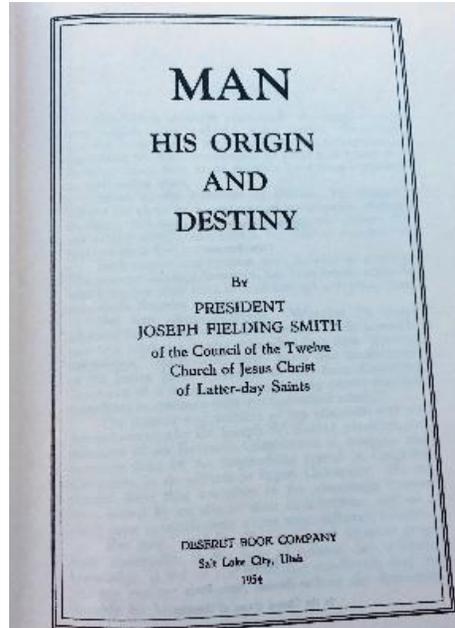


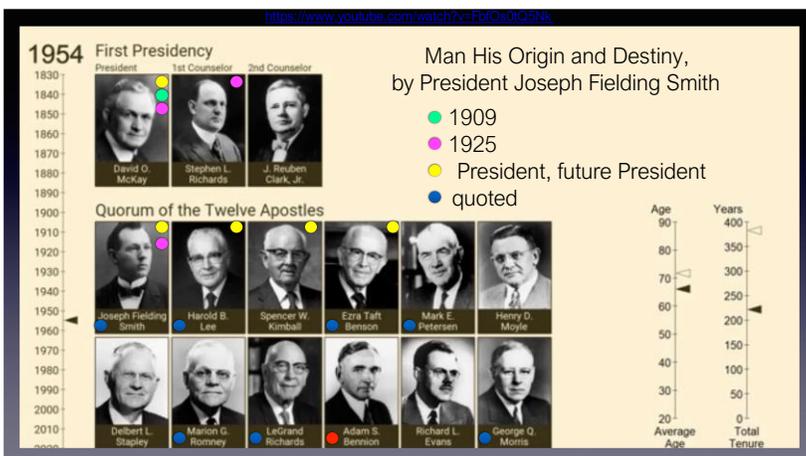
## What about Joseph Fielding Smith's 1954 Book "Man: His Origin & Destiny?"



President Joseph Fielding Smith's book (notice he published it as President as the title says), published in 1954, 70 years from the time of this publication, is now more relevant than ever and continues to represent (even if 'unofficially') the message and teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, being filled with teachings of latter-day prophets, scriptures of the restoration, and sound applied reasoning in support of those teachings applicable to address false evolutionary theories of our time.

Smith was Assistant Church Historian from 1906-1921, and Church Historian from 1921-1970. His faithful witness of Joseph Smith and the doctrines of the restoration are unparalleled. Smith was President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at the time of the publication and later became President of the Church.

The following chart prepared by Daniel Burdett shows what the leadership of the church was when his landmark 1954 book was written, and which Apostles quoted from it:



(Chart prepared by Daniel Burdett; see his excellent presentations on this subject by the streaming service at [bookofmormonevidence.org](http://bookofmormonevidence.org).)

As you can see, at least three future church Presidents quoted from the book. In total, at least seven Apostles quoted from it. Notice how David O. McKay, sometimes attributed as being soft on evolution, participated in the bold and clear 1909 and 1925 First Presidency statements.

Joseph Fielding Smith wrote to Sterling B. Talmage in 1934 about our right to question science claims which aren't aligned with divine revelation. He said, "I have **not** felt that I am under any obligation to accept the theories which are based on scientific research, **but have the divine right to question them**. I am, however, under obligation to accept **revealed truth** which comes through the opening of the heavens **from the One who "comprehendeth all things,"** and when I find what I believe to be a conflict between the theories of men and the word of the Lord, I am bold to say that I accept the latter with full confidence that the [scientific] theories must be changed. When I think I find something which tends to destroy the faith of the youth in these revelations, or which is hurtful to this truth, I have **opposed it with vigor** and have **freely expressed my views**. I believe I am willing to modify my views if the evidence indicated that my interpretation has been wrong." (Joseph Fielding Smith to Sterling B. Talmage, September 29, 1934. Sterling B. Talmage Papers, Marriott Library. )

Joseph Fielding Smith described how some reacted to his work and defended his writing methods. In a letter to Henry Eyring he said, "I speak frankly and to some my words may appear harsh, and even filled with "ill humor," by those who hold to the theories I have attacked. Nevertheless I feel that I am justified in referring thus to **those who hold these evolutionary theories** and who feel themselves to be superior in intelligence and wisdom and entitled to treat the rest of us as school boys and need disciplining and have no right to call them in question. It remains a definite fact that the majority of scientists have considered themselves to be superior in intelligence and wisdom." (Letter to Henry Eyring, <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/agreeing-to-disagree-henry-eyring-and-joseph-fielding-smith/>)

Elder Ronald A. Rasband urged the saints to be proactive in defending prophetic teachings. He said, referring to the prophet, "We do not sit quietly by but actively defend him." (October 2024 General Conference)

Elder McConkie wrote of Joseph Fielding, "Joseph Fielding Smith is the leading gospel scholar and the greatest doctrinal teacher of this generation. Few men in this dispensation have approached him in gospel knowledge or surpassed him in spiritual insight. His is the faith and the knowledge of his father, President Joseph F. Smith, and his grandfather, the Patriarch Hyrum Smith." (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, preface)

