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"That's What Makes Me a Jew and Him a Baptist": Jews, Southern Baptists, and the American Public Square in the Era of Reagan

Armstrong, April Charity

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"THAT'S WHAT MAKES ME A JEW AND HIM A BAPTIST":

JEWS, SOUTHERN BAPTISTS, AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SQUARE IN THE ERA OF REAGAN

April Charity Armstrong

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines interfaith dialogue between the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in the late twentieth century, which was a direct result of a controversy surrounding SBC president Bailey Smith's appearance at a political rally in 1980, where he had notoriously said, "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew." It examines the forging, sustaining, and collapsing of the alliance the ADL and SBC had named a "joint working group," revealing the diverse views of a broad swath of Americans who responded to Smith and the motivations of the ADL and SBC partners for seeking the other as an ally. Putting the partnership into the historical context of Cold War American religion, it builds upon recent scholarship on the "Judeo-Christianity" of the 1950s to show how the ADL-SBC dialogue, despite a conscious rejection of the Judeo-Christian model, nonetheless was based upon the same underlying assumptions about American ideals and morality. It addresses the significance of the (initially harmonious) dialogue itself taking place primarily in the American Southwest and internal conflicts within each organization that threatened collaboration, and shows how responses to an arsonist attack on a Baptist church in Jerusalem revealed that all along the two groups had been working with differing definitions of "separation of church and state" and "religious liberty," forcing an end to official relations. Ultimately, it argues, disagreement over American identity and separation of church and state, not theology, led them to part ways.

This project is emblematic of the interdisciplinary approach typical of religious studies. Using a blend of historical approaches, employing archival, interview, and oral history sources, it

also draws upon ethnography, sociology, and political science. It contributes to a range of disciplines within the academic study of religion, including American studies, Jewish studies, and history of Christianity. Previous scholarship has suggested that Americans can unite around their common national identity, but this research provides a case study offering another interpretation. Since religious views shape understandings of American identity itself, increasing religious diversity forces continual reimagining of what it means to be an American.

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INTRODUCTION:

A TALE OF TWO PEOPLES (NEIGHBORS, YET STRANGERS)

> *This is not to suggest that Baptists and Jews do not conflict on religion. But it is our responsibility, if we are to converse with each other, that we at least quarrel over the right issues. This demands that we understand our own traditions better and hear the other from his best spokesman. We are challenged to confront the other as he is and claims to be, not as caricature or distortion.*[1]
>
> *--Arthur Gilbert*

In the early September of 1980, William Pharr composed a memo to the members of the National Council of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) that ultimately sent shock waves throughout the world, despite his care to mark it "CONFIDENTIAL." In it, he wrote about his worries about the future of American pluralism in light of the rise of a new kind of religio-political power: the "New Right." He quoted a relatively-unknown pastor who had appeared at a meeting Pharr had attended. Sponsored by the "Moral Majority," the "Religious Affairs Briefing" in Dallas that August had served as more or less a rally of support for Ronald Reagan's campaign for the presidency of the United States. What worried Pharr was not so much the Presbyterian actor from California seeking to be the leader of the free world, but the Baptist preacher from Oklahoma who it seemed supported his candidacy. Pharr was a Baptist, too; in fact, this minister had just been elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), to which Pharr also belonged, along with Reagan's opponent, then-President Jimmy Carter. The pastor did not represent Baptists to Pharr, but rather the New Right, and with it, a threat to all that the NCCJ

[1]Arthur Gilbert, "Response," in *Meet the American Jew*, ed. Belden Menkus and Arthur Gilbert (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), iv.

sought to accomplish. This was not because Pharr disapproved of religious politicking, but because he disapproved of their brand of it.[2]

Meanwhile, Milton Tobian, Southwest Regional Director of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), was composing his own memo to Marc Tanenbaum, the national Interreligious Affairs Director for the AJC, and sending copies to a number of other AJC officials. As they did Pharr, a lot of things worried Tobian, though he had other reasons for feeling apprehensive. "'Now there arose a new pharaoh over Egypt who knew not Joseph,'" he began, warning that although things had been good for American Jews for a while, there were new threats to their welfare. He reminded his readers that when the new pharaoh came into power in Egypt all those millennia ago, it marked the shift from "a time of fruitfulness and abundance" to "four hundred years of slavery." August 1980 was a similar "watershed" moment for Jews. The Moral Majority, he felt, as the AJC had believed for some time, was likely to cause all sorts of problems for American Jews. Their "religio-political" movement "is designed to separate American Jews from effective participation and influence in American decision making." He, too, transcribed the statement that had troubled Pharr. These words had been the articulation of the agenda of the entire movement, Tobian believed, an agenda that "perforce leaves out Jews."[3]

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[2]William J. Pharr, Dallas, Texas, to "All Members of the Board Dallas NCCJ," 9 September 1980, Marc H. Tanenbaum Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 603, Box 95/2, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Pharr's uneasiness about the Religious Affairs Briefing is indicated in the memo, with his reference to the statement having "no place in the political life of the United States." Mark Briskman, who knew Pharr, also spoke in general terms about Pharr's qualms about the Moral Majority and the shock that groups like the NCCJ had about the failure of the press to report on the statement he was transcribing, and that it was hard for anyone involved to imagine that such a thing could have occurred without the American media saying something about it (interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011).

[3]Milton Tobian, Dallas, Texas, to Marc Tanenbaum, 10 September 1980, Marc H. Tanenbaum Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 603, Box 95/2, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Tobian took credit for alerting the press, and gave his reasons, at a meeting in Fort Worth

Glenn Ingleheart received a copy of the transcript at his office in Atlanta. As the director of the SBC's Department of Interfaith Witness, it had long been a part of his work to engage in dialogue with Jews. He composed a letter to the man who had said these things, appealing to their common goals and their Christian brotherhood. Of course Ingleheart believed—as did the Department of Interfaith Witness—in "the uniqueness of God's act in Jesus of Nazareth for the redemption of all persons, Jews as well as Gentiles," but that did not mean that the denomination should claim they had "the sole franchise on God," as the minister's comments seemed to imply, he wrote. Ingleheart reproduced Pharr's transcript in the letter. Ingleheart assured the new head of the denomination that its various agencies were praying for him. "May God help us all to continue to state our faith in ways that will further our progress in relating as Christians … to our Jewish neighbors," Ingleheart concluded. He also sent copies of his letter to four of his Jewish friends, all prominent enough within the American Jewish community that it would seem certain word would spread.[4]

Tobian called Helen Parmley, religion editor of the *Dallas Morning News*. He appears to have made sure Parmley received copies of Pharr's memo and Ingleheart's letter in addition to the transcript. Not long after Pharr's memo circulated, Helen Parmley quoted it in a story she wrote for the *Dallas Morning News* and circulated on the wire through the Religious News Service. Parmley did her share of investigative reporting, but the Dallas religion beat—though

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a few months later. See Frank Trejo, "Jewish Leader Places Blame on Use of Evangelical Politics," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 6 November 1980, 5H.

