resulting from Mosaic or Joseph's or his sons' authorship, in which case the tablet system would persist among the Israelites but not among the Egyptians.

MOSES' EDITORIAL SKILLS

Assuming, then, that Moses put together the ancient sources that lie behind Genesis, how well did he preserve their identity?

As regards the contents, we notice that in the first series the sun and moon are not named. This would be in keeping with a very ancient nomenclature. We note that God himself named heaven and earth and the sea, and day and night. In terms of a reality, we note that there is no 'I saw', hence it is not a vision. In the second set of records, we find God 'walking in the cool of the day', which could hardly be a late expression. The Jews were so reverent by then and could hardly think of God walking and talking with Adam!

There are also cross-references between sets of tablets. Thus at Genesis 5:29 Noah's record refers to Adam's record at 3:17. Besides being a distinction between sources, there is a continuity. Yet the tablets are not conflated. Genesis 11:10–18 repeats 10:22–29. Corruption in the earth is mentioned both in Genesis 6:5–8 and 6:9–13. Only the Joseph section seems to have no strong connection with the rest.

Critics have raised the question of the names of God, not only in their attempts to fragment Genesis unnecessarily, but because Exodus 6:3 tells us that God did not reveal himself to the ancestors of Moses as 'Yahweh', but

EXTENT OF PASSAGE	TOLEDOTH NAME	DETAILS
(1) Genesis 1:1 to 2:3	Heaven and Earth	When created
(2) Genesis 2:4b to 4:26	Adam	Creation of humans; (place of blessing)
(3) Genesis 5:3 to 6:8	Noah	
(4) Genesis 6:9b to 9:29	Noah's sons	They had sons after the Deluge
(5) Genesis 10:2 to 11:9	Shem	Shem 100, father of Arphaxad
(6) Genesis 11:11 to 11:26	Terah	Terah had three sons in Ur of the Chaldeans; Haran died
(7) Genesis 11:29 to 25:18	Isaac including Ishmael	Isaac 40, married Rebekah
(8) Genesis 25:21 to 36:43	Jacob including Esau	Jacob still in Canaan
(9) Genesis 37:2b to 50:26	?Sons of Israel	Joseph dies and is buried

Table 2. *The toledoth-divided passages in Genesis with toledoth names and details.*

as El Shadday. How does this square with Genesis 2:4b, where ‘Yahweh’ (translated into English as ‘the Lord’) is found, and from there onwards constantly occurs?

A quite reasonable answer may be given. Moses, while compiling Genesis from these Mesopotamian tablets, would come across the name ‘El Shadday’, yet God had already told Moses his special name for Israel was ‘Yahweh’. But it might cause misunderstanding and even sound like idolatry to use a foreign-sounding name along with ‘Yahweh’ in different places in the text.

In view of this, it may be that Moses did make alterations at this point to avoid idolatrous associations, for after all, God’s name must be preserved from blasphemy at any cost. To take a somewhat similar predicament for translators of the Bible into Arabic, is it right for Arabic Christians to use the name Allah? Or has it too many non-Christian associations?

But in all other ways Moses was very careful to preserve what God had caused to be handed down the ages. He was indeed faithful in preserving source references. He also explained unfamiliar names and places.

STATISTICAL EVIDENCE

Finally, I would back up my thesis with statistical evidence concerning the use of Hebrew *‘elleh*, ‘these’ and *‘zeh*, ‘that’ in the relevant chapters, mainly Genesis 1 to 36. As Halliday and Hasan point out, ‘those’ and ‘that’ are never cataphoric, so they cause no problem.³¹ The figures for ‘this’ and ‘these’ are shown in Table 3.

Naturally, the *toledoth* verses themselves are excluded, since they are the instances under consideration. The rather anomalous 18 cataphoric examples of ‘these’ in Genesis 1 to 36 are all found in the Ishmael and Esau sections.

We see from this that the tendency in the pre-Flood and Mesopotamian parts of Genesis is to use ‘this’ and ‘these’ anaphorically. This also happens in the Pentateuch as a whole. See, for example, the very last verses of Leviticus and Numbers. It does seem that in ancient times it was more common to refer back using these demonstratives than it is in today’s English formal writing. Even during my lifetime cataphora and anaphora have changed places.

