**The Evangelical Vote**

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The 2016 campaign is different in ways political analysts could not have anticipated. Among the strangest developments in this election year is the support that Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has drawn from white evangelical voters. While many high-profile evangelicals (Jim Wallis, Brian MacLaren, Ronald Sider) have withheld an endorsement, others, including Jerry Falwell Jr., Mike Huckabee, Rick Santorum, and Ralph Reed, are rallying strongly in favor of Trump. Despite the presence of more traditionally evangelical candidates in the race, polls show that Trump drew the support of 30 percent of evangelicals during the primaries. Moreover, by the time Trump chose evangelical favorite Mike Pence as his running mate, he had already consolidated the evangelical vote. In a recent  [survey, the Pew Research Center](http://www.pewforum.org/2016/07/13/evangelicals-rally-to-trump-religious-nones-back-clinton/) found that 78 percent of white evangelicals intend to vote for Trump. As these votes make up [25 percent](http://www.people-press.org/2004/12/06/religion-and-the-presidential-vote/) of the electorate, they could have an obvious impact on the outcome of the 2016 election.

The evangelical support is rather confounding as Donald Trump has been married three times, has boasted about refusing to ask for forgiveness, and has shown a [complete lack of understanding](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EIgHsGZAmk) of the Christian faith. In addition, he misquoted the Bible and [mocked a leading Southern Baptist on Twitter](http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-religious-rights-come-to-jesus-about-trump-20160510). Finally, Trump had been outspoken throughout the majority of his life about his pro-choice beliefs before tepidly claiming he was pro-life during the primaries. Nonetheless, in his 70 minute convention speech, he never mentioned the issue of abortion. It is consequently to nearly everyone's surprise that none of this mattered.

So what prompts the Evangelical community to vote for a man who doesn’t represent the typical evangelical platform? As an answer, this presentation argues that:

- For the first time in three election cycles, white evangelicals lacked a distinctive leader for their cause. For evangelicals, Donald Trump has both the leadership skills and tenacity to solve their country’s practical problems such as economic stagnation and the immigration dilemma.

-Even if many evangelicals do not think he shares their religious commitment, most do think that Trump understands the needs of people like them. For example, Trump’s very personalized, informal oratory makes the crowd feel included. They can see themselves as members of a winning team.

-Trump’s messages are clear and simple.

- Evangelicals like his boldness. They find Trump’s blunt, bold statements to be attractive, especially in the context of his strong criticism of the Republican establishment and of Obama’s policy concerning immigration and foreign affairs.

- Evangelicals are sick and tired of politicians telling them one thing and doing another. They would support a known “sinner” rather than a “family values” politician who may well betray their trust.

- Donald Trump operates in a world of absolutes: a world of right and wrong made up of a world of winners and losers.

- For Evangelicals, Trump represents accomplishment and success. Many consider his economic success as a sign of God’s blessing.

- Most Evangelicals resonate with Trump’s promises to defend the religious liberty of Christians and to keep Christianity from being further removed from the public square.

In sum, then, this presentation seeks to demonstrate how the evangelical attraction to Trump has little to do with faith-based values. The conclusion briefly outlines how, logically, an identity crisis for the traditional evangelical establishment is emerging from this departure from traditional values.

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