[4]Glenn Ingleheart, Atlanta, Georgia, to Bailey Smith, 3 September 1980, Marc H. Tanenbaum Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 603, Box 95/2, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. The language of both Pharr's and Tobian's memos, whichever Ingleheart received alongside the transcript, make it clear that the response was going to become public soon. Ingleheart's letter would be quoted in the *Dallas Morning News* less than two weeks later. While it is not provable, this suggests that Ingleheart sent copies to his Jewish friends as a part of the intended public response.

she would later remark that it was "like covering the legislature,"[5] for all of its intricacies and power struggles—did not necessarily draw all that much attention. Religion stories sometimes made the front page, but usually they would be found deep within the folds of the paper. *This* story, however, would be read all over America in one form or another. Her editor ran the story on the front page in the following morning's edition. With that, the pastor, Bailey Smith, became a household name, and a single sentence made him infamous: "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew."[6]

Bailey Smith had gone to sleep in Del City, Oklahoma on that September night without any premonition of what was about to happen. He was not some well-seasoned politico. He was a small town pastor with an unusually large church. First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, had grown exponentially during his tenure, which had been enough (along with his conservative theology) to attract the attention of some of the big names in the movement to rescue the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) from what many perceived to be a dangerous, liberal drift—Inglehart was one of the liberals steering the boat to the left. Being elected to the presidency of the SBC that June as the conservative candidate had meant Smith had the opportunity to do some new, exciting things. If that had not happened, Carter likely never would have wanted him to give an invocation at the Democratic National Convention (DNC), and he would not have been

[5]Quoted in Virginia Culver, "Lifetime Achievement Award: Helen Parmley," press release, Religion Newswriters Association, 24 June 2002.

[6]Helen Parmley declined to be interviewed for this project, but she did say that this story was a big one, possibly the biggest story she ever covered, in a conversation with the author. Briskman describes Parmley as excited about covering the ongoing drama that the initial story created, and somewhat territorial about it (interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011). The *Dallas Morning News* typically ran religion articles deep within the paper, and most often in a separate section. The choice to run this story (discussed below) on the front page demonstrates the editorial staff's belief in its importance. While it is not the only religion story to have graced the front page, and Parmley's work had made its way to the front section on numerous occasions, it was far from the typical way the newspaper handled the religion beat.

invited to preach at the Religious Affairs Briefing. Things in the SBC were too controversial for him to just make appearances with one political party, he reasoned. After all, Southern Baptists, like all Baptists, had a commitment to the principle of separation of church and state, and it should not look like someone in his position was endorsing a candidate for presidency of the United States—Southern Baptist or not. Privately, Smith questioned Carter's commitment to the ideals he thought Southern Baptists should uphold. Smith thought of Carter as a good man and a friend, but also as somewhat misguided, in Smith's opinion, about what the key issues were and what position to take on them. He must have known Carter was probably not going to be representative of the new SBC once Paige Patterson and Paul Pressler managed to take over like they had planned. But the full control they sought was about a decade away, at least according to Pressler's calculations, and until then, presumably the average Southern Baptist did not need added reason to worry about divisiveness. He had managed to win on the first ballot, but there were five other candidates. Such fierce campaigning was unknown to the relatively calm SBC of previous years—at least until the uproar of 1979. To Smith, Reagan was an ideal presidential candidate—so much charisma, and he said all the right things about the issues that worried Smith. Smith felt sure that if only people truly understood the Christian message, the country would not be in this mess. At home with his wife, Sandy, and their three sons, Smith enjoyed the last peaceful night he would know for many months.[7]

Parmley's article appeared on the front page of the *Dallas Morning News* on September 17, 1980, under a headline that, in retrospect, seems rather tame: "REMARKS ON JEWS DRAW IRE." The phone would not stop ringing, at the Smith's home or at First Southern. The

[7]Bailey Smith, interview by author, telephone, 29 September 2005, Fort Worth; and "Smith Shuns Maddox Advice," *Baptist Messenger*, 4 September 1980, 5. For more on Smith, see chapter 1.

mail kept pouring in, hundreds of letters every day. It seemed like everybody wanted to make a comment, or to ask him for his. Out of all that he had said that day, the focus was on one line from his sermon: "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew." Stories on Smith appeared in every major newspaper in America and in many other newspapers throughout the world. It was not just Jews, or liberal Protestants, or Joe and Jane American who were contacting Smith to express their rage, either—or even mostly them. Southern Baptists, already tense from the year's infighting, exploded with hot anger. Responses to *their* comments included *more* angry letters, *more* hateful phone calls. Some were supportive of Smith, or thought they were, but Smith was not sure which was worse. He wondered what made some people think he was on board with doing harm to Jews. Jesus was Jewish. Smith believed Jews were God's chosen people. Hating Jews was particularly evil, as he understood it. He could at least change his home phone number, but everybody recognized him, now, and he could not change the church phone number, or move. Thus, Smith's life changed drastically and permanently as a result of that one line, quoted again and again for years afterward, for a variety of purposes.[8]

Carter must have known that it was not his voter base who would be likely to support Smith, but either way, it was unlikely that he would have responded diplomatically. He was troubled by what had been going on in his denomination. It was hard enough to handle all the questions about being Southern Baptist, about being "born again," when the SBC president was *not* going around saying things like this. Now he had to explain his religion all over the place when he would otherwise have been talking about his policies. At a town meeting in Pittson, Pennsylvania, a Jewish boy asked whether Carter believed God heard his prayers. Reporters

[8]Dan Martin, "Bailey Smith Asks Meeting with Anti-Defamation League," *Penn Jersey Baptist*, December 1980, 1; and Bailey Smith, interview by author, telephone, 29 September 2005.

