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A Critical Evaluation of the Tablet Model: Considerations on the Origin of the Book of Genesis

Lee Anderson, Jr.*

Abstract

Subsequent to its adoption by many creationists as a feasible understanding of the compositional origin of the book of Genesis, the tablet model has been repeatedly advanced as the most likely explanation for how Moses could have written about historical events that occurred long before his time. This model maintains that Moses relied upon preexistent sources, clay tablets documenting the lives of Adam, Noah, and the Patriarchs. The boundaries between these sources are purportedly reflected in the book of Genesis by the presence of the Hebrew word תּוֹלֵדוֹת. This paper investigates whether the tablet model is a viable understanding of the composition of Genesis and whether it warrants continued promotion. It concludes that the tablet model is sufficiently problematic that its continued promotion may actually prove detrimental to the creationist cause. If advocated at all, it should be as one of many possible biblical theories of the composition of Genesis, with a tentativeness that befits it.

I. Introduction to the Tablet Model

The tablet model (or, as it is sometimes referred to, the "Wiseman Hypothesis") is a theory regarding the authorship of the book of Genesis. The model maintains that in writing Genesis, Moses relied upon preexistent source material, namely a collection of clay tablets authored by the individuals whose respective lives they recount. This model is built on the assumption that the Hebrew word תּוֹלֵדוֹת (*tôlēdôt* "generations"), which serves as the primary macrostructural device in the book of Genesis, is a colophon or subscript, signaling the close of each of the sources used by Moses in writing Genesis. The word *tôlēdôt* appears eleven times in the book of Genesis (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2), each followed by the name of an individual prominently featured in the book (with the exception of Genesis 2:4). Despite a measure of uncertainty among the proponents of the model as to who authored certain sections of Genesis (such as the *tôlēdôt* of the reject Esau, ostensibly beginning in Genesis 36:1), the consensus is that most sections were authored by the individuals whose names are immediately connected with the *tôlēdôt* markers. Textual evidence of dependence on written source material is, according to advocates of the view, found in Genesis 5:1, which is taken as representative of the other proposed units' subscripts: "This is the book (סֵפֶר; *sēpēr* "scroll, written document") of the

* Lee Anderson, Jr., andersonla@masters.edu
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generations (תוֹלֵדוֹת) of Adam."[1] Consequently, according to the tablet model, Moses is not the author of Genesis, *per se*, but rather the final editor or redactor responsible for compiling the constituent parts that make up the book of Genesis as a whole. Proponents argue, however, that this view on the composition of Genesis does not violate the biblical claim of Mosaic authorship, since other biblical authors also used source material (cf. e.g., Luke 1:1–3).

Moreover, it should be noted that proponents of the tablet model in no way deny that the book of Genesis is inspired. It is asserted that the Holy Spirit superintended the selection and use of sources in such a way as to ensure that the final product contained the precise words and sentences that God intended. It is somewhat ambiguous in certain creationists' writings, however, whether they regard the *individual source documents* as being inspired along with the book of Genesis, or whether only Genesis in its *final form* is considered to be inspired.

Originally developed in 1936 by the amateur archeologist P. J. Wiseman,[2] the tablet model quickly established itself as a viable alternative to the problematic documentary hypothesis, a compositional theory that dispenses with the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch altogether and attributes the book to four individual source documents composed in the first millennium BC and pieced together by anonymous redactors sometime in the postexilic period. Wiseman's model was subsequently adopted by the Old Testament scholar R. K. Harrison, whose 1969 work presented a detailed defense of the position, arguably more robust than that of Wiseman. About the same time as Harrison's publication, the modern creationist movement was taking root. Henry Morris, who was later to be known as the "father of modern creationism," embraced the position that had been set forth by Wiseman and Harrison, giving it significant attention in his commentary, *The Genesis Record*, published in 1976. Following Morris's lead, the tablet model came to be accepted by various other young-earth creationists, including a number of researchers presently affiliated with creationist ministries.

The tablet model is a clever compositional theory, as it explains how apart from direct dictation or visions from God, Moses would have been able to write about events that occurred long before his time. However, cleverness does not automatically equal historical plausibility or biblical credibility. Any theory of the composition of the book of Genesis must take into account the sum total of historical and textual evidence. Unfortunately, the tablet model has proven selective in its handling of this information, with its proponents often ignoring some very real problems related to the historical plausibility and biblical viability of the model (see section IV). Though further research has shown as incorrect some of the original conclusions of Wiseman and Harrison, creationists have grown increasingly self-confirmed in the supposed accuracy of the tablet model, with some essentially elevating it to a point of dogma. For instance, Hodge (2013, p. 228), working off the assumption of the tablet model, asserts, "Adam, the first man, could write, and we have a portion of what he wrote being edited by Moses into the Pentateuch, specifically the book of Genesis." Hodge further claims that Genesis 5:1 leaves "no excuse" for denying that Adam was directly responsible for writing a portion of the first book of the Bible. However, is this kind of overt dogmatism warranted? Is the tablet model really so firmly established as to leave dissenters "no excuse" for rejecting it? Is it just a minor point of doctrinal preference? What are the consequences, if any, of holding this theory? This paper will seek to investigate these questions. Notably, it recognizes the various intended benefits of the tablet model: (1) It advocates a compositional theory of Genesis that seeks to account for the characteristic structure of the book, the separation of the major sections by a formulaic expression. (2) In its latest instantiation, it is advanced to protect the origin of writing from an evolutionary anthropology. And (3) it is advanced to provide a source of primeval events that antedates the ancient Near Eastern accounts, thereby obviating defending textual independence. (In this, it is in line with the church fathers, who took great pains to demonstrate that all the knowledge of the pagan civilization was learned from the patriarchs.) However, as this paper argues, these benefits are inconsequential if the tablet model does not line up with the biblical data.

II. History of the Tablet Model

As noted in the preceding section, the tablet model was originally developed by P. J. Wiseman, who, while participating in archeological excavations in Babylonia, observed that ancient documents (commonly written on clay tablets) often concluded with a standardized form of colophon or subscript evidencing the name of the tablet's writer or owner. Wiseman likened this pattern to the formula repeated throughout the book of Genesis: אֵלֶּה תוֹלְדוֹת —"These are the generations…." He asserted that this catchphrase "was the ancient conclusion which Moses inserted indicating the source from which he obtained the narratives and genealogies" (Wiseman, 1977, p. 102).[3] He concluded, therefore,

[1] In keeping with the recognized conventions of journals on biblical literature, translations of Scripture, except where noted otherwise, are those of the author.

[2] Wiseman was an RAF officer with a deep fascination with archeology.

[3] The word "catchphrase" generally refers to a phrase at the top of a tablet, which is the same as the final phrase

that Genesis was the compiled collection of ancient records pieced together by Moses, with the *tôlēdôt* markers serving to identify the original authors. Wiseman argued that the antiquity of the original source documents was supported by the presence in the text of antiquated words that would have fallen out of regular usage by the time of Moses (Wiseman, 1977, pp. 46–47).

In accordance with the evidence of the *tôlēdôt* markers, Wiseman alleged that Genesis 1:1–2:4 (Tablet I) was written by Adam on the basis of direct revelation from God. Genesis 2:5–5:2 (Tablet II) was apparently also the work of Adam, in this case writing from his own experience. Genesis 5:3–6:9a (Tablet III), relating the events preceding the Flood, was written or owned by Noah. Genesis 6:9b–10:1 (Tablet IV), which centers on the Flood event, was written or owned by Noah's sons. Genesis 10:2–11:10 (Tablet V) was written or owned by Noah's son Shem. Genesis 11:10–27 (Tablet VI), which is limited to a genealogical record, was written or owned by Terah, the father of Abraham. Genesis 11:27–25:19 (which includes Tablets VII and VIII) documents the life of the great patriarch Abraham and is attributable to his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Genesis 25:20–37:2 (which includes Tablets IX, X, and XI) is similarly attributable to two brothers, Esau and Jacob. The final section of Genesis, the lengthy Joseph narrative, has no colophon, and thus is ambiguous as to its authorship (Wiseman, 1977, pp. 42–45, 58–64).

In proposing this model, Wiseman gave thought, not only to the original authorship of the tablets, but also to their transmission. He maintained that Moses did not happen upon eleven different historical documents and stitch them together haphazardly; rather, each individual tablet was likely passed from its original writer/owner onto a suitable heir, who later added to it his own record. Thus Adam would have entrusted his tablet to one of his descendants, who in turn passed it along until it came into the hands of Noah. Noah, upon adding his account, would have entrusted both his record and that of Adam (or at least a copy of Adam's record) to his sons. His sons (namely Shem), upon adding their respective portions, would have entrusted the growing collection of tablets to a suitable descendant, until it came to Terah. The line of transmission from Terah (via Abraham) to Ishmael and Isaac, and then to Esau and Jacob appears obvious (Wiseman, 1977, pp. 68–70). Consequently, as Wiseman concluded, "In Jacob's time these tablets comprising Genesis 1–36 were connected together as one record" (Wiseman, 1977, p. 70). Thus, the collecting of sources would have been essentially *done* before Moses came on the scene.

Wiseman did not deny Moses' role altogether in compiling the material; he asserted that although Moses left the text largely intact, he would likely have needed to update the language of some of the tablets and provide some explanatory notes (Wiseman, 1977, pp. 72–73).[4] In any case, however, Moses was much less a writer than he was an editor. The substance of the text of Genesis was for Moses, according to Wiseman's theory, essentially equivalent to how it appears today.

Wiseman was the primary advocate of the tablet model until R. K. Harrison took up the view in the 1960s. He argued that though scholars were agreed as to the importance of the formulaic expression "these are the generations," many had "misunderstood entirely both its usage and its significance for the literary origins of Genesis" (Harrison, 1969, p. 545). He claimed that the expressions must necessarily serve as colophons rather than headings because, generally speaking, the biographical information concerning the person mentioned in each of the expressions appears *before* rather than *after* the *tôlēdôt* formula (Harrison, 1969, p. 545). For example, subsequent to the mention of the "*tôlēdôt* of Adam" (Genesis 5:1), no additional information about Adam is given apart from Adam's age at his death (Genesis 5:4–5).

On this assumption that "the term תולדת can be held to indicate the presence of a colophon in the text," Harrison agreed with Wiseman that "it is eminently possible to regard its incidence as indicating the presence of a genuine Biblical source in the text" (Harrison, 1969, p. 547). He thus maintained that the first 36 chapters of Genesis (but not the Joseph narrative) were taken from "a series of tablets whose contents were linked together to form a roughly chronological account of primeval and patriarchal life written from the standpoint of a Mesopotamian cultural milieu" (Harrison, 1969, p. 548). In attributing the source documents to their supposed original authors, Harrison followed the same divisions set forth by Wiseman. He suggested, as had Wiseman, that many of the textual units betray attempts at dating their origins. For instance, the phrases "when they were created" (Tablet I; Genesis 2:4), "in the day when God created man" (Tablet II, Genesis 5:1),

on another tablet so as to facilitate the ordering of the tablets.

[4] Wiseman's original model, in contrast to more recent versions, considers the source tablets themselves to be divinely inspired (Wiseman, 1977, 73). This, he believes, influenced the manner in which Moses handled his task: "The first thing that impresses us as we read them now, is that he regards the old wording as so sacred that he avoids making unnecessary alterations to the text even to modernise words. He leaves the original ancient expressions and place names just as he finds them, though they are no longer in current use" (Wiseman, 1977, 73).

