

George McCready Price inspired the “No death before the Fall” teachings of Joseph Fielding Smith

George McCready Price was a Seventh Day Adventist “scientist” and an inspiration for many of the teachings of Joseph Fielding Smith.

A core teaching of Price’s was that there was no death on the Earth for any living thing before the Fall of Adam. [The Case for Divine Design](#) explains:

Price’s influence was at first mostly within his small Seventh-day Adventist group, and his arguments are the classic example of beginning with a specific interpretation of the Genesis account of Creation and then attempting to make science fit that interpretation (for example, **that there was no death of any organisms before the fall of Adam and Eve, which implies that all the organisms that became fossils lived after Adam and Eve**). (emphasis added)

The book goes on to [summarize the interaction between Joseph Fielding Smith and George McCready Price](#):

Joseph Fielding Smith, who became an Apostle in 1910 at age thirty-three, was strongly opposed to the “theory of evolution,” and even became enamored with the writings of George McCready Price who espoused and defended a young-earth flood geology (see Appendix A). Smith corresponded with Price and based much of his thinking on Price’s arguments. Price held, based on Genesis, that there was no death of any organism before the Fall. This was an old sectarian doctrine, but Smith found support for it in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 2:22), although that scripture is open to other interpretations.

See also: [The Backstory to Elder Eyring’s Age of the Earth Comment and Creationism](#) and “We can see no advantage to a continuation of the discussion: The Roberts/Smith/Talmage affair”

Examples of Price’s writing on death before the Fall

Here are just a few examples from his books where he is either directly teaching or implying the doctrine of “no death before the Fall”:

Death is the result of sin on the part of man

According to the Bible, death in even the lower animals (and consequently all misery and suffering: the less is included in the greater) is only the result of sin on the part of man, the head of animated nature, a reflex or sympathetic result, if you will. But with evolution we have countless millions of years of creature suffering, cruelty, and death before man appeared at all, cruelty and death that, as we shall show, have no moral meaning

at all, save as the work of a fiend creator, or a bungling or incompetent one.

—From [Outlines of Modern Christianity and Modern Science](#), pg 16

Degeneration started with the Fall

The glorious flood of vitality, so prodigally lavished upon our world in the beginning, has been ebbing lower and lower; and the theory of organic nature steadily advancing from the lower to the higher is manifestly just as puerile as the old hope of creating energy by a perpetual-motion machine,—and a mistake of precisely the same nature. Both are contradicted by the magnificent law of the Conservation of Energy, which, as we have said, is only the scientific expression of the Scriptural statement that Creation is completed, so far as our world is concerned; though, as the “wages of sin,” death has been decreed upon the individual, and degeneration more or less marked upon every organic type. The fossils of the past, as well as our own experience within the historic period, confirm the view already arrived at on other grounds that Creation is a completed work and is not now going on; and the universal testimony from organic nature is that degeneration and decay have marked the history of every living form. Just as the individual grows old and dies, so do species degenerate and become extinct.

—From [Q. E. D., or New Light on the Doctrine of Creation](#)

The Edenic condition was without death

For our age, skeptical above all others regarding the wonderworking power of God, these unanswerable proofs from the contemporary documents of nature, recording the death and burial of that beautiful world, have been reserved as final and unanswerable arguments. But not alone as an appeal to our fear and dread. Rather do they come to us with the sweet assurance that some day the bright, happy conditions of Edenic life will be restored to our sin-blasted planet, and God’s redeemed people will shine forth in the restored image of divine beauty. “And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

—From [The New Geology: A textbook for colleges, normal schools, and training schools; and for the general reader](#)

Joseph F. Smith (Joseph Fielding Smith's father) never taught the doctrine

Joseph F. Smith—Joseph Fielding Smith's father—never taught the doctrine of no death before the Fall for any living thing: I've comprehensively examined every writing of Joseph F. Smith on the topic and he never touches upon it.

Examples of Joseph Fielding Smith's teaching

NO DEATH ON EARTH BEFORE FALL. The Lord pronounced the earth good when it was finished. Everything upon its face was called good, There was no death in the earth before the fall of Adam. I do not care what the scientists say in regard to dinosaurs and other creatures upon the earth millions of years ago, that lived and died and fought and struggled for existence. When the earth was created and was declared good, peace was upon its face among all its creatures. Strife and wickedness were not found here, neither was there any corruption. ...

All life in the sea, the air, on the earth, was without death. Animals were not dying. Things were not changing as we find them changing in this mortal existence, for mortality had not come. Today we are living in a world of change because we are living under very different conditions from those which prevailed in the beginning and before the fall of man.