were asking questions at the White House for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Robert Maddox, special assistant for religious liaison at the White House and an ordained Southern Baptist minister, spoke to them on behalf of Carter. "I personally believe most Southern Baptists would disagree with the Rev. Dr. Smith," he said. "President Carter has prayed with people like Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and felt a spirit of prayer and communion with them. The President believes God hears all his children when they pray." Carter took the opportunity to tell assembled listeners in Chicago that he thought that the things Smith had said indicated Reagan's election would cause rifts between Christians and Jews. He left his press secretary, Jody Powell, to discuss the matter further with reporters. The president, Powell said, was "incensed."[9]

Reagan, on the other hand, was in a bit of a jam. He did not have much sympathy for Smith's theology, but he must have known a lot of people who would vote Republican did. In any case, Smith had said what he said at a Reagan rally, and thousands of people had applauded. Still, many on the fence about Reagan would run to Carter if they thought Reagan was likely to use Smith's ideology as a rationale for political decision making. Carter's comments were a simpler matter to address. Reagan said that the whole notion of him causing a schism between America's Christians and Jews proved Carter had reached "a point of hysteria." Smith was a complicated problem. Yes, Reagan assured the press, he disagreed with what Smith had said, but there was no reason to attack him for saying it. "I guess everyone can make his own

[9]Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), 472; Joesph Polakoff, "White House Reacts to Baptist Minister's Remark on Jews," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* 25 September 1980, 3; and Steven Weisman, "Carter and Reagan Comments Tangle Campaigns in a Controversy Surrounding Evangelical Group," *New York Times* 10 October 1980, D14. Carter's religious and political sensibilities are discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

interpretation of the Bible, and many individuals have been making differing interpretations for a long time."[10]

When Pharr wrote that "It definitely is my conviction that such a statement is viciously anti-Semitic, motivated by a gross and divisive religious prejudice which has no place in the political life of the United States and represents a strong trend at significant levels toward the distortion and disfigurement of the ideals of Brotherhood and Religious Pluralism which NCCJ has espoused for 52 years," he was gesturing to the ways in which Cold War Americans often understood themselves—as belonging to a tripartite faith of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Smith disagreed with this, religiously and in his conception of American identity, as will be seen later. Smith's comments reflected, if not changes in evangelical theology, changes in the American political landscape and the generally accepted idea of how religion and government should interact.

***

Although it is fair to say that the controversy surrounding Bailey Smith was one of the most significant news items during the 1980 U.S. presidential campaigns, it has nonetheless never been evaluated within its context. For most people, scholars included, this whole affair is simply a footnote to American Jewish history, evidence of any number of things—lingering anti-Semitism in American life, the dangers of religious exclusivism, or the reasons why Jews and evangelicals generally do not get along today. Smith's statement is typically boiled down to a single excerpt of a single sentence, with no indication where or why it originated: "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew." Leonard Dinnerstein quotes this excerpt (without

[10]Weisman, "Carter and Reagan Comments Tangle Campaigns." For more on Reagan, see chapter 3.

even naming Smith) as evidence of anti-Semitism's firm hold on the American South, a region he says is entrenched in a Protestant fundamentalism dangerous to American Jews.[11] Harold M. Schulweis quotes the excerpt, and compares it to comments by Orthodox Jews who express the desire to regulate Jewish prayers, implying that the deepest prejudices against Jews lie within the American Jewish community itself.[12] Howard Cohen cited the excerpt of Smith's words as the reason why Jews typically did not have warm feelings toward Southern Baptists.[13] Typing "Bailey Smith" into an internet search engine will quickly return thousands of similar uses of Smith's comment. It was not the most potentially controversial thing Smith had said in 1980, nor did he have a larger audience than usual, nor was it something that had no parallels in the preaching of other ministers of his time or other times, yet "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew" has had much more sticking power than a single line from almost any sermon, by Smith or anyone else, with the possible exception of Jeremiah Wright, whose sermonic discourse about God's opinion of America proved problematic for Barack Obama's 2008 campaign for president.[14] The question of why it is this statement, rather than, say, "I don't know why he [God] chose the Jews. I think they have funny looking noses, myself" (taken from a sermon Smith preached a few weeks after the incident in Dallas, broadcast over Oklahoma City

[11]Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 195.

[12]Harold M. Schulweis, *In God's Mirror: Reflections and Essays* (Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 2003), 8-9.

[13]Howard Cohen quoted in Mary Blye Howe, *A Baptist among the Jews* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 142.

[14]For a transcript of Wright's infamous sermon, in which he had exclaimed, "God damn America," see ABC News, "Reverend Wright Transcript," 25 April 2008, online, http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=4719157, access date 3 August 2014. Wright and Smith held similar viewpoints about church and state in many respects, and both were challenging the notion that God somehow favors America—a heresy for American civil religion.

radio[15]), that has stuck so firmly within the public consciousness in this way, has yet to be explored.

A few writers have briefly acknowledged some aspect of the broader context of Smith's words. Naomi W. Cohen situated Smith's comment within the rise of the Christian Right that evidenced American evangelicalism's newfound interest in politics shortly before the 1980 election, as part of the reason that many American Jews responded, as they did to the Christian Right more generally, with aggressive counter-politicking.[16] William Martin analyzed Smith's appearance in Dallas's Reunion Arena as revelatory of tensions in the American population during the 1980 presidential campaigns—pluralism was testing the limits of America's republican ideals, and revealed questions about just what sort of religious elements should be permitted in the political arena.[17] Daniel Goodman placed Smith's words within a brief overview of Southern Baptist approaches to Jews and Judaism throughout the denomination's history, stretching back into the antebellum period, as a basis for a call to "moderate Baptists" to renew the interfaith dialogue between Baptists and Jews that has since been abandoned.[18] Thus far, however, Smith's infamous sermon has served only as an example in texts whose different concerns understandably do not allow their authors to look more deeply at the profound significance of the sentence's being embedded in America's permanent historical memory.

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[15]Marjorie Hyer, "Southern Baptist Chief Slips into a New Controversy with Jews," *Washington Post*, 21 November 1980, F11.

[16]Naomi W. Cohen, "An Overview of American Jewish Defense," in *Jews and the American Public Square: Debating Religion and Republic*, ed. Alan Mittleman, Robert Licht, and Jonathan D. Sarna (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002): 31-32.

[17]William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*, rev. ed. (New York: Broadway Books, 2005), 215-216.

[18]Daniel Goodman, "Strangers, Neighbors, and Strangers Again: The History of Southern Baptist Approaches to Jews and Judaism," *Review and Expositor* 103, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 63-89.