"after the Flood" (Tablet IV; Genesis 10:1), etc., all provide something akin to a "timestamp" on their respective textual units (Harrison, 1969, p. 549). Additionally, Harrison maintained that attempts by the ancients at linking the source texts together, in keeping with Mesopotamian tradition, are evidenced in Genesis 6:9; 11:10; 11:27; 25:19; and 36:1. In all these instances, allowing for what he considered to be an "obvious gloss" in Genesis 36:1, he noted that, "the last word of a suggested tablet is the same as the first word of its successor," thus providing continuity in the record (Harrison, 1982, p. 437; cf. 1969, pp. 549–550).

Harrison was disinclined to suggest that the Joseph narrative (Genesis 37:2–50:26) had circulated as an independent written source prior to the compilation of Genesis. Moses may have been responsible for providing the account contained in that portion of the book. However, as far as it concerned the first 36 chapters of Genesis, Moses' role was one of an editor and compiler, a task for which his background would have prepared him well. As Harrison noted, "A person such as Moses would have been eminently suited to the task of assembling ancient records and transcribing them in edited form as a continuous record" (Harrison, 1969, p. 552).

In the face of the form- and source-critical theories that dominated the field of Old Testament study, the tablet model as articulated by Wiseman and Harrison occupied a minority position. However, it was popular among conservatives, who, on biblical grounds, rightly defended the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (cf. e.g., Joshua 8:31; Mark 12:26). One such individual intrigued by the tablet model was the creationist revolutionary Henry Morris.

Notably, in the groundbreaking work *The Genesis Flood* (1961), Morris's coauthor John Whitcomb (who wrote the first four chapters) allowed for a variety of different methods, either individually or jointly, in the composition of the book of Genesis. He wrote, "It is conceivable, of course, that God may have supernaturally sustained a *pure oral tradition* of the details of Genesis 1–11 within the line of the post-Babel Patriarchs; or that He may have revealed all these details to Moses directly, apart from any oral or written sources," and, "It is important to remember that whatever may have been the sources employed by Moses in the composition of Genesis—whether written records, oral traditions, or direct revelation—verbal inspiration guarantees its absolute authority and infallibility" (Whitcomb and Morris, 1961, p. 41).[5] These statements represent the classical conservative position quite well, which *permits* for the possibility of pre-Mosaic sources but does not *demand* them. In any case, whatever mix of written sources, oral traditions, and direct revelation was involved in the composition of Genesis, it was such that the final product could indeed fit within the Pentateuch, collectively referred to as being "of Moses." Presumably, Morris endorsed this position initially, but his perspective on Genesis' composition appears to have changed in the years following the initial publication of *The Genesis Flood*.

In his 1976 commentary *The Genesis Record*, Morris agreed with the viability of each of the three means (direct revelation, oral traditions, and written records) by which Moses could have produced the book of Genesis, noting than none violates the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration or the notion of Mosaic authorship. *However*, he contended that Moses *most likely* employed written sources in composing Genesis, arguing that dependence on direct revelation or oral traditions has no parallels anywhere in the canon of Scripture when it comes to setting forth "narrative records of historical events" (Morris, 1976, pp. 25–26).[6]

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[5] The remarks of Whitcomb on this point reflect the observations of Old Testament scholar Merrill Unger, to whose work he appeals. Speaking of similarities between the biblical record and Babylonian texts, that Unger claims "go back to an original source of fact, which originated in an actual occurrence," he argues, "These common traditions among the Hebrews are reflected in the true and authentic facts given them by divine inspiration in their sacred writings. Moses very likely was conversant with these traditions. If he was, inspiration enabled him to record them accurately, purged of all their crude polytheistic incrustations and to adapt them to the elevated framework of truth and pure monotheism. If he was not, the Spirit of God was able to give him the revelation of these events apart from the need of any oral or written sources. In either case supernatural inspiration was equally necessary, whether to purge the perverted polytheistic tradition and refine it to fit the mold of monotheism or to give an original revelation of the authentic facts apart from oral or written sources" (Unger, 1954, 70–71).

[6] In contrast to Morris's claim, the Old Testament contains several conspicuous examples of historical narrative material that *must* have been received by direct revelation. For example, in Job 1–2, the narrator records the exchange taking place between Satan and the Lord God. Since the writer clearly had no access to the heavenly realm in which this exchange took place, the reader is left to conclude that at least some of the material in these two chapters had to come by way of direct revelation. Similarly, Genesis 1, whether revealed to Adam or to Moses, had to come via direct revelation, as there was no human witness to the events described. As for the use of oral tradition in the writing down of God's word, who is to say that Luke, for instance, had at his disposal *only* written sources and did not incorporate the oral

Morris's separation of Genesis into textual units differs somewhat from that of Wiseman and Harrison in that he identified only nine major subdivisions. However, this stems from the fact that Morris opted to place the "*tôlēdôt* of Ishmael" (cf. Genesis 25:12) within the much longer "*tôlēdôt* of Isaac" (Genesis 11:27b–25:19a). Similarly, the "*tôlēdôt* of Esau" (cf. Genesis 36:1, 9) is regarded as a component of the lengthy "*tôlēdôt* of Jacob" (Genesis 25:19b–37:2). Supposedly, Isaac and Jacob were both responsible for obtaining the brief genealogical records from their respective brothers and incorporating them into their own accounts (Morris, 1976, p. 28). Morris further suggested that the Joseph narrative, running from Genesis 37:2b to Exodus 1:1, is distinguished as a self-contained unit by the wording of Exodus 1:1, which vaguely parallels the *tôlēdôt* formula: "These are the names of the children of Israel…" (Morris, 1976, p. 30).

Aside from the aforementioned contention related to biblical parallels, the chief argument Morris employed in his defense of the tablet model stems from his interpretation of Genesis 5:1, which specifically mentions "the book of the *tôlēdôt* of Adam." Although this is the lone usage of the Hebrew סֵפֶר ("scroll, written document") in conjunction with the *tôlēdôt* formula, Morris took it as a representative example of the other textual units. Thus, on the basis of Genesis 5:1, Morris maintained in his *Defender's Study Bible* notes (much more dogmatically than before) that these primeval and patriarchal records "must have originally come from eyewitnesses, and there is no reason (other than evolutionary presuppositions), why their transmission could not have been by written records instead of orally-repeated tales" (Morris, 1995, p. 17; cf. p. 2). Despite not really developing a full case for his perspective, Morris's stature in the creationist movement led to the widespread adoption and advocacy of the tablet model by other creationists.

Naturally, the creationist ministry most directly affected by Morris's position was the one he founded in 1972, the *Institute for Creation Research* (ICR). Although the ministry focuses chiefly on the promotion of the biblical and scientific case for a recent Creation and the global Flood, it does endorse the tablet model on the composition of Genesis, having reprinted several articles by Morris backing the theory. Also, a recent article by Brian Thomas published by ICR assumes the tablet model in arguing for early man's ability to read and write. In particular, on the basis of Genesis 5:1, Thomas claims, "Scripture indicates that the very first humans were able to read and write," and, citing Morris, "Since only Adam could have personal knowledge of all the events in Genesis 2, 3 and 4, it is reasonable to conclude that this section was originally written by him. Genesis 5:1a is thus Adam's signature at its conclusion" (Thomas, 2012).

The Australian-based group, *Creation Ministries International* (CMI) has also published a number of articles staunchly supporting the tablet model. Summary arguments for Moses' use of primeval and patriarchal sources appear prominently in articles by Clifford Wilson (1992, p. 45), Russell Grigg (1993, pp. 38–40; 1998, p. 45), Charles Taylor (1994), and Don Batten (1996, pp. 44–45). Among these sources, however, only Taylor's defense went beyond the arguments submitted by Wiseman, Harrison, and Morris. He argued that viewing the *tôlēdôt* formula as a colophon finds support in the fact that Hebrew demonstrative pronouns זֶה ("this") and אֵלֶּה ("these") are, in the book of Genesis, more often used anaphorically (that is, to refer to something that precedes) than cataphorically (that is, to refer to something that follows).[7] Accordingly, since all the *tôlēdôt* statements appearing in Genesis are introduced by either זֶה or אֵלֶּה, it is more reasonable to take the *tôlēdôt* statements as colophons rather than headings (Taylor, 1994, p. 210).

The creationist group that is arguably most vocal in the promotion of the tablet model is *Answers in Genesis* (AiG). It is the view adopted by Ken Ham in his seminal work *The Lie: Evolution*, where he states categorically that the *tôlēdôt* statements are "a kind of 'signature' to most of the sections" (Ham, 1987, p. 161), and, "Presumably Adam wrote down all the details that God had given him concerning the original creation. He would have recorded the other events under God's direction, and Moses later obtained this material and compiled it into the Book of Genesis" (Ham, 1987, p. 162). Apart from his use of the Genesis 5:1 prooftext,[8] Ham

testimony from people he interviewed (cf. Luke 1:1–3)?

[7] According to Taylor's own count (1994, p. 210), apart from the verses containing the *tôlēdôt* formula, in Genesis 1–36 the Hebrew זֶה is used anaphorically 68 times, cataphorically 5 times, and exophorically (that is, to refer to something outside of the text) 12 times. In Genesis 37–50, זֶה is used anaphorically 32 times, cataphorically 7 times, and exophorically 5 times. Similarly, in Genesis 1–36, אֵלֶּה is used anaphorically 49 times, cataphorically 18 times, and exophorically 4 times. In Genesis 37–50, אֵלֶּה is used anaphorically 17 times, cataphorically 2 times, and exophorically 3 times.

[8] Here the term "prooftext" is meant in its technical sense of a biblical text to which appeal is made in support of a particular argument or position. It does not, as is sometimes erroneously assumed, necessarily carry the negative sense of "prooftexting," which is the practice of using isolated, out-of-context quotations from the biblical text to try to establish a doctrine.

assumes the tablet model rather than seeking to defend it scripturally (Ham, 1987, p. 162).[9] This approach is likewise evidenced in Ham's more recent material (Ham, 2011; 2012).

Other material from AiG has taken a similar perspective, often assuming the validity of the tablet model without defending it (e.g., Mortenson, 2012). One of AiG's articles provides a fairly comprehensive comparison between the tablet model and the documentary hypothesis (Mortenson and Hodge, 2011, pp. 96–98); but the only *new* argument submitted for the model is that the Flood account supposedly reads "like a ship's log," which suggests that some of the proposed sections of Genesis may read well as self-contained units (Mortenson and Hodge, 2011, p. 97). However, no evidence is supplied to back up this assertion. Other articles by Bodie Hodge (2010; cf. 2006) and Elizabeth Mitchell (2012) likewise present the tablet model as the view best explaining the composition of Genesis; but apart from the Genesis 5:1 prooftext, they offer no defense of the position. It is therefore disconcerting that Hodge maintains on the basis of such scant evidence that readers have "no excuse" for denying that Adam was directly responsible for writing a portion of Genesis (Hodge, 2013, p. 228). In contrast to this overly forthright assertion, the tablet model is put forth more tentatively in a recent article by Tim Chaffey, who offers it *only* as a possibility (Chaffey, 2014). Nevertheless, Hodge's assertions are representative of many of AiG's publications addressing the composition of Genesis, which tend to imply very strongly that the tablet model is required by the biblical evidence.[10]

In addition to the writings of ICR, CMI, and AiG, the tablet model has been supported by other individuals who have contributed directly or indirectly to the modern creationist movement, including Dale DeWitt (1977), Curt Sewell (1994; cf. 2010), David Livingston (2003a; 2003b), Marvin Lubenow (2004, pp. 316–325), Paul Taylor (2007), and Barry and Helen Setterfield (2012). These sources largely parrot the arguments set forth by Wiseman and Harrison, though some new arguments surface as well. For example, Sewell maintains that adopting the tablet model aids in explaining perceived discrepancies in the sequence of the events described in Genesis 1 versus that of Genesis 2 (Sewell, 1994, pp. 25–26).[11] Livingston adds to this another

[9] It may be granted that *The Lie: Evolution* is directed at a layman's audience and, as such, does not provide a detailed defense of the tablet model (which is, in fact, a rather minor point in the book). However, assumption of a theory without discussion unfortunately lends itself to categorical endorsement of the theory—even if this was not the author's intent.

