**Does Donald Trump Mean the End of the Religious Right?**

**Neil J. Young\***

**\***Neil J. Young PhD, is former lecturer in History at Princeton University, and holds a doctorate from Columbia University. His book, *We Gather Together, The Religious Right and the Problem of InterFaith Politics,* was published by OUP in 2015*.*

The political success of Donald Trump has raised many questions about the state of American politics, the shape of the Republican Party, and the future of conservatism. For scholars of religion and politics, Trump’s support among white evangelical voters has proved particularly confounding given the candidate’s spotty personal life, intemperate personality, and unorthodox, if not un-conservative, politics. At the same time, Trump has struggled with other groups of religious conservatives, particularly Mormons and Catholics. Recent polling indicates that white evangelicals are providing Trump with around 80% support, in line with their backing of other Republican nominees in recent history, whereas both LDS and Catholic voters have shown marked decline in their traditional levels of support for the GOP because of Trump. This divide among a group of voters who have reliably supported the Republican Party for more than forty years has led many to argue that Donald Trump has brought about the end of the Religious Right.

This paper examines Trump’s standing among evangelicals, Catholics, and Mormons – the three pillars of the Religious Right – and sets his candidacy within a longer history of interreligious political strategies and alliances. Since the 1970s, Catholics, evangelicals, and Mormons have found themselves working on similar political issues, often in close partnership. Yet those efforts have yielded few victories at the federal level for the Religious Right’s chief concerns as abortion remains legal, school prayer has not been returned to public classrooms, and gay rights continue to expand, including the recent legalization of same-sex marriage. Instead, the Religious Right has benefited the Republican Party’s electoral ambitions, providing the GOP with a solid voting bloc even if the party has not returned the favors by advancing the Religious Right’s political goals. This latter fact has distorted our understanding of the Religious Right. The virtual unanimity of Catholics, evangelicals, and Mormons at the voting box has created a false perception of the Religious Right as a unified, monolithic bloc now riven apart by Donald Trump’s controversial candidacy. But I argue that the history of the Religious Right instead demonstrates it was always a fragile coalition that navigated longstanding historic animosities and religious disagreements and divided on political issues and tactics as much as it united. By situating Trump’s candidacy in this history, we can understand his polarizing campaign not as the end of the Religious Right but rather as yet another moment that reveals the challenges and complications inherent to the coalitional nature of the Religious Right. Lastly, in taking account of the #NeverTrump movement among a small set of evangelicals we can understand better how intrareligious factions have shaped larger interreligious political alliances and strategies.