Cohen is correct that Jews were concerned about more than merely one man, or even Southern Baptists in general. Martin's belief that Smith's words were so well received in Reunion Arena because so many Americans were wary of a growing diversity of religious opinions in the United States seems plausible. Goodman's assertion that internal denominational politics have as much to do with relationships between the SBC and American Jews as anything else appears to be true. Yet none of these offer a fully satisfactory explanation of why Smith's statement brought Americans from every quarter into a very public discussion of the American ideals of religious freedom and the merits of the newly-found "Judeo-Christian" civil religion that had embraced a triangle of Protestant/Catholic/Jew as an embodiment of those ideals. It appears that all of these elements—Jewish experience in America, conflicts within the SBC, and tensions within the American populace at large—fed upon one another. Further, the post-World War II efforts by American Jews to engage in dialogue with evangelicals, and those of the SBC to engage in dialogue with Jews, were also reaching critical mass in 1980. Thus, when Smith made the following statement in Reunion Arena, he created the perfect storm, a storm that has yet to be fully examined for both its causes and effects:

> And if America is going to know revival, there must be the preaching of the supremacy of Christ…I'm telling you all other gods besides Jehovah and his son Jesus Christ are *strange* gods. It's interesting to me at great political rallies how you have a—a Protestant to pray and a Catholic to pray, and then you have a Jew to pray. With all due respect for those dear people: my friend, God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew, for how in the world can God hear the prayer of a man who says, "Jesus Christ is not the true Messiah"? It is blasphemous! … We need to bring the world to the foot of the cross. The cross, the cross, ascends *everything* and *every* idea and *every* nation and *every* philosophy and *every* goal! My friend, it is not "God and country", it's *God!*[19]

[19]See "Campaign Report," *Bill Moyers Journal*, prod. Sydney Smith, Public Broadcasting Service, 26 September 1980, VHS.

Ultimately, in the chapters that follow it will be seen that those who cite Smith's statement as centrally significant about what it has the potential to reveal about 1980s American life are correct to do so, but that they have not fully understood why that is the case. This is not primarily a story about how religion affected American politics. Instead, it is a story about how secular and religious politics shaped ideas about national identity and interfaith—and *intra*faith—relationships in this period of national crisis. "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew" was, indeed, a watershed moment. It was not a transformative one, but one that gave voice to a broad range of perspectives all at once, allowing us to observe the transformations already taking place within relationships among Jews, evangelicals, Southern Baptists, and national politics.

Smith's now-infamous statement about Jewish prayers was not wholly discontinuous with preexisting trajectories for Southern Baptists, American Jews, or American politics. Yet there was something else going on when the world reacted to Smith than merely finding discussion of his words a useful way to talk about existing cultural tensions, and especially when those most closely involved reacted to the kerfuffle. The response revealed new areas of disagreement that were more subtle and less conveniently expressed in sound bites. At this historical moment, a nation was revising its self-conception. Doing battle over Smith meant doing battle over American principles of freedom and democracy. The process of learning about other Americans in other regional cultures that began for the members of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the SBC who engaged in interfaith dialogue in direct response to the Smith controversy brought unexpected bouts of reflection about their own American subcultures. While changes in leadership at the national level for both the ADL and the SBC did have an impact on the continuing relationship between the two, in the end far more than logistics severed their ties.

My research shows that the major issue that ultimately put the ADL and the SBC's fledgling joint working group asunder was not primarily theological, nor was it strictly political in nature, but was a conflict over the meaning of American identity and the ideal of religious liberty. The thing that most closely united the ADL and the SBC turned out to be the thing that tore them apart. Therefore, this is at a most basic level a story about the costs of religious freedom and the limits of America's democratic ethos, and the ongoing pervasiveness of the Cold War's religio-political framework well beyond its formative years in the early part of the era—even into the 1980s.

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Until relatively recently, historians neglected to account for the significant role religion played in the Cold War.[20] Thankfully, this is being remedied, and this is producing new lines of inquiry for scholars of religion.[21] Contemporary Cold War historians have examined and re-examined the culture that produced sociologist Will Herberg's seminal *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* in 1955, telling us many things about the rise and fall of what Kevin M. Schultz has termed "tri-faith America." Despite observing an apparent decline in religious fervor, and acknowledging that "the religion which actually prevails among Americans today has lost much of its authentic Christian (or Jewish) content," Herberg asserted that "American religion and American society

[20]For an excellent summary of the main lines of scholarly inquiry among historians of the Cold War, see the editor's introduction to *Religion and the Cold War*, ed. Dianne Kirby, Cold War History Series, ed. Saki Dockrill (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2003), 1-22.

[21]See, for example, Leilah Danielson, "'It Is a Day of Judgment': The Peacemakers, Religion, and Radicalism in Cold War America," *Religion and American Culture* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 215-248; Mike Grimshaw, "Encountering Religion: *Encounter*, Religion, and the Cultural Cold War, 1953-1967," *History of Religions* 51, no. 1 (August 2011): 31-58; Zoe Knox, "The Watch Tower Society and the End of the Cold War: Interpretations of the End-Times, Superpower Conflict, and the Changing Geo-Political Order," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 4 (December 2011): 1018-1049; and Hugh B. Urban, *The Church of Scientology: A History of a New Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 89-117.

would seem to be so closely interrelated to make it virtually impossible to understand either without reference to the other."[22] For Herberg, "American religion" meant Judaism, Catholicism, and so-called "Mainline" Protestantism.[23] Indeed, he had observed, 95% of Americans identified as Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, with the other 5% supposedly holding "no preference" (any preference other than these three was recorded as none).[24] American society had strong expectations of its citizens' adhering to Western monotheism, and beyond the boundaries of Christianity and Judaism, nothing existed ("in order to be 'something' one must be either a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew"[25]). "For the foreseeable future," Herberg predicted, "we may with some confidence expect the continuance of the strength of the American Way of Life as both the tradition and the 'common faith' of the American people."[26] Dwight D. Eisenhower's now somewhat infamous claim that America's "government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is"[27] was, to 1950s America, an obvious

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[22]Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, New York: Country Life Press, 1955), 15.

[23]The use of the term "Mainline," then as much as today, reifies a misperception of being "mainstream," or holding a majority. Here, I use it out of a desire to avoid anachronism, but agree with Martin Marty's 1976 observation that its use is "unfortunate" and tends to be "somewhat more elite than is the whole complex of majority religion in America," with an "aura" that suggests wealth and social prominence more than numeric domination. See Martin Marty, *A Nation of Believers* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976), 53.