[10] Despite heavy dependence upon a couple of select passages (namely Genesis 5:1), it appears that the factors driving the promotion of the tablet model at AiG are not primarily the supposed biblical evidences. Rather, it seems that AiG's stance concerning the tablet model stems from a noble desire to refute the notions (1) that early man was not highly intelligent, which purportedly accommodates an evolutionary perspective on man's origins, and (2) that the Creation and Flood accounts are original and are not derived from or associated with pagan myths. In relation to point 1, Mortenson and Hodge (2011, p. 97) in their defense of the tablet model write, "Only evolutionary thinking would lead us to conclude that Adam and his descendants could not write. Early man was very intelligent." A similar argument is again advanced by Hodge (2013, p. 229) who asserts (again, on the basis of Genesis 5:1!) that "what is known is that mankind was able to communicate with a language and, furthermore, that they were able to write it down as a record just as Adam did." With respect to point 2, Mitchell (2012) argues on the basis of the alleged validity of the tablet model, "We have good reason to believe that the content of Genesis 1–11 predates the pagan flood myths that were written after the dispersion from the Tower of Babel," which would, by implication, effectively militate against the notion that Genesis "borrows" from mythological pagan documents (cf. Chaffey, 2014). These statements thus suggest that AiG's adoption and promotion of the tablet model derives primarily not from any direct biblical evidence, but rather from a (legitimate) desire to guard against certain unacceptable ideas that have nothing to do with the authorship of Genesis. While the intelligence of early man and the uniqueness of the Genesis record are indeed important issues, it is not necessary for the tablet model to be true in order to maintain robust defenses of these points; they can be adequately supported by other lines of biblical, literary, and historical data (see section 3).

[11] Sewell elaborates, "As an example of how the Tablet Theory can assist our understanding, consider the common accusation that a conflict exists between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, in terms of the sequence of creative actions. This criticism is not valid, since chapter 2 does not attempt to say 'This happened and then that happened.' This apparent conflict is partly because of peculiarities in words; it only shows up in some languages. The English language has definite past, present, and future tenses for its verbs, but Hebrew (the language of Genesis) does not. In Hebrew, the relative timing must be taken from the context, not the actual words themselves. In chapter 1, the timing is definitely stated—these events took place on the sixth day, and in the order stated (animals, then man and woman). This

line of biblical argumentation, claiming, based on the presence of the Hebrew חֻקּוֹת ("statutes") in Genesis 26:5, that Abraham possessed some form of God's *written* law (Livingston, 2003a).[12]

Lubenow's work also offers a unique defense of the tablet model, taking an entirely different tack in attacking the reliability of oral transmission. He maintains, "But it is absurd to think that God would entrust his eternal word to the fragile memories of humans….In Deuteronomy 31:19–21, Moses was given a song to teach to the people. He was specifically commanded to write it down so it would not be forgotten. God said that forgetting was what the people were disposed to do. Obviously, God had little faith in oral transmission" (Lubenow, 2004, p. 318). Consequently, Moses *must* have relied upon *written* sources in writing Genesis. Lubenow, like Wiseman, limits Moses' role principally to that of a compiler; however, he admits that Moses may have done some editorial updating. In fact, he indicates fifteen locations in Genesis where Moses ostensibly interjected brief editorial comments (Lubenow, 2004, pp. 324–25).[13]

What this brief overview has shown is that many creationists have embraced the tablet model as originally developed, generally taking Wiseman's arguments as he presented them with little refinement. Having now traced the development of the tablet model and having shown its broad adoption by creationists, it is necessary to move on to an evaluation of the arguments used to support the tablet model and determine (1) if they stand up to careful scrutiny and (2) if they are so airtight as to warrant the dogmatism evidenced by some of the model's advocates.

III. Evaluation of the Tablet Model

The following section details the primary arguments undergirding the tablet model as *a theory of the composition of Genesis in which Moses is the compiler of preexistent sources*. Between the early works of Wiseman and Harrison, as well as the later writings of recent creationists, eight major arguments in support of the

chapter is written from the Creator's viewpoint (on His tablet) and outlines the exact things He did. But in chapter 2, there are no timing statements. This chapter is written from a different viewpoint (probably by Adam himself), and describes events as he saw them" (Sewell, 1994, 25–26). It is not clear from Sewell's argument, however, why separate sources are required to account for the fact that there is an obvious shift in theme between Genesis chapters 1 and 2 as signaled by the context. It is possible for monumental shifts in theme to occur within a textual unit written by a single author. Consider, for example, the thematic transition between Genesis 7:24 and 8:1.

[12] Livingston (2003a) writes, "Abraham had written laws of Jehovah which he kept: Genesis 26:5 says he kept, among other things, Jehovah's statutes ('*chuqqim*') and laws ('*torah*'). A '*chuqqim*' is a written commandment, usually inscribed in stone….These… we maintain, would be separate documents, themselves the Word of God." Regrettable are Livingston's mistakes in Hebrew (incorrect plural for חֻקָּה; an apparent ignorance that there are two different, albeit related, words, חוֹק and חֻקָּה, which have different plurals; mistranslating *torah* תּוֹרָה as "laws," rather than "law" ["laws" is from תּוֹרוֹת]; and treating "*chuqqim*," the plural of חוֹק as though it were a singular). That aside, the Hebrew word חֻקָּה does derive from the verbal root חקק, which has the sense of "engraving" or "inscribing." But this verse does not demand that Abraham had a written copy of God's word. The NET Bible notes, "The language of this verse is clearly interpretive, for Abraham did not have all these laws. The terms are legal designations for sections of the Mosaic law and presuppose the existence of the law….[T]he simplest explanation is that the narrator…elaborated on the simple report of Abraham's obedience by using terms with which the Israelites were familiar. In this way he depicts Abraham as the model of obedience to God's commands."

[13] Like much of the material produced by AiG, it seems that the driving force behind Lubenow's argument is his laudable desire to avoid the pitfalls of liberal scholarship related to early man. He writes, "The implications of this evidence for the origin of Genesis are staggering. Rather than Genesis having a late date, as is universally taught in nonevangelical circles, the evidence implies that Genesis 1–11 is a transcript of the oldest series of written records in human history. This is in keeping both with the character of God and with the vital contents of these chapters. It is reasonable to expect that the first humans created by God would have had great intelligence and language capabilities and that God would fully inform them as to their origin. This research also confirms the idea that the Genesis creation and flood accounts were not derived from the very different and polytheistic Babylonian accounts. It also supports the fact that monotheism was the original religious belief and not a later evolutionary refinement from an earlier polytheism" (Lubenow, 2004, p. 324). Again, as will be argued later in this paper, while the intelligence of early man and the uniqueness of the Genesis record should be defended, it does not follow that the tablet model must be accepted in order to construct robust arguments for these points; they can be adequately supported by many other lines of biblical, literary, and historical data.

tablet model have been identified. In the interest of space, each argument will be stated, followed immediately by relevant counterarguments.

1 (**1**) The tablet model allegedly reflects the historical context in which the book of Genesis was written, with Genesis following in the pattern of contemporaneous Mesopotamian documents in their use of a colophon to indicate the author of a body of text (Wiseman, 1977, p. 102). However, this argument is valid only if, in fact, the *tôlēdôt* statements of Genesis match with the style of the colophon titles found in the Mesopotamian literature. However, they do not. Colophons contained in ancient Near Eastern literature typically contain the following elements: the title of the work, the date it was authored or copied, the serial number, a concluding statement that this is the last tablet of the series, and the name of the owner. This is quite different from the *tôlēdôt* statements of Genesis (cf. Ross, 1988, p. 71). Perhaps the most striking difference, however, is, as Allen Ross observes, that "the Akkadian equivalent of *tôlēdôt* is not used in the formulas" (Ross, 1988, pp. 71–72). Correspondence is therefore lacking on the most fundamental lexical level and is reinforced by incongruence on a stylistic level. Consequently, on the basis of these critical distinctions, efforts to draw comparisons between the *tôlēdôt* statements of Genesis and the colophons found in Mesopotamian literature are unwarranted.

2 (**2**) The tablet model is said by its proponents to remain faithful to the structure of the text itself, taking the *tôlēdôt* statements as indicating macrostructural divisions (Mortenson and Hodge, 2011, p. 96). However, neither Genesis nor any other biblical book suggests that these *tôlēdôt* statements function as compositional markers. Where the word *tôlēdôt* appears elsewhere in the canon of the Old Testament (Exodus 6:16, 19; 28:10; Numbers 1:20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42; 3:1; Ruth 4:18; 1 Chronicles 5:7; 7:2, 4, 9; 8:28; 9:9, 34; 26:31), never is there any evidence that it is being used to demarcate a section of text as belonging to a particular writer. Indeed, in some cases, such a notion does not even fall within the realm of possibility. For example, Ruth 4:18 mentions the "*tôlēdôt* of Perez," an individual dead long before the events recorded in the book of Ruth transpired. Perez could not have written any portion of Ruth, which means the "*tôlēdôt* of Perez," despite having an identical structure to the *tôlēdôt* statements found in Genesis, is not the mark of the author. Consequently, the tablet model understands *tôlēdôt* in Genesis in a manner different from how it is used in the rest of the Old Testament.

3 (**3**) The tablet model purportedly accounts for why the proposed sections of Genesis seem to read as self-contained units; for example, the "*tôlēdôt* of Noah's sons," is said to read like a ship's log (Mortenson and Hodge, 2011, p. 97; cf. Mitchell, 2012). However, it does not follow that just because a section of text reads well as a self-contained unit that it is attributable to a different author than the surrounding text. For example, the shameful account of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 reads quite well as a self-contained unit, in many senses insulated from the larger Joseph narrative that precedes and follows it (Genesis 37, 39–50). However, proponents of the tablet model who regard Genesis 37:2–Exodus 1:1 (or 1:6) as representing the contents of a single tablet written by Joseph and his brothers (e.g., Morris, 1976, p. 30; cf. Sewell, 2010), do not posit that Genesis 38 existed as a separate account before being added to the contents of chapters 37 and 39–50. Given this inconsistency, it is incorrect to say that the ability for a section of text to be read as a self-contained unit automatically makes it an independent text.

