

Religious bigotry vs. partisanship

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

October 10, 2012

Michigan pastor Kent Clark [loves him some Paul Ryan but doesn't think Mitt Romney is a Christian](#).

Not a problem for anyone involved. As we [learned last month from Pew](#) (pdf), being a Mormon doesn't really hurt a person's chances among evangelical voters, even though many of them agree with Clark. Tobin Grant seems to [take this as good news](#) about evangelicals:

Despite a history of Republican voting, some political pontificators predicted that evangelicals would be apprehensive about an LDS candidate. The picture of evangelicals as religious partisans has itself proven to be little more than caricature and stereotype.

Sure, the Pew data might mean that evangelicals don't actually object to a Mormon president. But it also might mean that for many evangelicals—as, to be sure, for many other Americans—[party affiliation is a singularly powerful identity marker, stronger even than religion](#). And in a contest between religious bigotry and rank partisanship, it's hard to get excited about either contender.

Grant goes on to point to earlier Pew data indicating that Democrats, too, are uncomfortable with Mormon leaders—but for different reasons. Of course, the reasons he has in mind don't come from a voter survey; they come from an opinion writer:

Wall Street Journal columnist Bret Stephens said this week that Mormons are often ridiculed in popular culture, as in the Broadway hit *The Book of Mormon*. [Stephens said](#) there is an "emerging liberal consensus ... that it's okay to concede the fundamentalist premise that religious belief ought to be entitled to the highest possible degree of social deference—except when Mormons and sundry Christian rubes are concerned."

I'm not convinced. [I still think that](#) whatever Democratic objection there is to Mormons in elected office has much (not all) to do with the simple fact of Mitt Romney's candidacy. This is also the reason so few evangelicals *do* object to the same. We're a nation of partisans, first and foremost.

If Harry Reid were the Democratic nominee for president, the survey findings would be different.