

Title: Gerald Ford and the Evangelical Vote in the 1976 Presidential Election

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Abstract: This paper examines the relationship between Gerald Ford and the evangelical vote in the presidential election of 1976, the “Year of the Evangelical.”. Although there is much research on the connection between the evangelicals and Jimmy Carter, the Democrat nominee and winner of the presidential election, there is little information about President Ford’s connection to the evangelical community and his outreach to them in his campaign. This paper explains the state of the evangelical community by 1976, demonstrating that they were a politically active but diverse group that did not vote as a bloc, thus depriving Ford of victory in some key states. The paper also examines Ford’s credentials as an evangelical himself, enumerates the ways he reached out to the evangelical community, primarily those on the religious right, and reveals reasons why the evangelicals on the right and the left did not vote for him. Although Ford won 51-52% of the evangelical vote nationwide, he won less than 50% of the evangelical vote in key states like Missouri, Kentucky, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, a fact which cost him the election.