Furthermore, it is necessary to point out that not all of the suspected "self-contained" textual units are in fact as self-contained as they appear. Some of them are tied together by lexical and thematic threads which, though easy to overlook, are integral to the text. For example, *according to the textual divisions established by Wiseman*, Noah's son Shem (Hebrew שֵׁם), whose name literally means "name," appears quite conspicuously for the first time in the "*tôlēdôt* of Noah" (Genesis 6:10; 9:18; cf. 9:26–27). The "*tôlēdôt* of Shem" notes the families descending from Shem (Genesis 10:21–31); and then the seemingly isolated Babel account, showcases the Hebrew שֵׁם, where those responsible for constructing the tower say to themselves, "Now let us make for ourselves a name (שֵׁם)…" (Genesis 11:4). The prominence of Shem then continues into the "*tôlēdôt* of Terah," where he is featured at the head of the genealogical record (Genesis 11:10–11). And finally, in a unique theological twist, in the next *tôlēdôt* unit, God promises Abram, "And I will make your name great (וַאֲגַדְּלָה שְׁמֶךָ)." This unambiguous allusion points back to the account of Babel: Whereas man's attempt to make for himself a name (שֵׁם) was doomed to failure, God is capable of making for the one He had chosen, not only a *name*, but even a *great name*. This allusion reinforces theologically the lexical link between the individual narratives and genealogies afforded by the word שֵׁם, thereby showing that even if Moses relied on written sources, the textual units of Genesis are not simply individual accounts strung end to end. Rather, the book of Genesis is a grand, unified literary masterpiece, with its constituent narratives and genealogies meaningfully tied together. It is, as John Sailhamer (1990, p. 5) rightly describes it, "a carefully wrought account of Israel's early history," and, as Kenneth Mathews (1996, p. 25) fittingly states,

an "unmistakably coherent, unified story line."[14]

4 (4) The tablet model allegedly represents the best understanding of the reference to "the book (סֵפֶר) of the generations of Adam" (Morris, 1995, p. 17; Ham, 1987, p. 162; Hodge, 2013, p. 228; etc.). The word *sēp̄er* refers to an "inscription," "something written" (Koehler and Baumgartner, 2001, p. 766). It is, as Umberto Cassuto notes, a loan-word from Akkadian that "denoted a missive that was *sent* from one place to another" and subsequently came to be used to refer to anything in writing (Cassuto, 1961, p. 273). It could be used of any document, regardless of length, provided it was complete in itself (Leupold, 1942, p. 230). For example, in Deuteronomy 24:1 it is used of a certificate of divorce; in Jeremiah 32:12 it is used of a title deed. It is thus readily acknowledged that *sēp̄er* in Genesis 5:1 may possibly refer to a source text of some kind.[15]

For the sake of argument, it will be assumed that Genesis 5:1 has in view such an external reference. However, this concession that it notes a source text does not automatically support the tablet model as it relates to the composition of Genesis as a whole. If Moses as the compiler of Genesis deliberately referred to the *sēp̄er* of the *tôlēdôt* of Adam in order to indicate special dependence upon a written source in transcribing that particular section of text (according to Wiseman, Genesis 2:5–5:2), then one must wonder why, if in copying the other sections of Genesis from their respective source texts, Moses did not also use *sēp̄er* in conjunction with their respective *tôlēdôt* markers. That the *tôlēdôt* marker in Genesis 5:1 goes out of its way to indicate the presence of an underlying written source by use of the word *sēp̄er* conversely suggests that it is uncertain whether markers without *sēp̄er* have dependence upon underlying written sources. Thus Genesis 5:1 is poor support for the tablet model because it singles out one section of Genesis as distinct from all the others, signaling by its unique alteration of the normal formula that the section is likewise unique in its dependence upon written source material.[16] But whether or not Genesis 5:1 does truly refer to a source outside the text will be explored in point number 6 below.

5 (5) The tablet model supposedly best accounts for why Genesis 26:5 speaks of Abraham keeping the "charge" (מִשְׁמֶרֶת), "commandments" (מִצְוֹת), "statutes" (חֻקּוֹת), and "laws" (תּוֹרוֹת) of the Lord. In particular, since חֻקּוֹת typically refers to a written commandment, it would seem that its use implies that Abraham had access to a written document containing God's laws (Livingston, 2003a). However, this interpretation isolates Genesis 26:5 from its literary context. The list of terms appearing in Genesis 26:5 is very similar to that which appears in Deuteronomy 11:1, where the whole Mosaic Law is in view. Moreover, the individual terms appear regularly throughout the legal literature of the Old Testament (cf. Ross, 1985, p. 71). Consequently, while it is hypothetically possible that the text has in view some written ethical standard that God had revealed to the great patriarch, it more probably is a reference to the Mosaic Law. Indeed, Morris conceded this point rather than attempting to press this verse into service in an effort to construct his argument for the tablet model (Morris, 1976, p. 419). Commenting on this passage, Sailhamer notes, "Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as obedience to God's statutes, commandments, and laws. Abraham could not have 'kept the Sinai law' in a literal sense, as it had not been given until the time of Moses (cf. Ex 15:25b). Abraham lived a life of faith, and God counted that to him as his 'keeping the law' (cf. Gen 15:6)" (Sailhamer, 2009, p. 244). Taking Genesis within the context of the Pentateuch, it is most reasonable to conclude with the NET Bible that the author here "elaborated on the simple report of Abraham's obedience by using terms with which the Israelites were familiar" (cf. Waltke with Fredricks, 2001, p. 368). The purpose of Genesis 26:5 is thus far more profound than a passing reference to an earlier source text. As Mathews rightly observes, "By employing covenant terminology, the author depicts the complete obedience of Abraham as the ideal for Israel in the land who must observe the provisions of the Sinaitic covenant (e.g., Lev 26:3; Deut 4:40; 30:16)" (Mathews, 2005, p. 405; cf. Ross, 1985, p. 71).

6 (6) The tablet model purportedly best explains the origin of Genesis in light of biblical parallels, which show that historical narrative texts commonly

[14] As for the notion that the account of the Genesis Flood reads like a ship's log, the fact is that Genesis 6:9–9:29 reads nothing like a captain's account of a sea voyage, which would have been concerned exclusively with onboard affairs. By contrast, the Flood account includes virtually no details of life on board the ark but repeatedly addresses geological and meteorological activity outside the ark (e.g., Genesis 7:17–24) that would have been entirely unknown to Noah.

[15] See especially Alter (1996, p. 23), Cassuto (1961, p. 273), Kidner (1967, p. 80), Leupold (1942, p. 230), Von Rad (1961, p. 68), Waltke with Fredricks (2001, p. 24), and Wenham (1987, pp. 126–27). For different perspectives on Genesis 5:1, see Ramban (1971, p. 96) and Fretheim (1994, p. 380).

[16] It is common for departures from normal formulas to be indicative of something especially significant in the text. For example, the miraculous taking of Enoch (Genesis 5:24) is highlighted by a conspicuous departure from the expected refrain that appears throughout Genesis 5: "And he died."

depended upon written source material (Morris, 1976, pp. 25–26). It is true that historical narrative passages often relied upon written source material. For example, Numbers 21:14 speaks of "the book of the wars of YHWH"; in Joshua 10:13 is mentioned "the book of Jashar"; the writer of 1 and 2 Kings repeatedly alludes to "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" and "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah." The point here is not to determine what these books were (for they are not extant) but rather simply to acknowledge that dependence upon written sources was common in the writing of the Bible's historical records. However, in all the passages mentioned above, various source citation formulae are employed: an introductory phrase or particle such as עַל־כֵּן "on account of this [preposition + anaphoric particle]/hence," or הֲלֹא , "is it not [interrogative particle + negative expecting positive answer]/indeed [asseverative particle]," or הִנֵּה, "indeed [presentative particle to be understood asseveratively]"; a statement that it is a citation, either אמר, "to say," or כתב, "to write," or עַל־דִּבְרֵי, "on the words"; the actual name of the source; and finally, sometimes a short quote from the source, after which the passage resumes as before. Moses, in Numbers 21:14, uses these conventions: "Hence it is said in the Book/Record of the Wars of YHWH: 'Waheb in Suphah and the wadis: Arnon.'" This, in some difficult to understand way, is meant by Moses to support his previous statement about the placement of the border of Moab. It is clearly a reference to an external source (whether oral or written), because after the statement, the passage continues as it did before, chronicling the travels of Israel. Shortly after this time, Joshua also employs these stylistic formulae: "Indeed, is it not written in the Book/Record of Jashar (Yashar)?" Here כְּתוּבָה, a Qal passive participle feminine singular of the root כתב ("to write") and סֵפֶר ("record") occur together. The Record of Yashar is expressly described as a written external record. Obviously, therefore, Joshua is there citing something that was written down at the time about the battle on the miraculously long day.[17]

Persons of note kept records of various types, as well. Annals for King David (1 Chronicles 27:24), perhaps his personal records; Annals of Samuel the Seer; Annals of Nathan the Prophet; Annals of Gad the Seer (1 Chronicles 29:29), which together could be 1 and 2 Samuel; Annals of the Kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:19), which is not extant; Annals of Shemaiah the Prophet (2 Chronicles 12:15); and an unnamed record that contains "the words of the seers who spoke to him [Manasseh]" (2 Chronicles 33:18) are all examples.[18]

What is seen in Genesis is nothing at all like these. Why would Moses not use the citation conventions before quoting or paraphrasing *36 chapters* from other sources, namely the tablets handed down since Adam and the patriarchs? Although biblical authors sometimes did not cite their sources,[19] clearly Genesis 5:1 is not a source citation. This fact on its own does not definitely establish that the tablet model is invalid, but it does put it in serious doubt. If Moses wished to clearly indicate that he was using a written source, then why did he not cite his source here? Instead he used language that could just as easily (indeed more so) refer to the subsequent material in the passage. That is, *sēp̄er* in Genesis 5:1 refers to the genealogical record that is found in that chapter. Here, an idea needs to be introduced, concerning exophoric versus endophoric usage. The latter term speaks of circumstances in which the text refers to itself, either to a place earlier in the text (anaphoric) or a place after (cataphoric). The proponents of the tablet model make the unwarranted assumption that "this is the book/record" is *necessarily* exophoric (a reference to an external source). But more likely, *sēp̄er* refers to the genealogical record that is found in Genesis 5. Therefore, although an unnamed and uncited external source is not impossible, it is much more likely that this statement is endophoric with the rest of Genesis 5 in view, or that it includes all ten generations to Genesis 9:28.

7 (7) The tablet model demonstrates the high intelligence of early man, who was able to express his thoughts in coherent literature (Morris, 1995, p. 17; Ham, 1987, p. 162; Lubenow, 2004, p. 324; Mortenson and Hodge, 2011, p. 97; etc.). This is a point insisted on by some, with the implication sometimes being that rejection of the tablet model—or, specifically, of Adam's authorship of the material preceding Genesis 5—is tantamount to embracing an "evolutionary" perspective on early man (Hodge, 2013, p. 228). However, a multiplicity of

[17] It is evident from its reference in 2 Samuel 1:18 that this record was still being kept when David's lament, "The Bow," was added to it on the occasion of the death of Saul and Jonathan: "And he said to teach the Sons of Judah 'Bow.' Indeed, it is written on the Book/Record of Yashar."