[24]Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, 59. Whether it was because they actually said they held "no preference" (as opposed to subscribing to another religion) or because the survey did not account for the possibility is not specified, because, as Herberg says, "the category 'other religions' proved too small for analysis and is included under 'no preference.'" See idem, 78 n. 2.

[25]Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, 70. See also note 6, above.

[26]Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, 94.

[27]"With us of course it is the Jud[e]o-Christian concept," he said. Eisenhower quoted in T. Jeremy Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2009), 55.

affirmation of the unity of America's three faiths—no more, and no less.[28] Herberg identified American religion as "Jewish-Christian faith;"[29] here I will refer to this dominant ideological thread as "Judeo-Christianity." 1950s Judeo-Christianity inserted "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, stamped "In God We Trust" on the nation's currency, required its schoolchildren to pray "nonsectarian" prayers before classes began, and brought out a trio of priests, rabbis, and Protestant ministers to petition God to bless inaugurations. Prayer, then, had become one of the main activities through which Judeo-Christianity expressed itself. To challenge the validity of these practices (as Smith had) was to challenge what was seen as the axiomatic foundation of American freedom. It was a society more tolerant of religious difference than that which immediately preceded it, but its tolerance extended only to those who fit within its new framing of what it meant to be a good American—("Mainline") Protestant, Catholic, or Jew.[30]

Judeo-Christianity was as bland as it was ubiquitous; it found its strength in disregarding distinctions in favor of a vague, shared moral grounding rooted in a generic Western God, in contrast to America's "godless" communist enemies. T. Jeremy Gunn calls it "governmental theism," reflective of his argument that "'God' was cited in the political arena—whether inside at the White House or outside at a city hall dedication of a Ten Commandments monument—not for the prophetic purpose of calling the nation's citizens to repentance but for the political purpose of throwing down the gauntlet in defiance of America's enemies at home and abroad."[31]

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[28]Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, 97-98.

[29]Ibid., 270.

[30]See Jonathan P. Hertzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 198, and Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

[31]Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons*, 9.

Jason W. Stevens has shown how this three-directional partnership rescued Jews from accusations that Marxism and was Jewish in origin, making American Judaism safely compatible with Western democratic ideals. Americans did not seek alliances among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in hopes of promoting the multicultural diversity with which twenty-first-century Americans are more familiar. Instead, they did so "because a chorus of voices espousing common values was less likely to be drowned out by extreme ideologies masking a will to power."[32] In so doing, Jonathan P. Hertzog argues, they tied the necessity of religion to the threat of communism, so that when communism's threat faded, "so too would the urgent need for" religious fervor.[33]

Whether or not communism seemed threatening, Judeo-Christianity held too many tensions within it to remain the consistent law of the land. With challenges to its formative assumptions—that there is such a thing as truly nonsectarian religious activity, and that the three groups were really somehow the same at heart—a series of court decisions chipped away at Judeo-Christianity's grip on American government at all levels. In 1962, an era (seemingly) came to an end, when the Supreme Court ruled public school prayer unconstitutional in *Engle v. Vitale.* As Schultz observed, testimony in this case, and other similar cases, revealed that there really was no neutral "middle ground" free from sectarian battles to keep Judeo-Christianity safe. The Courts had to follow the logic of Judeo-Christianity to its end. If nothing really was non-

[32]Jason W. Stevens, *God Fearing and Free: A Spiritual History of America's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 13-15, quote from 15.

[33] Hertzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex*, 8.

sectarian, then the government would not endorse anything (not to be confused with endorsing nothing).[34]

Historians point out that Herberg, like Judeo-Christianity's power brokers, were embracing a myth of national unity that excluded many people. The "voice of religion in America" did not belong to evangelicals. The national media did not seek their opinions on the issues of the day, favoring representatives of "Mainline" Protestantism from the National Council of Churches.[35] Herberg did not see fit to include them in his study. Sociologists as well as Census demographers of this era made no effort to consider the commitments of evangelicals as distinct from any other Protestants. As Schultz puts it, "evangelicals were, as a social category, nonexistent."[36] As both "theological and cultural outsiders," their opinions simply did not matter to America's Judeo-Christian power bloc, in spite of their large numbers.[37] They also did not seem to be asserting themselves until later decades, when the standard historical narrative holds that they hijacked the rhetoric of Judeo-Christianity to argue for a return to a time that had never existed at all, one where they held great power and their values were normative for the American populace.[38] There is a suggestion of a preference for the invisibility of the 1950s; a time when evangelicals were sensible enough to know their place within the scheme of things, or perhaps for a time when their spirituality remained unsullied by the messiness of secular politics.

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[34]Schultz, *Tri-Faith America*, 134. See also Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 53-55.

[35]See Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons*, 199.

[36]Schultz, *Tri-Faith America*, 178.

[37]Hertzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex*, 206.

[38]For an excellent summary of the historiography of the rise of the Christian Right, see Hertzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex*, 206.

Some of those on the outside of Judeo-Christianity—Southern Baptists who had never belonged and the neoconservative Jews of the ADL who actively rejected this framework in the latter part of the Cold War for strategic purposes examined later—thought they could present a new model for America to follow, one of partnerships across religious lines that did not ask for theological unity. Yet despite a rejection of Judeo-Christianity as the basis of law, in many ways, much of America still clung to its doctrines, and of its expectations of their countrymen. Rejection of it was thus very controversial, whether it was evangelicals or Jews doing the rejecting. It is true that due to the Moral Majority's ongoing legacy, many evangelicals today employ the language of an "American Judeo-Christian heritage," and it seems to have a firmer grip on them now than it did when Smith denounced it in Dallas. However, it also appears that even beyond the evangelicals who latched onto the term as a rallying cry in the wake of the Supreme Court's dismantling of the legal grounding of many of the trappings of American civil religion, Judeo-Christianity did not go quietly into the night, either. As Hertzog has said, the wall between church and state is only one measure of how a nation envisions the relationship between religion and society, and not always the best one.[39] When asked to report on their feelings about various religious groups in the early twenty-first century, sociologists found that Americans still rank evangelicals significantly lower than Herberg's original grouping of ("Mainline") Protestant-Catholic-Jew, with evangelicals more or less tied with atheists in American esteem, a place more neutral than positive (America reserves its negativity for Muslims and Buddhists).[40] Americans also still seem to exaggerate their actual degree of religious involvement when

[39]Hertzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex*, 9, 201-202.

[40]Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 505-507.

surveyed, suggesting that the idea that religion still holds something of the kind of sway of the lukewarm 1950s—one has to *identify* religiously, whether or not one *behaves* religiously,[41] and the best thing to be is still a Catholic, a Jew, or a "Mainline" Protestant.

