

Why Christians Should Be Leery of This Celebrity 2022 Senatorial Candidate

Dr. Mehmet Oz, the celebrity surgeon and host of television's *The Dr. Oz Show*, has launched a campaign for Pennsylvania's U.S. Senate seat now held by Pat Toomey, who is retiring. If Oz wins the Republican nomination, he will be the first Muslim-born individual to be nominated for a Senate seat by a major American political party.

But Oz is not a Muslim in practice. The son of Turkish immigrants, the 61-year-old cardiothoracic surgeon, who gained celebrity as a frequent guest on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, affiliates himself with the Swedenborgian Church of North America after being introduced to the church by his wife, Bryn Athyn.

Wikipedia says the Swedenborgian Church of America "is one of the few Christian sects that draws its faith from the Bible as illuminated by the teachings of Emmanuel Swedenborg. The church's website says it is "an open-minded, forward-looking Christian church drawing its faith from the Bible as illuminated by the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). If you have serious questions about traditional Christian theology, yet wish to explore the deeper aspects of the Bible and the Christian faith, we may be what you are looking for. We worship a God of unconditional love, whose warmth and light can deepen your inner life and give direction to your spiritual journey."

His religious beliefs aside, Christian voters should also be aware that Oz and his wife practice Transcendental Meditation and reiki, a traditional Japanese practice of using "healing energy" for medicinal purposes.

“When I meditate, I go to that place where truth lives,” Oz told Religion News Service. “I can see what reality really is, and it’s so much easier to form good relationships with him.”

In 2016, President Trump named Oz to the Council and Sports, Fitness and Nutrition. Oz subsequently endorsed the use of the malaria drug hydroxychloroquine to combat COVID-19, which Trump also touted in office.

Announcing his Senate campaign on the *Washington Examiner’s* website on Tuesday (Nov. 30), Oz made an oblique reference to his Turkish American background, writing: “I witnessed my family’s sacrifices. My father grew up dirt poor (literally sleeping on a dirt floor) and loved this country as much as anyone already here.”

While his mother adhered to the secular vision of modern Turkey’s founder, Kemal Ataturk, Oz’s father was a strict Muslim, according to a 2012 interview for Henry Louis Gates Jr.’ PBS television program *Faces of America*. As a young man, Mehmet Oz said, he rebelled against both traditions and chose to align his views with Sufism, a mystical Islamic sect. {eo}

Religion News Service contributed to this report.

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