Before television, news readers began ‘Here is the news’, or sometimes ‘This is the news’, but for some time such a statement has appeared at the end, especially, ‘This was the . . . news’, or ‘This has been the . . . news’, etc.

MOSES — GOD’S FAITHFUL TRANSCRIBER

In the light of these findings, I would claim that the *toledoth* verses belong to what precedes them. This means that Genesis 1:1 to 2:4a would have appeared on one tablet or set of tablets, according to how many tablets there were. The subscript is then distinctly separate from the following passage, and the narrative before the colophon would be called ‘The Origin(s) of the Universe’ in modern terms. This set of tablets is then followed by a second set, notably starting the narrative with ‘the earth and the heavens’, where the centre of attention is the earth itself rather than the universe, as the different order of words indicates. How precise this record is!

Morris summarizes the contents of these nine hypothesized tablets in the Introduction to his commentary on Genesis.³² Morris concludes:

‘this theory . . . does seem to fit all available facts better than any other theory. It is consistent with the doctrine of biblical inspiration and authority, as well as with the accurate historicity of the records.’³³

To this I would add that it shows how carefully Moses kept and passed on the records. Unless Hebrew were the original pre-Babel language (and Scripture is silent on this), Moses would have to translate the earlier tablets, and probably all of them, because the language of 1450 BC would have been different even from that of Joseph in Egypt.

It is generally agreed that the alphabet was invented (or revealed?) by someone in the Sinai region round about 1450 BC.³⁴ As any student of language knows, this does not mean that there was no writing before the alphabet. After all, modern Chinese does not use an alphabet.

Languages before the alphabet appeared were logographic (word-based, not letter-based), which means that if we ever found pre-alphabetic scripts, we would have no idea how the sounds were pronounced. Moses therefore would have his work cut out to transfer these scripts

WORD	PASSAGE	ANAPHORIC	CATAPHORIC	EXOPHORIC
‘this’	Genesis 1 to 36	68	5	12
	Genesis 37 to 50	32	7	5
‘these’	Genesis 1 to 36	49	18	4
	Genesis 37 to 50	17	2	3

Table 3. The figures for the usage of ‘this’ and ‘these’ from a statistical analysis of Genesis.

into an alphabet, as well as having to decipher the meanings. I believe he had a first class brain, given him by God, plus the ongoing aid of the Holy Spirit for the work.

Only a contemporary of Moses could transcribe the writing efficiently into Hebrew, and even if Hebrew had been used in the originals, it would not have been in an alphabetic script. Thus it appears that God channelled the important account of the creation, and that of the Deluge, through this one chosen vessel, Moses. And Moses was so faithful in the work.

In a somewhat similar way, we find that the New Testament writers' documents in Greek were kept intact down to today by Christians who believed they should not alter one word, even though the writers were nearly all Jews writing in a foreign language. All their 'bad grammar' is preserved for us. This is not a defect. On the contrary, it indicates the faithfulness of the copyists. They would never dream of polishing them up. God delights to use weak vessels. Frank Morrison and others have shown that it is the irregularities in the Bible which bear witness to its genuineness and ensure that it will stand up in a court of law.³⁵

In the same way we see Moses leaving in Genesis all the *toledoth* or source 'footnotes' in the text, making it uneven. Yet in that very thing he ensured under God that we today possess a truly faithful record of the mighty works of God in creation and judgment. There is no literary reason to doubt the truth of these things, and we ignore such truth at our peril.

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24. Exodus 31:18.
25. As, for example, Luz, which became Bethel (Genesis 28:19), and Zoar, which became Bela (Genesis 14:2,8).
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Dr Charles V. Taylor has B.A.'s in languages, music and theology, an M.A. in applied linguistics and a Ph.D. in a central African language. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Linguists, and for eight years served as Co-ordinator of applied linguistics courses in The University of Sydney. The author of nine Christian books, Dr Taylor now lives in semi-retirement in Gosford, New South Wales, having served on the staff of Garden City School of Ministries and on the Board of Creation Science Foundation.