[18] In addition, several times the author of 1 and 2 Chronicles cites the biblical book of 1 and 2 Kings as his source (2 Chron. 16:11; 25:26; 27:7; 28:26; 32:32 [which also mentions the biblical book of Isaiah]; 35:27; 36:8). For no easily explainable reason, sometimes the source is called the Record of the Kings of Judah and Israel and sometimes the Record of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

[19] For example, the author of 1 and 2 Chronicles mentions in 2 Chronicles 20:34 that a portion of the Annals of Hanani the Son of Jehu was incorporated into the Record of the Kings of Israel, which may be the biblical book of 1 and 2 Kings.

passages demonstrate the intelligence of early man. Genesis 4 indicates that early man was an inventor of musical instruments (v. 21), as well as a user of bronze and iron implements (v. 22). Genesis 6 indicates that Noah was able to build an enormous seaworthy vessel. Genesis 11, though describing it in the context of man's rebelliousness, mentions that early man was capable of achieving notable architectural feats. In view of these passages, it is clear that the defense of the intelligence of early man does not hinge on the tablet model. The tablet model, therefore, deserves to be evaluated *on its own merit* (whether biblical, historical, or literary), rather than on its perceived ability to serve as a "safeguard" against the adoption of a secular, evolutionary perspective.[20]

(8) Finally, the tablet model supposedly places the original recording of the content of Genesis 1–11 long prior to the development of polytheistic pagan myths, such as the Babylonian creation story (*Enūma Elish*) and the flood legend (the *Epic of Gilgamesh*). Accordingly, the tablet model militates against any suspicion of Genesis being influenced by or borrowing from these pagan myths (Lubenow, 2004, p. 324; Mitchell, 2012; cf. Chaffey, 2014). However, the fact remains that the record of Genesis is quite obviously distinct from contemporaneous pagan mythology in terms of its content. Consequently, the tablet model need not be invoked in order to "rescue" Genesis from the charge of dependence upon the polytheistic ancient Near Eastern (ANE) myths. Furthermore, placing the composition of the content of Genesis roughly in the same time as its characters—rather than in the time of Moses—ignores the conspicuousness of the polemical features of Genesis, which would have been targeted at the well-known pagan myths *circulating in the day of Moses*. Speaking specifically of the Genesis creation account and the ANE creation myths, Steven Boyd notes that in comparing the two, scholars often "emphasize the similarities, and draw conclusions based on them." He says, however, that "this is a flawed approach, because it ignores the fact that it would be the atypical nature of the Genesis account that would attract the attention of the original readers." It is these "atypical" features, Boyd argues, "which makes the Genesis account into a polemic against the ANE texts" (Boyd, 2008, p. 188).[21]

John Currid makes a similar point with respect to the distinctions between the Genesis Flood account and the ANE

[20] Creationist Kurt Wise conjectures whether, given the intelligence of early man, dependence upon written records in writing Genesis would have even been necessary. He submits that the tremendously long lifespans and sharp minds of the antediluvian ancestors facilitated the reliable oral transmission of the content that was incorporated into the book of Genesis. Assuming that the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are closed, there would need to be only about eight or nine transmissions from Adam to Moses (Wise, 2002, pp. 16–17). Oral transmission would also avoid the problem of Moses having to depend on pre-Babel texts in writing the early chapters of Genesis. Objections might be raised against the reliability of oral transmission due to supposed shortcomings in the ability of the human mind to memorize large quantities of material. However, while the memorization of vast quantities of Scripture is largely foreign to most evangelical Christians living in the West, it is commonplace in the Jewish community, in which many know large sections—if not all—of the Torah.

[21] Boyd specifies three main distinctions between the Genesis creation account and the ANE texts: (1) the distinction between the Lord and the ANE deities; (2) the distinction with respect to the nature of creation; and (3) the distinction between the mythical quality of the ANE texts and the patently anti-mythological nature of the Genesis account. On point 1, Boyd lists five main differences: "First, the Lord is self-existent and eternal; the ANE gods are born from eternal matter. Second, the Lord is uncreated; the ANE gods are created in some way. Third, the existence of the Lord is neither proved nor asserted but rather assumed; in the ANE texts the focus is on theogany (the origin of the gods). Fourth, the Lord is separate from His creation; the ANE gods are deified natural forces. And fifth, the Lord is an unopposed sovereign Creator; the ANE texts feature battles among the gods after which the victor creates" (Boyd, 2008, p. 188). Similarly, on point 2, Boyd offers six specific areas of distinction: First, "The Lord created by fiat and unopposed action; the ANE gods, by birth, battle, magic, and opposed action." Second, "The Lord created from no preexistent matter; the gods, from eternal matter and vanquished foes." Third, "The Lord created in a sequence of days; the gods—there is no analogy." Fourth, "The Lord purposefully progressed in His creation toward the creation of man; the gods created man as an afterthought." Fifth, "The Lord created man deliberately and personally; the gods created man from the entrails of a vanquished foe… (as in *Enūma Elish*) or … from one of the lower hierarchy of gods… (as in *Atra-ʿasīs*)." Finally, sixth, "The Lord blessed man and placed him as vice-regent over the natural realm; the ANE texts have man subservient to the nature gods and terrified of them" (Boyd, 2008, p. 189). On point 3, Boyd notes that the anti-mythological character of Genesis is evidenced especially in mentioning no struggle between competing deities, and in the preexistence of the Creator rather than matter (Boyd, 2008, p. 189).

flood legends. Speaking of the author of Genesis, he states, "His presentation of the flood account not only relays the event in a historical manner; it also contains harsh and radical rebukes of the pagan myths. These taunts are often subtle, but they are purposeful" (Currid, 2013, p. 61). One of the key emphases of this polemic embedded in the Genesis Flood narrative is to show that the Lord is in full control of the event; by contrast, the ANE deities were frightened by the deluge, which they had let get out of hand. As Currid states, "These pagan deities are at the mercy of nature, whereas Yahweh presides over nature with full command" (Currid, 2013, p. 62; cf. Psalm 29:10). So too, the Genesis account functions to display the sovereignty of the Lord; by contrast, the ANE myths show the gods as dependent upon man, needing the food of man's sacrifices to satisfy their very human-like hunger (Currid, 2013, pp. 62–63).

Additional features in the text of Genesis that function as polemics against the ANE accounts can be pointed out; however, the one mentioned here makes the point well. To assume the tablet model and to assert that most or all of Genesis was written in the time of its characters rather than in the time of Moses (i.e., prior to the ANE myths) is to miss entirely the thrust of Genesis's polemical features. Thus, not only is the tablet model not needed to "rescue" the book of Genesis from the charge of reliance upon the ANE accounts, but it undermines the textual clues that actually show how Genesis asserts its true theology over against the ANE myths.

IV. Problems with the Tablet Model

Having set forth the arguments used in support of the tablet model and, having shown them to be unconvincing, unfounded, or even detrimental, this paper will now turn to the discussion of additional problems incurred by the tablet model. Eight problems are noted here.

1 (**1**) The tablet model makes Moses out to be merely the compiler rather than the author of the book of Genesis. However, this notion lacks biblical support. Given the biblical evidence, it is appropriate for the reader to assume that Genesis shares the same author as the rest of the Pentateuch. The other books of the Pentateuch forcefully testify to their Mosaic authorship (Exodus 17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:27; Numbers 33:1–2; Deuteronomy 31:9, 11). Similarly, other Old and New Testament books assume the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (cf. Joshua 1:7–8; 8:31–32; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11–13; Malachi 4:4; Matthew 19:8; Mark 10:4; 12:26; John 5:46–47; 7:19; Acts 3:22; Romans 10:5; Hebrews 10:28). The Bible does not speak specifically of *Genesis* as having been authored by Moses; however, as Kidner rightly observes, the Bible "seems to imply for Genesis a similar relation between substance and final shape as it implies for the rest of the books: that is, that the material is from Moses" (Kidner, 1967, p. 15). Also, as Kidner states, "It seems artificial, for instance, to exclude Genesis from our Lord's dictum, 'Moses… wrote of me' (Jn. 5:46) and from His Emmaus exposition 'beginning from Moses' (Lk. 24:27; *cf.* 44). Such a distinction would have occurred to none of the original readers of the Gospels" (Kidner, 1967, p. 15).[22]

Regardless then of whatever arguments are made, the fact remains that Scripture provides no direct evidence for any "original" (pre-Mosaic) author(s) of Genesis. Nor does Scripture suggest that Moses was anything other than an author, in the normal sense of the word, rather than a compiler. It is one thing to say that Moses used sources in writing Genesis, much as this paper was written using sources. Other books of Scripture used sources in the same way. However, it is quite another thing to say, as the tablet model does, that Moses was merely a *collector* of earlier texts, stringing them together end to end and repeating their words "verbatim" (Wiseman, 1977, p. 73). Given this definition of reliance upon sources, it would be very hard to call Moses the "author" of Genesis.[23] Consequently, the tablet model suffers from going beyond the plain statements of Scripture (contra 1 Corinthians 4:6) in explaining the provenance of Genesis. This fact alone ought to exclude all dogmatism when it comes to considering the tablet model as an explanation for the composition of Genesis. Even *if* the view is judged to be a viable option, it can never, as Hodge (2013, p. 228) insinuates, be established with the kind of dogmatic certainty afforded by the authoritative statement, "Thus saith the Lord."

2 (**2**) The tablet model overlooks the internal evidence of the book of Genesis, which attests to its writing in the time of Moses. If Genesis was written by the individuals whose lives it details (namely the patriarchs), then it would be expected that the text would evidence details consistent with that. Geographical and cultural details in the Genesis account would fit with the lives and times of the patriarchs, rather than Moses. This means that the details should

[22] Moreover, such a distinction would have omitted from the Lord's great overview of what was written of Him both the protoevangelium and the promises to Abraham. The expression "Beginning from Moses" implies beginning from the beginning of the Scriptures, not beginning from Exodus or Genesis 37:2b.

[23] Scripture does note the presence of collectors and distinguishes them from the author(s). For example, Proverbs 25:1 refers to those who copied some of the proverbs of Solomon.

evidence familiarity with the land of Canaan and (until the Joseph narrative, at least) less so with the land of Egypt. However, particular geographical details in the text betray the fact that the author of Genesis was probably not a resident of Canaan. Speaking of the Pentateuch as a whole, Gleason Archer maintains that whereas the geography of Egypt and Sinai is "very familiar" to the author of the Pentateuch, "the geography of Palestine is comparatively unknown except by patriarchal tradition (in the Genesis narratives)" (Archer, 2007, p. 96). More specifically, he notes, "Even in Gen. 13, when the author wishes to convey to his audience some notion of the lush verdure of the Jordan plain, he compares it to 'the land of Egypt as thou goest unto Zoar' (v. 10), referring to a locality near Mendes, midway between Busiris and Tanis in the Delta" (Archer, 2007, p. 96). A similar case can be made for Genesis 33:18, which, speaking of the city of Shechem, notes that it "is in the land of Canaan." Clearly, if this text had been written by one of the patriarchs (presumably Jacob, if Wiseman's attributions are correct), there would have been no need for this explanatory note; they were, after all, familiar with Canaan. These references make more sense if the text was written by someone who was an outsider to the land of Canaan—namely Moses.[24]

Similarly, cultural details intertwined with the vocabulary of the text itself suggest that the author of Genesis was a native of Egypt (Moses) rather than Canaan (the patriarchs). The author shows considerable familiarity with Egyptian protocol, and this is not limited to the Joseph narrative. Notably, it is an Egyptian loanword that says the most about whether the text is Mosaic versus pre-Mosaic. In Genesis 12:10–20, the text describes how, as the result of a famine in Canaan, Abram sojourned in Egypt, where he had less-than-favorable interactions with Pharaoh (vv. 15, 17, 18, 20). As Gordon Wenham observes, "Pharaoh is the Hebrew equivalent of Egyptian *pr-o* 'great house.' In the Old and Middle Kingdom periods, it retains this basic meaning, 'royal palace,' but from the eighteenth dynasty onward (from *ca*. 1500 B.C.) it denotes the Egyptian king himself. This verse's terminology, 'house of Pharaoh,' then reflects the usage of the term in the writer's period rather than the patriarchal age" (Wenham, 1987, p. 289). Even the various attempts made by creationists at revising the Egyptian chronology cannot be called upon to evade this argument, because, if anything, these attempts move Egypt's eighteenth dynasty *later* rather than earlier (see, e.g., Ashton and Down, 2006). And while it might be proposed that Genesis 12 has seen thorough editing by Moses, this hardly seems to fit with Wiseman's assertion that Moses "regards the old wording as so sacred that he avoids making unnecessary alterations to the text even to modernize words," and "leaves the original ancient expressions and place names just as he finds them, though they are no longer in use" (Wiseman, 1977, p. 73).