—From [Doctrines of Salvation 1:108-9](#)

Of course, I think those people who hold to the view that man has come up through all these ages from the scum of the sea through billions of years do not believe in Adam. Honestly I do not know how they can, and I am going to show you that they do not. There are some who attempt to do it but they are inconsistent—absolutely inconsistent, because that doctrine is so incompatible, so utterly out of harmony, with the revelations of the Lord that a man just cannot believe in both.

... I say most emphatically, you cannot believe in this theory of the origin of man, and at the same time accept the plan of salvation as set forth by the Lord our God. You must choose the one and reject the other, for they are in direct conflict and there is a gulf separating them which is so great that it cannot be bridged, no matter how much one may try to do so. ...

... Then Adam, and by that I mean the first man, was not capable of sin. He could not transgress, and by doing so bring death into the world; for, according to this theory, death had always been in the world. If, therefore, there was no fall, there was no need of an atonement, hence the coming into the world of the Son of God as the Savior of the world is a contradiction, a thing impossible. Are you prepared to believe such a thing as that? (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:141–42.)

—From [the current Old Testament Manual](#)

IF EVOLUTION IS TRUE, THE CHURCH IS FALSE. If life began on the earth, as advocated by Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel (who has been caught openhanded perpetrating a fraud), and others of this school, whether by chance or by some designing hand, then the doctrines of the Church are false. Then there was no Garden of Eden, no Adam and Eve, and no fall. If there was no fall; if death did not come into the world as the scriptures declared that it did—and to be consistent, if you are an evolutionist, this view you must assume—then there was no need for a redemption, and Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, and he did not die for the transgression of Adam, nor for the sins of the world. Then there has been no resurrection from the dead! Consistently, logically, there is no other view, no alternative that can be taken. Now, my brethren and sisters, are you prepared to take this view?

—From [Doctrines of Salvation 1:143](#)

No Adam, no Fall; no Fall, no Atonement ...

George McCready Price [popularized the statement by Robert Blatchford](#):

No Adam, no Fall; no Fall, no Atonement; no Atonement, no Savior

Joseph Fielding Smith taught this same idea in articles he wrote for Church magazines. For instance, in his article “The Origin and Destiny of Man” published in March of 1920 in the Improvement Era, [he wrote](#):

The first man, according to this hypothesis known as the “cave man,” was a creature absolutely ignorant and devoid of any marked intelligence over the beasts of the field. Then Adam, and by that I mean the first man, was not capable of sin. He could not transgress, and by doing so bring death into the world; for, according to this theory, death had always been in the world. If, therefore, there was no fall, there was no need of an atonement, hence the coming into the world of the Son of God as the Savior of the world is a contradiction, a thing impossible. Are you prepared to believe such a thing as that?

I repeat, no man can consistently accept the doctrine of the evolutionist and also believe in the divine mission of our Redeemer. The two thoughts are in absolute conflict. You cannot harmonize them and serve both masters. If life began on the earth, as advocated by Darwin ... and others of this school, whether by chance or by some designing hand, then the doctrines of the Church are false. Then there was no Garden of Eden, no Adam and Eve, and no fall. If there was no fall; if death did not come into the world as the scriptures declared that it did,—and to be consistent, if you are an evolutionist, this view you must assume,—then there was no

need for a redemption, and Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, and he did not die for the transgression of Adam, nor for the sins of the world.

George McCready Price creationism is scientifically untenable

The book *The Case for Divine Design* (a pro-creationist book) compares various creationist theories in its appendix. Regarding George McCready Price's brand it says:

This brand of creationism, although it was by far the best known during the twentieth century, is so vulnerable to scientific examination that its widespread influence seems almost ludicrous. The young-earth idea goes against all scientific methods used to date the earth, and the notion that earth's geology can be accounted for by a Noachian, worldwide flood requires numerous assumptions that are truly impossible to support scientifically.

When Joseph Fielding Smith was attacking B.H. Roberts's ideas, James E. Talmage wrote to his son (a current professor of Geology) for his son's thoughts on Price's book "The New Geology". [Here is a description of this exchange:](#)

After a quorum meeting in which Smith quoted extensively from Price's *The New Geology*, Talmage decided to prepare himself more fully for a debate on the merits of this type of evidence. He wrote to his eldest son, Sterling, for an opinion of the book. Sterling was a professor of geology at the New Mexico School of Mines.

The younger Talmage responded by pointing out a number of technical errors in the specific passages quoted by Smith and then added: "You ask 'how Price is held in the opinion of geologists in general.' As far as I can tell (and it seems to be the unanimous opinion of those who know his book, at least as far as I have talked with them), he is considered as a theological fanatic, who has gone off on a tangent that most geologists seem to find funny. I never heard his book discussed ... without the element of comedy being dragged in. All of Price's arguments, in principle at least, were advanced and refuted from fifty to a hundred years ago. They are not 'new.' His ideas certainly are not 'Geology.' With these two corrections, the title remains the best part of the book."