

Birmingham, Alabama, Thursday, January 1, 1981

# *Smith Expresses Regret, Condemns Anti-Semitism*

NEW YORK (BP)—Expressing deep regret for any hurt to the Jewish community because of his statements concerning Jews, Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith joined national Jewish leaders in a joint statement abhorring, condemning and rejecting anti-Semitism.

Smith, pastor of First Southern Church of Del City, Okla., read a joint statement following a three-and-a-half-hour meeting Dec. 18 with six other Southern Baptists and seven officials of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, a national organization of Jewish laymen.

Smith asked for a meeting with ADL national director Nathan Perlmutter in the wake of controversy over Smith's widely reported

comments that God does not hear the prayers of Jews and that Jews have funny looking noses.

The statement, issued after a closed door meeting held under tight security at the B'nai B'rith headquarters across the street from the United Nations Building, said:

"The parties agreed that they abhor, condemn and reject anti-Semitism because it violates their respective deeply held religious beliefs;

"Second, both reaffirmed their commitment to their basic theological beliefs without rancor or rejection of each other; and

"Third, both groups have been the victims of religious persecution and even to this day suffer persecution in the Soviet Union and other

parts of the world."

The president of the 13.6 million-member denomination also refused to back down from his previous position. The statement made plain Smith "has distinctive theological beliefs he cannot compromise," but added the Southern Baptist "stands with the Jewish community for total religious liberty" and "for an American pluralistic society."

"I am satisfied that pastor Smith had no anti-Semitic intent," Perlmutter said. "But I am not satisfied with his beliefs and he is not satisfied with mine either. That's what makes him a Baptist and me a Jew."