(3) The tablet model essentially ignores the inimitable doctrinal consistency and uniform theological message of Genesis, which points to a single author who carefully engineered the whole work, rather than many contributors who wrote independently of one another. Unfortunately, in emphasizing the component parts rather than the whole, the tablet model follows all too closely in the footsteps of the documentary hypothesis, being more concerned with the sources of the text than the message of the final form, and overlooking the theological strands that connect and bind together the different narrative units.[25]

The compositional unity of the book of Genesis is evidenced by the key words and repeated theological themes that are woven throughout the book. Had the book been the product of many authors, the presence of these key words and repeated themes would be truly remarkable. However, as it is,

[24] It might be assumed that these statements represent editorial remarks added to the existing text by Moses. This is within the realm of possibility—at least in these two cases (although Lubenow, ironically, omits them from his list of texts that he claims display evidence of editorial updating). However, the simpler explanation is that Moses authored the respective passages surrounding these verses, which accounts for why the text reads so smoothly and consistently.

[25] T. Desmond Alexander warns against the influences of this kind of approach: "As regards the book of Genesis, modern critical methods have increased, rather than lessened, this tendency to fragment the text. Scholarly endeavors to discover the sources underlying Genesis have resulted in apparently unified narratives being viewed as composite. Interest in the final form of the text has given way to a detailed scrutiny of the component parts which are believed to underlie it. Many commentators excel at being able to reduce Genesis to various documents and/or editorial strands, without adequately appreciating that in the process they do not shed much, if any, light on the received form of the text" (Alexander, 1993, p. 256). Although surely not as destructive as the varieties of source and form criticism employed by liberal scholarship that denies altogether the involvement of Moses in the composition of the Pentateuch, the promotion of the tablet model can have a similar effect as these views, creating, as Alexander states it, "the impression that individual episodes may be understood adequately without considering their relationship to the many other episodes which comprise the rest of the book" (Alexander, 1993, p. 256).

they suggest one mind responsible for composing the book of Genesis as a unified work. Alexander argues that one of the principle themes of Genesis is that which is conveyed by the Hebrew word זֶרַע (*zera*‘ "seed").[26] He notes, "When Genesis is viewed as a whole it is very apparent that the genealogical structure [of the book, often signaled by *tôlēdôt*] and the concept of 'seed' are closely linked in order to highlight a single, distinctive, family lineage" (Alexander, 1993, p. 260; cf. 2002, p. 105). Ross identifies another major theological theme, "blessing," signaled by the Hebrew root ברך (*brk*).[27] On the concept of blessing in Genesis, Ross notes, "The entire book turns on this motif and its antithetical motif, cursing" (Ross, 1988, p. 65). Interestingly, these two themes—"seed" and "blessing"—are themselves intertwined in Genesis, a fact that is showcased in God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 17: It is God's blessing that gives the seed to the patriarch and then provides land and dominion to the promised seed (cf. Ross, 1988, pp. 65–66). In both cases, the way these themes are used to link together different portions of the book of Genesis evidences a truly masterful compositional strategy.

While it is certainly incorrect to think that the mere presence of these themes somehow indicates that Genesis does not employ sources, it is equally incorrect to think that the presence of these themes, when it is considered how they function in the book of Genesis, allows for the text to have been nothing more than a compilation of source material. On the contrary, the grand theological motifs appearing throughout the book that tie together the Creation, Fall, Flood, and patriarchal narratives suggest an elaborate compositional scheme. The narrative units of Genesis are not merely strung together but have been carefully interwoven according to the strategy of the text's author, who deliberately sought to highlight and progressively develop particular theological subjects of monumental significance (cf. Davis, 1975, p. 26).[28]

Other, more subtle, thematic and theological connections exist that further show that the book of Genesis was not composed in a piecemeal fashion. (On this point, see especially the observations by Sailhamer, 1990, noted in the appendix.) Additionally, the *tôlēdôt* structure of the book itself demonstrates that the author of Genesis was very calculating in how he presented the contents of the book, carefully crafting each individual narrative and judiciously tying them all together in order to advance his intended purpose and theme (see point 4 below).

(4) The tablet model necessitates reading the *tôlēdôt* markers of Genesis as colophons rather than transitional headings, but this is unsustainable. Jason DeRouchie (2013) has outlined four lines of evidence showing that the *tôlēdôt* markers must be read as transitional headings, which will be surveyed here. First, some of the *tôlēdôt* markers cannot logically be understood to pertain to the information that precedes them. While it might be appropriate to take the "*tôlēdôt* of Adam" (Genesis 5:1) or the "*tôlēdôt* of Jacob" (Genesis 37:2) as describing the material that immediately precedes the marker, the "*tôlēdôt* of Ishmael" (Genesis 25:12) surely cannot be thought to include all of the Abrahamic narrative (Genesis 11:28–25:11). So too, the "*tôlēdôt* of Isaac" is not a fitting description for the genealogical information of Ishmael's descendants (Genesis 25:12–18). Likewise the "*tôlēdôt* of Esau" hardly describes the textual unit that precedes Genesis 36:1 (which is all about Jacob); rather, it serves well as a heading for the genealogical material for the descendants of Esau, which follows in Genesis 36:2–43.[29]

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[26] The Hebrew *zera*‘ appears 59 times in the book of Genesis, compared with 170 in the rest of the Old Testament. See Genesis 1:11 (2x), 12 (2x), 29 (2x); 3:15 (2x); 4:25; 7:3; 8:22; 9:9; 12:7; 13:15, 16 (2x); 15:3, 5, 13, 18; 16:10; 17:7 (2x), 8, 9, 10, 12, 19; 19:32, 34; 21:2, 13; 22:17 (2x), 18; 24:7, 60; 26:3, 4 (3x); 28:4, 13, 14 (2x); 32:12; 35:12; 38:8, 9 (2x); 46:6, 7; 47:19, 23, 24; 48:4, 11, 19. As is evident from this list, *zera*‘ has a fairly even distribution across the various narratives that comprise the book of Genesis.

[27] See Genesis 1:22, 28; 3:3; 5:2; 9:1, 26; 12:2, 3 (3x); 14:19 (2x), 20; 17:16 (2x), 20; 18:18; 22:17 (2x), 18; 24:1, 11, 27, 31, 35, 48, 60; 25:11; 26:3, 4, 12, 24, 29; 27:4, 7, 10, 19, 23, 25, 27 (2x), 29 (2x), 30, 31, 33 (2x), 34, 38, 41; 28:1, 3, 6 (2x), 14; 30:3, 27, 30; 32:1, 27, 30; 35:9; 39:5; 47:7, 10; 48:3, 9, 12, 15, 16, 20 (2x); 49:25, 28 (2x); 50:23. As with *zera*‘, *brk* has an even distribution across the various narratives that comprise the book of Genesis.

[28] On this point, the author would like to thank a reviewer who added, "The selection of those few episodes from the long lives of the patriarchs which clearly show that YHWH is fulfilling His promises to Abraham and demonstrating the measure of compliance of Abraham and his descendants to the covenant expectations proves that the book was written by one hand. It is beyond ludicrous to suppose that the material putatively individually recorded on tablets when assembled would contain exactly what was needed to advance the theological purposes of the book as it does."

[29] According to Morris (1976, p. 26), Isaac and Jacob were both responsible for obtaining the brief genealogical records from Ishmael and Esau, respectively, and incorporating them into their own accounts. But this is an *ad hoc* explanation that still fails to explain the anomalous appearance of the *tôlēdôt* markers at the *beginning* rather than the *end* of those particular records.

Second, the appearances of *tôlēdôt* outside of the book of Genesis show its consistency in use as a heading rather a colophon. Nowhere in the Bible does *tôlēdôt* clearly refer to what precedes, and often it *must* refer to what follows (cf. Ross, 1988, p. 72). Two examples make this clear. First, in Numbers 3:1, the "*tôlēdôt* of Aaron and Moses" cannot conclude the census of Numbers 1–2 but must function as an introduction to the high priest's lineage (vv. 2–4). Second, in Ruth 4:18, the "*tôlēdôt* of Perez" necessarily introduces the genealogy that follows rather than concluding the preceding account. These two examples suggest that the *tôlēdôt* markers in Genesis ought to be read in the same fashion; that is, as transitional headings rather than as colophons.

Third, the very meaning of *tôlēdôt* requires that the markers be taken as headings rather than colophons. The Hebrew תּוֹלֵדוֹת derives from the Hiphil stem of the root ילד (*yld*), which means "to bear," "to beget," or "to bring forth." Consequently, it is fitting that *tôlēdôt* markers relate to the *descendants* of the person mentioned rather than to the person himself. The *tôlēdôt* of Adam (Genesis 5:1) describes the descendants of Adam; the *tôlēdôt* of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Genesis 10:1) describes their descendants, and so forth (cf. DeRouchie, 2013, p. 224).

Admittedly, some of the *tôlēdôt* headings seem to serve as signals that the account to follow concerns the life of the individual mentioned (e.g., the "*tôlēdôt* of Noah" in Genesis 6:9), rather than that individual's descendants. However, this is the exception rather than the rule. And even in the case of the "*tôlēdôt* of Noah," Noah's sons are in the immediate context (Genesis 6:10), so the textual unit *does* concern them. Additionally, even the unusual "*tôlēdôt* of the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 2:4) functions better to describe the account that follows rather than that which precedes. DeRouchie observes, "It must point ahead to that which is immediately derived from the heavens and the earth—that is, humanity, shaped out of the ground and by the breath of God (Gen 2:7); a crafty serpent as a personification of all that is evil and created by God (3:1); toil, growing out of a world cursed by its Creator due to sin (3:17–19; cf. Rom 8:20–21); and a human offspring of hope, considered a gift of God and a sure sign that the promised deliverer would come (Gen 4:25; cf. 3:15; 4:1)" (DeRouchie, 2013, p. 224; cf. Ross, 1988, p. 72).

Fourth, linguistic analysis suggests that the *tôlēdôt* markers function better as headings than colophons. When Hebrew verbless clauses containing a definite subject and predicate occur with demonstrative pronouns (in this case זֶה or אֵלֶּה), they usually serve as headings, pointing forward to something not yet mentioned (DeRouchie, 2013, p. 224; cf. Deuteronomy 1:1; 4:44–45). The argument by Taylor (1994, p. 210) that the demonstrative pronouns זֶה and אֵלֶּה are, in the book of Genesis, more often used anaphorically than cataphorically is rendered irrelevant because he did not take into account the grammatical constructions in which the pronouns appear.

