

Should a Mormon be President of the United States?

Should there be a religious test for being president? No, for the First Amendment declares that “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion...” On the other hand, it encouraged belief in religion and God in general by adding, “nor forbidding the free exercise thereof.” So, the Constitution encourages belief in God in general, while it forbids establishing one national religion in particular. This is evident from the following facts.

First, five of the 13 colonies which ratified the First Amendment had their own state religion at the time of ratification. And they were never required to disestablish their state religion. Gradually, they did so later of their own account, but not from constitutional compulsion.

Second, Congress itself prayed to God before opening its session, and it has been doing so ever since. This has never been ruled a violation of the First Amendment.

Third, many states even required belief in God as a condition for holding a public office. For example, Article IV, Section 8 of the North Carolina Constitution reads: “Disqualifications for office. The following persons shall be disqualified for office: First, any person who shall deny the being of Almighty God.”

Fourth, even the Supreme Court of Massachusetts ruled that “[The First Amendment] embraces all who believe in the existence of God. This provision does not extend to atheists because they do not believe in God or religion” (*Kneeland*, 1838).

Fifth, and most importantly, every US colony and territory had to agree with “the principles of *The Declaration of Independence*” in order to become a state. As late as August 21, 1959, Hawaii was admitted to the United States based on the fact that it concurred with “the principles of *the Declaration of Independence*” (see *Gonzales*, 2007). But what are these principles? The most famous ones are found in the immortal lines of our founding document, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that [1] **all men are created equal**, that they are endowed [2] by **their Creator** [3] **with certain unalienable Rights**, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Whatever other principles there may be, one thing is certain—the belief in Almighty God, the Creator of humankind is one of the fundamental principles on which our government is founded.

Sixth, the Preamble of every State Constitution has a reference to God. He is called variously “Almighty God,” “God,” the “Author of Existence,” the “Supreme Ruler of the Universe,” etc. One thing is clear—our country, with all of its states, has a monotheistic basis. It is based on the belief in God, the one supreme Creator of the universe and of humankind. Of course, under this umbrella there is freedom for citizens who do not believe that way. But as for the country and its states, there has been from the very beginning a belief in the one and only monotheistic God.

Now this is precisely the problem when it comes to having a Mormon president. While earlier Mormonism affirmed one God (*The Book of Mormon*, Mosiah 15:1-5; Alma 11:28,29; 2 Nephi 31:21), later Mormonism is a form of Polytheism (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 132:19-20). Its founder, Joseph Smith, declared that there is “a plurality of Gods” (*The Prophecies of Joseph Smith*, 370). Further, Mormonism affirms that God the Father has a tangible body of flesh and bones (*Doctrine and*

Covenants, Sect 130, 22). There is a series of Gods wherein each God was begotten by a previous God in an endless series of Gods (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 322). God the Father had a “wife” who is our “Heavenly Mother” by whom we are all begotten (ibid., 516; *Journal of Discourse*, vol. 9, p. 286). The fifth Mormon president and prophet, Lorenzo Snow, said, “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become.” Joseph Smith himself said, “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!... I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see.” He added, “God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did.... [A]nd you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves” (*The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 345-47).

This raises a critical question for every Mormon candidate for president: Do they agree with the basic principles of America’s founding document, *The Declaration of Independence*? Or do they agree with the traditional teachings of the Mormon Church? Every American needs to know the answer. Are they monotheists or polytheists? Why? Because Polytheism is contrary to our founding document, *The Declaration of Independence*, the grounds for statehood, and the history of our country! Further, when the president takes the oath of office, does he swear upon *The Bible* or on *The Book of Mormon*? Every president since George Washington has taken the oath of office on the Bible—a monotheistic Judeo-Christian book (see Deut. 6:4; Isa. 43:10; Matt. 22:37). America was founded on a monotheistic basis. But the polytheistic teachings of Joseph Smith and other Mormon presidents (prophets) are simply incompatible with our founding American document. Indeed, even the Preamble of the Utah State Constitution declares: “Grateful to Almighty God [singular] for life and liberty, we establish this Constitution” (1896).

Indeed, belief in the one and only supreme God is a basis of statehood. Further, we pledge allegiance “under God.” And “In God We trust” is inscribed on the coins in our pockets; it is in the last stanza of our National Anthem, and it is written large on the wall in the House of Representatives. And I for one am not willing to see it changed to “In Gods We Trust”! While the Government cannot force anyone “to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion” (*Torcaso*, 1961), nonetheless, every American voter has the moral right to know of every Mormon (or non-Mormon) candidate for the highest office in our land whether or not they believe in the principles of our American birth certificate, *The Declaration of Independence*, and in the one monotheistic God inscribed therein. **So my challenge to every Mormon candidate for president is this: Are you willing to publicly repudiate the polytheistic teaching of the founder and of other presidents (prophets) of the Mormon Church and affirm your firm belief in one and only one “Almighty God” who is “the Supreme Ruler of the Universe.”** If not, then with all due respect, Sir, I believe that you do not qualify to be president of the United States of America.

So, to answer the question with which we began. Yes, I believe a Mormon can qualify as a candidate for the presidency of the United States, if he denies Polytheism and affirms the Monotheism of our founding document, *The Declaration of Independence*. If it is a ground for statehood, then why should it not also be a test for the presidency of all the states, that is, for the United States of America.

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