Beyond their inability to overcome such firmly entrenched ideals, my research suggests that the participants in the ADL-SBC interfaith dialogue project suffered from blindness to the myriad of ways beyond broad religious identities they were different from other Americans and from one another. Their conversations suggest that they believed Americans should share *some* ideals in common universally—and that they did not fully appreciate the reality that religious identity shaped these "secular" values as well. In the end, "religious liberty" cleaved the membership of the ADL and the SBC, in both senses of the word: it bound them together in a common cause, and it tore them apart as they discovered their differing definitions of an "American" value system. In the end, the dismantling of Judeo-Christianity as a legal framework left Cold War Americans with an ongoing challenge to the possibility of unity, but the one thing that none of the dialogue participants disputed was that there should be a universal grounding, somehow, in national values. Cold War American identity, as they demonstrated it, was a commitment to a hope that all Americans can see at least some things from the same perspective—that in some cases, they might all share a common mission and a common foe. In that way, despite their overt rejection of the Judeo-Christian model, they shared its basic assumptions about an "American" morality rooted in Western monotheism.

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[41]See Hertzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex*, 214.

Beyond the historiography of religion in Cold War America, this project draws upon work in a few other related fields. Numerous authors have examined the ways the "New World" affected the lives of both Christians and Jews who found their way to its shores; a much smaller swath of studies focuses specifically on the encounters between the two. Most literature dealing with the meeting of Christians and Jews in America considers Jewish perspectives. It is in many respects a predictable phenomenon that the literature would concentrate on this theme, given that Jews would encounter Christians as something of a matter of course, whereas many Christians in America might never meet a Jew. Very often, the focus of this work has been upon the ways that Christian prejudices have affected the lives of Jews in America. A far smaller segment of the scholarship on Christian-Jewish encounters in America highlights Christian perspectives and experiences. This project draws heavily upon this secondary literature. From the framing work already done by others, we can construct an overall narrative for contextualizing the ADL-SBC dialogue of the 1980s within American history more generally.[42]

The efforts of several scholars help to show how the relationships between Christians and Jews in America have interfaced with American politics and give helpful comparisons to the contretemps over Smith and the 1980 United States presidential campaign. Others have already addressed the questioning of religion's place in American democracy and foreign policy with respect to Israel.[43] In addition, a broad range of literature on American Protestant

[42]A few broad studies are helpful in situating the figures studied in this project within American history as a whole. See Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*; and Egal Feldman, *Dual Destinies: The Jewish Encounter with Protestant America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 246.

[43]See Caitlin Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals, and Israel* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

Fundamentalism addresses Fundamentalist politics and Fundamentalist views of Jews and Judaism, which also helps illuminate the situation surrounding Smith.[44] Scholarship on interfaith dialogue between American Jews and Christians is another important point of comparison, as it gives insight into the motivations and expectations of participants within it.[45]

Though little has been done in showing the regional differences in how Jews and Christians related in America, a number of texts on Jewish experiences in specific regions are instructive. These texts shed light on how a denomination which has for much of its history been confined to the American south might approach Jews and Judaism differently than those Christians with a more significant presence in areas where the population of Jews is larger, as well as how American Jews themselves differ in their approach to Christians depending upon their locations. Such studies contribute to the project's analysis of the significance of the descriptor "Southern" in the term "Southern Baptist" for its subjects, as well as providing context for understanding why region was so vital for the success or failure of the ADL-SBC project.[46]

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[44]Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers Univeristy Press, 1987), 19-20; Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace*; Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 89-112; Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 233-241; Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004); Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1982* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

[45]See Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); and Egal Feldman, *Catholics and Jews in Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

[46]Hasia R. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Eli N. Evans, *The Lonely Days Were Sundays: Reflections of a Jewish Southerner* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993); Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Deborah Dash Moore, *New York Jews and the Decline of Urban Ethnicity, 1950-1970* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001); Clive Webb, *Fight against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); and Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

Scholarship on both American Jews and Southern Baptists has shown that there are internal questions about what it means to identify as Southern Baptist or Jewish, and this literature will help to clarify who was perceived to be included and represented in the interfaith dialogue I examine.[47]

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Though most will think of the 1950s when the term "Cold War era" is employed, recent scholarship has been showing how Cold War concerns shaped American culture well beyond the decade.[48] However, most current studies of the Cold War, particularly religion and the Cold War, have focused on the earlier part of the four decades of severely strained relationships between the United States and the Soviet Union. My project helps to show that there is continuity from this earlier period to the latter part of the Cold War, especially with respect to American understandings of the role of religion in politics, despite intervening social movements like the Civil Rights Movement, significant Supreme Court decisions that changed the landscape of church and state in American jurisprudence, widespread upheavals in social mores, and protracted involvement in a not-so-"cold" conflict in Vietnam. Indeed, reactions to the Civil Rights Movement and its reshaping of Judeo-Christianity had a strong influence on the ADL's

[47]For American Jewish identity, see Arnold M. Eisen, *The Chosen People in America: A Study in Jewish Religious Ideology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Juliene G. Lipson, *Jews for Jesus: An Anthropological Study* (New York: AMS Press, 1990). For Southern Baptists, see Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003); and Susan M. Shaw, *God Speaks to Us, Too: Southern Baptist Women on Church, Home, and Society* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008).

[48]See, for example, Renee Romano, "Moving Beyond 'The Movement that Changed the World': Bringing the History of the Cold War into Civil Rights Museums," *The Public Historian* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 32-51.

sense of mission, while they insisted they were the true preservers of tradition, both Jewish and American. Meanwhile, Southern Baptist discussions about church and state reveal their struggle to find their place among the previously Judeo-Christian halls of power.

Alongside telling a more complete story of the Cold War, this project contributes to our understanding of relationships between American Jews and Christians. While the existing literature offers a useful framework for study, it suggests there is still much we could learn from narrowing our focus both temporally and topically to the relationship between the ADL and the SBC in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Since much of the story already told deals with Christians who have changed their theological positions on the need for Jewish conversion, it would be especially helpful to have a study examining a group of Christians who have maintained missions among Jews, and how that has impacted Christian-Jewish encounters following the changes that occurred among others. Likewise, as these studies have focused on Jewish groups within the strong currents of Judeo-Christianity, highlighting a Jewish group that consciously distanced itself from this type of interaction would also help to give a fuller picture of how different groups navigate the challenges posed by America's somewhat blurry definitions of religious freedom and tolerance.