Ezra Taft Benson expressed his view and that of Elder Mark E. Peterson, that Fielding's book was in keeping with the Church. He said, "More recently, one of our Church educators published what he purports to be a history of the Church's stand on the question of organic evolution. His thesis challenges the integrity of a prophet of God. **He suggests that Joseph Fielding Smith published his work, *Man: His Origin and Destiny*, against the counsel of the First Presidency and his own Brethren. This writer's interpretation is not only inaccurate, but it also runs counter to the testimony of Elder Mark E. Petersen, who wrote this foreword to Elder Smith's book, a book I would encourage all to read.** Elder Petersen said: "*Some of us [members of the Council of the Twelve] urged [Elder Joseph Fielding Smith] to write a book on the creation of the world and the origin of man. . . . The present volume is the result. It is a most remarkable presentation of material from both sources [science and religion] under discussion. It will fill a great need in the Church and will be particularly invaluable to students who have become confused by the misapplication of information derived from scientific experimentation.*" When one understands that the author to whom I alluded is an exponent of the theory of organic evolution, his motive in disparaging President Joseph Fielding Smith becomes apparent. To hold to a private opinion on such matters is one thing, but when one undertakes to publish his views to discredit the work of a prophet, it is a very serious matter. **It is also apparent to all who have the Spirit of God in them that Joseph Fielding Smith's writings will stand the test of time.**" (President Ezra Taft Benson, "God's Hand in Our Nation's History," March 28, 1977)

A letter from Heber J. Grant to Joseph Fielding Smith said, "I don't want to flatter you, Joseph, but I want you to know that **I consider you the best posted man on the scriptures of the General Authorities of the church that we have.**" (Letter to Joseph Fielding Smith, Dec. 31, 1938, HDC. Also in Heber J. Grant, in Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph Fielding Smith: Gospel Scholar, Prophet of God* (1992), 290.)

Later as President of the Church in 1970, Joseph Fielding Smith said, “What I have taught and written in the past I would teach and write again under the same circumstances.” (President Joseph Fielding Smith, Conference Report, October 1970, 5)

David O. McKay praised the work of J. Fielding, saying, “His [Joseph Fielding Smith’s] loyalty to the leadership of the Church has been uncompromising. He has supported his brethren in every endeavor. No man has ever been more loyal to the President of the Church.” (David O. McKay, Improvement Era, July 1966, p.613)

Ezra Taft Benson encouraged parents to get the book for their children. He said, “I know one noble father who reviews with his children regularly what they have been taught, and if they have been taught any falsehoods; then the children and the father together research out the truth. . . . If your children are taught untruths on evolution in the public schools or even in our Church schools, provide them with a copy of President Joseph Fielding Smith’s excellent rebuttal in his book *Man, His Origin and Destiny*.” (Ezra Taft Benson, *God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties*, p. 227)

Finally, President N. Eldon Tanner praised the work of Joseph saying, “There is no more faithful person in all the world than Joseph Fielding Smith, . . . no one is more in tune, no one is better prepared to receive those directions from the Lord.” (President Nathan Eldon Tanner, speech given at Church Historian’s Office, June 29, 1970. Taken from Joseph Fielding Smith,” *Ensign*, Oct 1976, 96)

My book gives a preview of some teachings from Fielding’s book, but that book contains a wealth of scientific and religious information not featured here.

Of course, there were some complainers. For example, B.H. Roberts didn’t feel Smith was qualified to speak on the subject. Ethics professor Richard Sherlock labeled Smith’s work as extreme, unfavorable, antiscientific, refusing to accept evidence, and unqualified in 1980. Duane E. Jeffery in “Seers, Savants, and Evolution: The Uncomfortable Interface” suggests that Fielding’s book was out of the norm, antagonistic to science; but those who know church history, doctrine, and the flaws in evolution, the usurper of real science, know that these claims are unfounded.

Smith lamented the prevalence of worldly philosophies even in his time and cheered on the few who have remained faithful. He said, “The more I see of educated men, I mean those who are trained in **the doctrines and philosophies of men** now taught in the world, the less regard I have for them. **Modern theories which are so popular today just do not harmonize with the Gospel as revealed to the Prophets** and it would be amusing if it were not a tragedy to see how **some of our educated brethren attempt to harmonize the theories of men with the revealed word of the Lord. Thank the Lord there is still some faith left, and some members who still cherish the word of the Lord and accept the Prophets.**” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Small Journals*, Dec. 28, 1938. Typescript of this quotation in Eugene Thompson Collection, BYU Archives. [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V15N01\\_81.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V15N01_81.pdf))

Sterling W. Sill, assistant to the Twelve Apostles, recognized the value of Smith’s work in a General Conference address. He said, I hope I do not embarrass **President Joseph Fielding Smith** by speaking about his recent great book entitled *Man—His Origin and Destiny*, which I think is **one of the great books of the Church**. I would like to see every person in the world read this great book, for what knowledge could be more important and helpful to man than the ideas therein presented. **President Smith has packed into this book the study, meditation, and devotion of a lifetime**, but through our reading we may make all of these ideas our own in a week or a month. This is one of the advantages of **a great book.**” (Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles, *Our Greatest Responsibility, Conference Report*, October 1954, pp. 27-29)

**Elder James E. Faust** was aware of those who found themselves wiser than the prophets. He said, “**Isaiah** spoke of a people who **did not care to listen to their prophets and seers**, who were urged, “Say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits” (Isa. 30:10).” <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1986/10/unwanted-messages?lang=eng>

Get a copy of Joseph Fielding Smith's book and see for yourself! <https://www.amazon.com/Origin-Destiny-Joseph-Fielding-Smith/dp/B000733631>