In view of the fact that the *tôlēdôt* markers do not function as colophons, even if they indicate the existence of prior sources that Moses relied upon in writing Genesis, those sources *are not the sources required by the tablet model*. For example, if "the book of the *tôlēdôt* of Adam" (Genesis 5:1) functions not as a colophon but as a heading *and* indicates the existence of a prior source, that unit of text *could not have been written by Adam*. This conclusion is inevitable because of the simple fact that "the book of the *tôlēdôt* of Adam" contains all the biographical material running from Genesis 5:1 to Genesis 6:8 and, accordingly, must have been compiled after the death of Adam by someone living—at the earliest—in the time of Noah. This same type of problem is also incurred by a number of the other textual units. For example, the "*tôlēdôt* of Terah" extends all the way to Genesis 25:11, but Terah dies back in Genesis 11:32!

How, then, are the *tôlēdôt* markers to be understood? They are transitional devices that are absolutely integral to the fabric of Genesis as a whole. Each marker functions, as Mathews explains it, as a "linking device that ties together the former and the following units by echoing from the preceding material a person's name or literary motif and at the same time anticipating the focal subject of the next" (Mathews, 1996, pp. 33–34). The *tôlēdôt* markers in Genesis thus *act to bind the book together*. Mathews provides another analogy, saying that each marker functions "like a hinge that swings back, recalling the information in the prior section, and also swings forward by suggesting the topic in the section it introduces" (Mathews, 1996, p. 34).

DeRouchie describes the *tôlēdôt* headings similarly, defining them as "transitional headings that progressively direct the reader's focus from progenitor to progeny and narrow the reader's focus from all the world to Israel through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed" (DeRouchie, 2013, p. 225). The Creation account contained in Genesis 1:1–2:3 (which has no *tôlēdôt* heading) serves as the preface to Genesis and supplies the thematic or theological "keys" necessary to unlocking the meaning of the whole book of Genesis. Therefore, the opening narrative unit "provides the prefatory lens into the *toledot* units, with the blessing-commission of 1:28 playing a central role in the development and narrowing in the book" (DeRouchie, 2013, p. 226).

This purpose for the *tôlēdôt* markers naturally links back to the "seed" and "blessing" motifs previously discussed, again showing that the book of Genesis did not arise by stringing together nonrelated sources. The highlighting and progressive development of key

theological themes facilitated, in part, by the narrowing and focusing function of the transitional headings evidences a grand compositional strategy in place right from the beginning of the book. Mathews's conclusion quite fittingly describes this fact: "The formula as the framework of the Genesis collection is the book's strategy for declaring *its organic unity*—from the creation of the universe to the election of Israel's historical precursors. By this overarching pattern the composition's framework is historical genealogy, tying creation and human history in continuum. *The superscription then has a unifying effect*" (Mathews, 1996, p. 34, emphasis added).[30]

Table I.

Preface		*The Creation Account* (1:1–2:3)
Section 1	—	These are the *tôlēdôt* of the heaven and the earth (2:4–4:26)
Section 2	—	This is the *sēpēr* of the *tôlēdôt* of Adam (5:1–6:8)
Section 3	— *waw*	These are the *tôlēdôt* of Noah (6:9–9:29) *And* these are the *tôlēdôt* of the sons of Noah (10:1–11:9)
Section 4	— *waw* *waw* *waw* *waw*	These are the *tôlēdôt* of Shem (11:10–11:26) *And* these are the *tôlēdôt* of Terah (11:27–25:11) *And* these are the *tôlēdôt* of Ishmael (25:12–18) *And* these are the *tôlēdôt* of Isaac (25:19–35:29) *And* these are the *tôlēdôt* of Esau (36:1–8; 36:9–37:1)
Section 5	—	These are *tôlēdôt* of Jacob (37:2–50:26)

5 (5) The tablet model suggests that the accuracy of the record of Genesis is ensured because it comes directly from eyewitness accounts of the events described that were written down shortly after the events themselves occurred. By implication, therefore, the tablet model endorses (perhaps unwittingly) the notions (a) that an eyewitness account is necessary to ensure the reliable recording of a historical event, and (b) that only written documents are adequate to ensure the faithful transmission of a historical record. These points are generally true; however, in the case of Genesis, the doctrine of divine inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21) affords for a text which is accurate irrespective of whether or not the human author was an eyewitness of the events described. As stated previously, certain biblical narratives (e.g., Job 1–2) contain content that must have been written on the basis of direct revelation from God, as there was no human eyewitness of the events described.[31] Additionally, with respect to the faithful transmission of historical events, it is impossible to dismiss out of hand the possibility that oral transmission could have provided Moses with the material that he needed in order to compose the bulk of the book of Genesis (cf. Wise, 2002, p. 17). In any case, regardless of whatever compositional model is assumed, *at minimum* the text of Genesis 1:1–2:3 must have come about by means of divine inspiration apart from the involvement of any human eyewitness. Consequently, on the whole, the tablet model does not guarantee an inerrant text any better than do other compositional models and, given the doctrine of divine inspiration, it is really unnecessary.

6 (6) The tablet model assumes that Moses was capable of understanding and translating records predating the dispersion at Babel (i.e., the source tablets purportedly written by Adam, Noah, and Noah's sons; cf. Genesis 5:1; 6:9; 10:1). However, this undermines the significance of the linguistic confusion the Lord brought upon the human race in Genesis 11. Responding to this charge, Hodge (2013, pp. 231–39; cf. 2006) offers four possible explanations.[32]

[30] All the *tôlēdôt* markers function to organize the contents of Genesis, focusing the contents of the book and also narrowing the reader's focus, but not all of the *tôlēdôt* markers work in precisely the same way; some have a closer connection to the material in the preceding section than do others, which is signaled by the Hebrew conjunction ו (*waw*), where it fronts the formula אֵלֶּה תוֹלְדוֹת. DeRouchie (2013, pp. 232–33) notes, "While the five *toledot* units beginning without an explicit connector stand grammatically independent from the preceding material, the five *toledot* units fronted with the coordinate conjunction are intentionally linked to the *toledot* units that precede." He therefore sees five major sections in Genesis after the preface. See Table I.

[31] In response to the erroneous notion promoted centuries ago by John Gill that the בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים mentioned in Job 1–2 were human "professors of religion," it is worth noting that no Hebraist adopts such a strained view of the text. See on the meaning of בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים the article, "Is the 'Sons of God' Passage in Genesis 6 Adapted Pagan Mythology?" (Anderson, 2015).

[32] The four possibilities that Hodge offers are as follows: (1) The pre-Babel language survived the confusion introduced in Genesis 11 and became one of the post-Babel languages. In this case, either the Patriarchs or Moses would have been able to translate the pre-Babel records that came to be included in Genesis. (2) Knowledge of the pre-Babel language was retained by Noah and his immediate family. In this case, Noah or

However, Hodge does not, in setting forth these four explanations and the respective supporting arguments for each of them, interact with any relevant linguistic and theological scholarship. His "fallback" argument is that even if the pre-Babel tablets were humanly indecipherable, Moses could have enlisted divine assistance in translating them. Hodge asserts, "If there were any discrepancies, he would have had the all-knowing God, who invented the different languages, in his tent with him" (Hodge, 2013, p. 238).

If it is assumed that Moses translated by the aid of the Holy Spirit, there is no need for having the pre-Babel tablets in the first place. What is the purpose, after all, in distinguishing whether Moses wrote a new document by the aid of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Peter 1:21), or that he, in reliance on the Holy Spirit, "translated" old documents written in a long-lost language that he could not humanly comprehend? The difference is only a technical one, not a practical one, for in either case, the Spirit would be informing Moses of the things of old, and the pre-Babel records would serve no real purpose as far as Moses, the "translator," was concerned; Moses would not have actually *used* them.[33] In any case, the fact remains that the polished—and sometimes elaborate—style of the book of Genesis does not suggest that it is a translated work.[34]

(7) The tablet model asserts that Moses relied, not just on sources, but specifically on clay tablets. However, despite the bulk of Genesis having allegedly come from tablets, the Hebrew for "tablet" (לוּחַ) never once appears in Genesis in order to indicate the existence of previous source material. Notably, the one text commonly appealed to by proponents of the tablet model in order to support the idea of Moses' reliance upon prior sources (Genesis 5:1) uses סֵפֶר, the generic term for any sort of written document, rather than לוּחַ, which is specifically a tablet. However, if Moses had wanted to indicate his dependence on tablets, why did he not use לוּחַ? While it may be asserted that Isaiah 30:8 supplies evidence that לוּחַ and סֵפֶר have overlapping semantic ranges, this is not sufficient evidence to explain why, had the use of source *tablets* been so important in the writing of Genesis, Moses was not more specific so as to use לוּחַ. Moses' familiarity with the word for *tablet* is evidenced by its frequent appearance in his other writings (both

one of his sons translated the pre-Babel records, and Moses later incorporated the translated accounts into Genesis. (3) The pre-Babel language was completely lost at the confusion. And (4) the pre-Babel language was "subdivided" at Babel, with elements retained in all extant languages. Both 3 and 4 assume *either* the ability of post-Babel individuals to decipher the pre-Babel language in order to translate the records *or* that Moses was able to "translate" the pre-Babel records by the aid of the Holy Spirit.

[33] Arguments for "guilt by association" are rarely valid; however, in light of the preponderance of evidence already standing against the tablet model, it cannot hurt to mention this oddity: The idea of Moses "translating" pre-Babel texts he could not read except by the aid of the Holy Spirit sounds all too much like Joseph Smith "translating" the so-called "golden plates" by means of a seer stone. In neither case would the human "translator" have had any knowledge of the language of the source text, which makes the presence of the source text unnecessary to begin with.

[34] The elaborate intricacy displayed in Genesis 1 (which is, according to the tablet model, a translated piece) is commented on at length by Boyd: "The palistrophic structure (corresponding clauses form an ABCDD'C'B'A' or similar pattern) in Genesis 1:14–19 comprises eleven purpose clauses *a–k*. Six *(a, f* and *i–k)* are construed by ל + infinitive construct of three different verbal roots: 1) להבדיל 'to divide,' 2) להאיר 'to shine light,' and 3) למשׁל 'to rule.' Three *(b, c*, and *d)* are in verse 14b, 'for signs, for appointed times, for days and years.' Two *(g* and *h)* are imbedded in verse 16, 'the big light source for the *ruling* of the day and the small light source for the *ruling* of the night.' 'For ruling' in this verse is לממשׁלת, which is ל plus a noun from the verbal root of clause *j* (root 3). Finally, clause *e*, 'for light sources,' is connected to clause *f*, 'to shine light on the earth,' and thus, corresponds semantically to the latter" (Boyd, 2008, p. 190). He continues, "The clauses are arranged as follows: the last clause *(k)* clearly corresponds to the first *(a)*, because both have root 1 and they are semantically equivalent objects. We will call them therefore *a* and *a'*. Furthermore, the third *(f)* is identical to the third from last *(i)*. So they are *f* and *f'*. In addition, *g* and *h* are the same, enabling us to assign *g* to both. This leaves us *b*, *c* and *d*, and *j*. The schema, then, is as follows: *a* [*b*, *c* and *d*] *f g-g f'* [*j*] *a'*. That is, among the clauses corresponding to one another because they have identical roots, the *b*, *c* and *d* grouping is between the first and second and *j* is between the last and second to last. The result is that the precision of the author's meticulously crafted structure directs the reader to semantically equate *b*, *c* and *d* with *j*. And since *g* and *j* have the same root, we can thus understand the meaning of 'the big light source for the *ruling* of the day and the small light source for the *ruling* of the night'" (Boyd, 2008, pp. 190–91). The intricacy of this short passage (to say nothing of the rest of chapter 1) does not lead the reader to suspect that the text is a translation of another work. Its elaborate structure would likely not have survived intact through the translation process.