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The SBC came into being in 1845, as north and south split over the issue of slavery. Although the Triennial Baptist Convention had adopted a (supposedly) neutral stance on slavery, in 1845, its Home Missions Board refused to appoint a slaveholder as a missionary, which provoked Southerners to form their own, separate group. Unlike other Protestant denominations that divided in the prelude to the Civil War, as C. C. Goen notes, the Southern and Northern

Baptists parted ways forever, rather than reuniting during Reconstruction.[49] The Southern Baptist Convention also chose to retain its regional descriptor, unlike their northern counterparts, who adopted the name "American Baptist Convention" in 1950. Like the Triennial Baptist Convention, both Southern and Northern Baptists united their member congregations primarily for the purpose of establishing agencies and boards that could provide what individual churches could not, such as organizations for sending missionaries, establishing seminaries, and publishing religious literature. Congregations remained independent. The SBC's organizational structure is such that it has no governing power over its member churches, only its own organizations. Churches send "messengers" to the Convention's annual meeting, rather than "delegates." Some say the SBC is not technically a denomination at all, to distinguish itself from hierarchical structures in other Protestant groupings like the Presbyterian synods. No action taken by the SBC messengers is binding on the churches. Still, in the mid-twentieth century, there was a significant uniformity among Southern Baptist churches, with most using literature published by the SBC's Sunday School Board and participating in programs its various agencies and boards sponsored. Pastors usually came from the SBC's seminaries. In the 1960s, some of those in the SBC became alarmed by the literature it was publishing, saying it was unorthodox. Feeling their concerns were not addressed, they began a concerted campaign to take over the SBC itself, and root out all traces of "liberalism." Houston Judge Paul Pressler, who said that he had observed the destructive power of liberal ideas on Baptist churches while attending Princeton University in the region that had belonged to the Northern Baptists, spearheaded the effort. Pressler had read the SBC's Constitution and Bylaws and had discovered that through the

[49]C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985).

trickle-down effect of presidential appointments, if those worried about liberal drift could simply elect their own presidents of the SBC for ten years, they could remake the denomination as they saw fit. This effort began not long before the Jewish prayer controversy, with the election of Adrian Rogers as SBC president in 1979. In 1987, liberal Southern Baptists broke away to form the Alliance of Baptists. In 1991, moderate Southern Baptists followed suit in forming their own organization, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). The SBC cut ties with the CBF in 1994.

The SBC of the 1980s provides an ideal case study for a number of reasons. First, the SBC, despite its maintenance of the descriptor "Southern," was, after World War II, found in all 50 states, and thus had representation in every region of the country, just as American Jews did.[50] Second, some members of the SBC became deeply involved in evangelical-Jewish dialogue from its beginning in the years following Vatican II, when some American Jews began to have the sense that they would potentially be able to convince all of Christianity that Judaism was valid on its own, and were more willing than at any other point in history to engage in such dialogue with evangelicals. Third, the SBC of the 1980s still reflected a fairly diverse segment of the American Protestant population, since Baptist emphasis on autonomy meant that the group's loose alliance around certain agencies left freedom for fairly significant disagreements about a number of different doctrinal issues at the time. The SBC was undergoing a contentious shift in leadership that would fracture the denomination into three parts by 1991, and lessen the tolerance for differences of opinion on doctrine, but prior to that point, it had a fairly diverse mix of fundamentalists, moderate evangelicals, and liberal Protestants, who fought intensely over issues like whether to take Genesis literally and women's equality, sort of a cross-section of the

[50]See Dale E. Jones, et al., *Religious Congregations & Membership in the United States* (Nashville: Glenmary Research Center, 2002), electronic resource.

diversity present within American evangelicalism more generally.[51] The SBC was a behemoth, the largest Protestant denomination in the world, and their official actions generally made national headlines and were a part of national debate. Finally, and perhaps most glaringly, Smith's comments provide a unique window on the opinions of those Christians and American Jews not interested in or involved in interfaith dialogue. The incident's occurrence during a presidential election campaign provoked many of these Baptists, Jews, and other Americans to express their opinions, whereas otherwise their thoughts on the subject would probably be totally unrecoverable. While key means of expressing their thoughts were, of course, letters to Southern Baptist and Jewish leaders, they also found ways to do so within the public square, through newspapers, public resolutions, and various other forms of media available at the time.

The ADL had its roots in an older and larger organization as well, the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith. B'nai B'rith was originally a fraternal service organization meant to help Jewish immigrants to the United States to adjust to and thrive in the new environment. In 1913, Leo Frank, a Jewish manager of a pencil factory in Atlanta, was tried and convicted for the murder of one of the factory's employees, 13-year-old Mary Phagan. Subsequent analysis of the case led Georgia's Governor John M. Slaton to commute Frank's death sentence to life imprisonment. Locals were outraged, and a lynch mob hanged Frank in 1915. Today scholars believe anti-Semitism was a major contributing factor in Frank's conviction and subsequent lynching, just as

[51]For an in-depth study of Southern Baptist attitudes in this period, see Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*. The Southern Baptist Convention eventually split three ways, with the conservative faction retaining the original name, liberal Baptists becoming the Alliance of Baptists, and the more middle-of-the road forming the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

many Jews believed at the time.[52] In response to Frank's conviction despite evidence of another man having committed the crime, and in part because Frank had been the president of Atlanta's B'nai B'rith chapter, a group of members of Chicago's B'nai B'rith formed the Anti-Defamation League in September 1913. The ADL's original mission, as reflected in its name, was to combat Jewish defamation and to seek fair treatment for Jews in civil life. In the 1960s, having been swept up into Judeo-Christianity, the ADL became involved in the Civil Rights Movement, and at various times in its history officials of the ADL have seen it as their responsibility to work toward eradicating discrimination of all kinds, against anyone, Jewish or not. During the 1970s, joining a surge of neoconservatism among American Jews intended to combat the radical New Left and the Black Power Movement,[53] ADL officials redefined "anti-Semitism" as failure to support the modern state of Israel. They called this the "new anti-Semitism" in contrast to the forms they had worked to combat in previous decades, and asked in 1974, "Is the post-World War II honeymoon with Jews over?[54] Today, the ADL continues to focus on support for Israel as its main goal.