Exodus and Deuteronomy[35]), so there is no real reason for suggesting that he could not have used it to indicate his dependence upon source tablets in compiling Genesis.

(8) Finally, the tablet model leaves too many uncertainties unaddressed and too many questions unanswered. Regardless of how confident its proponents may be that the tablet model presents a satisfactory answer for how Moses could have written about historical events that occurred long before his time, the fact remains that there is a conspicuous vagueness to the model. For instance, how were the sources compiled prior to coming into the hands of Moses? Notably, there is an extra level of difficulty in explaining how the genealogical material from Ishmael and Esau in particular (cf. Genesis 25:12; 36:1) worked its way into the collection of tablets. How were the tablets kept during Israel's long sojourn in Egypt, and how did Moses come into possession of them? These are merely logistical issues; other, far more serious questions exist as well. For example, how would the original authors of the tablets that allegedly make up Genesis have known what to write in order to ensure such a high level of consistency in the tablets' message? Were the source tablets all individually inspired by God (cf. Wiseman, 1977, p. 73), or was Moses an "inspired" editor (cf. Hodge, 2013, p. 239)?[36] Answers submitted to these questions tend to be speculative, not concrete. However, the traditional view of the Mosaic authorship of Genesis is unhindered by the problems evidenced in these questions. Thus, if the tablet model is going to be proven correct, its proponents need to do a better job addressing these issues.[37]

V. Conclusions about the Tablet Model

This paper has traced the development of the tablet model and has shown how, beginning with Henry Morris, creationists have repeatedly advanced it as the most likely explanation for how Moses could have written about historical events that occurred before his time (section II). In doing so, it has examined the major arguments for the tablet model (section III) and found them to be wholly unconvincing, unfounded, and even detrimental. It has also outlined a plethora of additional problems incurred by the tablet model (section IV), demonstrating, among other things, that the model simply cannot account for the biblical data.

The weakness of the case submitted for the tablet model first by Wiseman and later by Harrison suggests that the adoption of the model into Morris's defense of biblical creationism was at best premature, if not ultimately detrimental.[38] Unfortunately, Morris's promotion of the model as the best explanation for the composition of Genesis set off a trend in the creationist community, such that *some* proponents of the model now tenaciously defend it as being necessitated by the biblical evidence. And this in spite of the fact that the tablet model is on such incredibly shaky ground when it is actually weighed against the scriptural data.

What, then, may be affirmed about the composition of Genesis? It may be stated, in accordance with the preponderance of biblical evidence, that it was authored by a single person—Moses. Certainly, Moses may have relied on sources (perhaps written, perhaps oral, perhaps both), but these sources are

[35] See Exodus 24:12; 27:8; 31:18 (2x); 32:15 (2x), 16 (2x), 19; 34:1 (3x), 4 (2x), 28, 29; 38:7; Deuteronomy 4:13; 5:22; 9:9 (2x), 10, 11 (2x), 15, 17; 10:1, 2 (2x), 3 (2x), 4, 5.

[36] This terminology is used by Hodge (2013, p. 239), who specifically states that "Moses was inspired as he wrote." However, this misrepresents the doctrine of inspiration. According to 2 Timothy 3:16, it is the text of Scripture, not the authors, that is inspired or "God-breathed"; the authors of Scripture were indeed guided by the Holy Spirit, but were not themselves "inspired" in the technical sense of the word. Thus, the question that presents itself is whether the original authors were Spirit-guided, or whether only the author of the final form of the text (Moses) was Spirit-guided.

[37] There are two other objections to the tablet model that deserve to be mentioned, but which cannot here be explored at length. First, the tablet model reduces the Joseph narrative in significance, leaving it as a "tacked-on" epilogue of sorts. However, the Joseph narrative is of great significance to the book of Genesis. Aside from the narrative itself, which continues and advances many theological themes of the book, there are the extremely important blessings of Jacob in chapter 49 (in particular v. 10). Second, the tablet model wholly discounts the reliability of the convention in the Jewish community to transmit the Scriptures orally. It is possible that the idea that the Lord would not depend on oral tradition to preserve the accounts of Genesis stems from a self-awareness on the part of its proponents that they could not do this. But the Jewish people do. And this is true of more than just the scholars.

[38] The repeated use of the word "detrimental" is here very intentional. Simply put, holding onto an obviously erroneous compositional theory allows for there to be aspersions cast on creationists' methodology and conclusions. An outsider could well reason if some creationists hold on to *this* exploded theory, what other antiquated and refuted ideas do they grasp with equal tenacity? In the end, this does great damage to creationists' theological, scientific, and intellectual credibility.

not identifiable in Genesis. Whatever sources Moses may have used have been thoroughly incorporated into the grand flow and overarching message of the book, much in the same way that a skilled modern author might interact with source material, weaving quotes and allusions into his own work without disrupting the flow and message of the piece he is writing (cf. Garrett, 2000, p. 99). As C. John Collins states, "We cannot say that there were no sources … but we are in a good position to say that whatever the process of stitching together, it shows high literary skill, producing a coherent whole" (Collins, 2006, p. 235).

As it has been demonstrated in this paper, the book of Genesis is a highly complex, polished literary work that does not read like an assembled or compiled text but rather as a unified, flowing, coherent account. It is a true literary masterpiece (cf. Boyd, 2008, p. 165). The *tôlēdôt* markers are devices used primarily for structural purposes (cf. DeRouchie, 2013, pp. 245–47); they do not evidence the boundaries of original source material.[39] Mathews is correct in saying, "What follows the catchphrase in the extant Genesis is not necessarily the material of the original source. *Thus we cannot possibly reconstruct the pre-Genesis sources with confidence as to their origins and contents*" (Mathews, 1996, p. 32, emphasis added).

Clearly, the *tôlēdôt* markers are integral to the compositional strategy of Genesis, functioning to focus the reader's attention on God's progressively unfolding plan and work—especially as it concerns a "seed" and a "blessing" (cf. Alexander, 1993, p. 260; Ross, 1988, pp. 65–66). Given this fact, it is best to conclude with Woudstra, "The author of Genesis… has himself given us a clue as to the composition of the book, a composition which suggests a well-thought-out plan. The *toledot* formulas have not been subsequently added to an already existing text, but are the very fabric around which the whole of Genesis has been constructed" (Woudstra, 1970, pp. 188–89).

What, then, can be said about the sources behind the content of Genesis? Garrett responds to this question quite effectively, stating, "Any attempt to isolate documents behind Genesis must remain hypothetical. Dogmatism is impossible here!" (Garrett, 2000, p. 81). This would be an excellent point for the creationist community to consider. Garrett continues, "The text, as it now stands, is in its present form because of the work of Moses…. One cannot assume that any passage in its present form is a word-for-word representation of the original source" (Garrett, 2000, p. 81). Indeed, in contrast to much of the creationist literature surveyed previously in this paper, it is this more reserved perspective—not the tablet model—that will permit for the continued construction of a robust and respectable defense of biblical creationism.

[39] Duane Garrett (2000, p. 81) makes this distinction in very bold (but helpful) terms: "Finding the sources of Genesis is not the same as identifying the structure of Genesis….The question of sources and the question of structure must not be confused."

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Appendix

Striking parallels and other obvious connections demonstrate that the book of Genesis is not comprised of disjointed narrative units strung together by a redactor, as the tablet model suggests. For example, the Creation/Fall and Flood narratives manifest many close parallels, with emphasis placed on the important themes of creation/re-creation (note, e.g., the formation of the land; Genesis 1:9–10; 8:3–5), divine blessing (Genesis 1:22, 28; 9:1), cursing (Genesis 3:14, 17; 9:25), and others (cf. Ross, 1988, p. 190). John Sailhamer proposes an intriguing extended parallel between the Abrahamic narrative and the Joseph/Exodus narratives. Although scholars

Table II.

Abraham	Joseph/Exodus
12:10 – Now there was a famine in the land	41:54 – Then there was famine in all the lands…
12:11 – When he came near to Egypt…	46:28 – And they came into the land of Goshen
12:11 – "I know that you…"	46:31 – Joseph said to his brothers…
12:11 – He said to Sarai his wife…	46:31 – "I will go up and tell Pharaoh…"
12:12 – "And when the Egyptians see you, they will say…"	46:33 – "When Pharaoh calls you and says…"
12:13 – "Say that…"	46:34 – "You shall say…"
12:13 – "That it may go well with me because of you…"	46:34 – "That you may live in the land of Goshen…"
12:15 – Pharaoh's officers saw her and praised her to Pharaoh	47:1 – Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh…
12:15 – And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house	47:6 – [Then Pharaoh said…] "Settle your father and brothers in the best of the land…"
12:16 – [Pharaoh] gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels	47:6 – "Put them in charge of my livestock" 47:27 – And they acquired property in [Goshen] and were fruitful and became very numerous
12:17 – But the LORD struck Pharaoh… with great plagues…	Exod. 11:1 – "One more plaque I will bring on Pharaoh…"
12:18 – Then Pharaoh called Abram and said…	12:31 – Then [Pharaoh] called for Moses and Aaron…
12:19 – "Take her and go"	12:32 – "Take… and go…"
12:20 – And they escorted him away…	12:33 – To send them out…
13:1 – So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev	12:37 – Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth…
13:1 – And Lot with him	12:38 – And a mixed multitude also went up with them…
13:2 – Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold	12:38 – Along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock 12:35 – Articles of silver and gold…
13:4 – [Abram returned] to the place of the altar… and there Abram called on the name of the LORD	12:11 – "The LORD's Passover"

debate the legitimacy of some points of the proposed parallel, the fact remains that it is unlikely that Sailhamer would have even been able to argue for such a parallel (or others like it) *were it not for Mosaic authorial unity*. Sailhamer writes, "The account of Abraham's 'sojourn' in Egypt bears the stamp of having been intentionally shaped to parallel the later account of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Gen 41–Exod 12). Both passages have a similar message as well. Thus here, at the beginning of the narratives dealing with Abraham and his seed, we find an anticipation of the events that will occur at the end" (Sailhamer, 1990, p. 116).

Sailhamer concludes, "By shaping the account of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt to parallel the events of the Exodus, the author permits the reader to see the implications of God's past deeds with his chosen people. The past is not allowed to stay in the past. Its lessons are drawn for the future. Behind the pattern stands a faithful, loving God. What he has done with Abraham, he will do for his people today and tomorrow" (Sailhamer, 1990, p. 117). Notably, parallels such as this serve to showcase the compositional unity of Genesis. It is implausible to suggest that they are coincidental. Rather, these parallels evidence the work of a single author who deliberately drew connections between different narrative units in order to make a theological point.