The ADL of the 1980s is a useful counterpoint in this study, since it had a unique approach to interfaith dialogue. Much of what we already know about interfaith dialogue

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[52]See *The People v. Leo Frank*, Ben Loeterman Productions for *Frontline* and PBS (dir. Ben Loeterman, 2009). See also Jeffrey Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

[53]Jewish neoconservatism will be examined in chapter three. See also David Biale, *Power & Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schoken Books, 1986), 197; Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 202-206; Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Ethan Goffman, *Imagining Each Other: Blacks and Jews in Contemporary American Literature*, SUNY Series in Modern Jewish Literature and Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 210.

[54]Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 1.

between American Christians and Jews surrounds groups of Jews who sought changes in Christian practice to end attempts to convert Jews (in the case of evangelicals, to bring evangelicals within the fold of Judeo-Christianity).[55] The ADL marched to the beat of a different drum. Interfaith dialogue was not a major focus of the group, and under the leadership of then-national director Nathan Perlmutter, they gave it even less attention. Like other Jewish neoconservatives, Perlmutter's motivations tended to be more political than religious. Yet the ADL would, and did, engage in dialogue when they felt it would bring immediate, practical benefit, as was the aim of all of its activities. The ADL did not attempt to effect slow changes in attitudes. It sought something more tangible as a reward for its efforts. Perlmutter's views on the functional usefulness of relationships with the SBC, which the agency acted upon at the regional level, were not fully shared among the American Jewish population as a whole, and drew intense criticism from some American Jews at the time, but many other American Jews felt the ADL's approach was best. The ADL of the 1980s reflects a segment of American Judaism struggling with self-identity and a growing disillusionment with its previous Christian allies, who were beginning to reject the idea of inclusion within the "American" religious framework of Judeo-Christianity. The ADL's internal divisions over how to handle the SBC also show the organization's ultimate inability to fully contain its constituency in the shadow of its umbrella. Like the SBC, it had a presence in every region of America, though its cultural influence was greatest in areas where the SBC's was weakest, a crucial factor in their ability to maintain meaningful ties.

[55]An excellent example of such a dialogue may be found in *A Time to Speak: The Evangelical-Jewish Encounter*, ed. A. James Rudin and Marvin R. Wilson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Austin: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1987). This is also seen in the discussion of the AJC's reaction to Smith in chapter two.

At its heart, this is an *American* story, and it could be no other. The importance of the American context cannot be overstated. In 1980, Smith greeted a nation in crisis mode, and the crisis they perceived was real. Involvement in a protracted war in Vietnam had ended only five years before, and military tensions with communist powers persisted for more than a decade beyond his appearance in Reunion Arena. Battles at home for racial and gender equality were being fought in continuously new iterations. Advances in medical science allowed a shakeup of sexual mores. For many, the traditional answers given in American religion were unsatisfactory, and abandoning one's family religion became increasingly common, particularly among disenchanted young adults. In a nation that had only a few decades before continually asserted that the only way to avoid complete destruction was a shared religious and moral ethos, it is not surprising that widespread fears about these various forms of social upheaval led to a search for cohesion and a "return" to a more-ordered world, but those who sought this order often found—and caused—even more chaos. Thus, this is not a story only about the things that divided American Jews and Southern Baptists who engaged in dialogue, but about that which they held in common as Americans of their time. Though they sometimes did propose mutually exclusive solutions, they both felt the anxieties of the broader culture's sense of crisis, and they were, in many respects, involved in the same search for order, although they would not find it.

In this respect, this study contributes to the field by examining how a perceived "failure" of interfaith dialogue might tell us something about the limits of interfaith dialogue itself. Studies like Ariel's and Feldman's have shown what happens when dialogue "works"—when it brings both sides to a resolution they find satisfactory. What, then, might cause dialogue to "fail"? I will show how the participants in interfaith dialogue often approach it with mutually contradictory goals, and that ultimately no solution can be found in such cases that would satisfy the

participants. The broader implications of my study involve this critical examination of the democratic ethos underlying both American politics and interfaith dialogue. In the end, it may well be impossible to achieve true "dialogue" among certain groups, and America's democratic "civil religion," in attempting to collect all under its umbrella, unintentionally also develops its own systems of exclusion. In giving a variety of conflicting messages about the relationship between church and state, the American system provides inadequate means for addressing the costs of religious freedom.

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This study examines a relatively brief period in the 1980s during which relationships between the SBC and the ADL developed through official, purposeful contact, and the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of formalized joint efforts, covering a span approximately equivalent to Ronald Reagan's rise to national prominence as a politician and the years of his presidency. In order to provide fuller context, it will offer historical background reaching into the past to about the middle of the twentieth century. It draws upon a wide variety of archival, print, and interview sources. My intent is not to provide an exhaustive overview of these encounters, but rather to contextualize the relationship within American Christian-Jewish encounters more generally, especially with respect to Jewish and evangelical contact, and to explain the various responses to Smith's statement in the 1980 United States Presidential campaign. I do not aim to suggest ways the SBC might change its theology (or, for that matter, how ADL officials might change theirs), but rather to examine the ways theological commitments at once did and did not hinder their cooperation.

The title of this introduction is also the title of a 1927 book published by the SBC.[56] Thinking of Jews and Southern Baptists as two "peoples" was an ongoing theme in SBC literature on Jews and Judaism throughout the twentieth century,[57] just as American Jews have often presented themselves as a "people." Thinking of both sides of this dialogue as "peoples" is probably the best way to approach it. They lived within particular subcultures of American life that included far more cultural markers than merely religion, and cannot be identified as specific racial groups.

I want to make it clear that I do not think it will be possible to account for the views of every person for whom the descriptor "Jewish," "Southern Baptist," or "American" might apply. Indeed, there will be notable silences. Many populations of both Southern Baptists and Jews were simply not talking about Smith or about each other, or never felt like expressing themselves in ways a historian might recover. There were plenty of Americans of every stripe for whom Smith's statement was not relevant, because it was either not surprising or did not seem to have anything to do with their own lives. My title, then, should not be taken to imply that this is a story that describes all of Jewish, Southern Baptist, or American life. Instead, it describes a particular group of Americans, Baptist and Jewish, focusing on a small set of (almost always white and male) participants in a so-called "interfaith dialogue." To the extent that it discusses others, it discusses them in relationship to these participants, and how their conversations about and with them reveals just how little the participants in dialogue actually corresponded to Southern Baptists and American Jews more generally.

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[56]Warren Mosby Seay, *A Tale of Two Peoples: Gentiles and Jews* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1927).

[57]See M. Thomas Starkes, *No Man Goes Alone* (Nashville: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1972), 35.

The first chapter opens with the controversy surrounding Bailey Smith as most people saw it: as a reflection of a pending major shift in the American political scene. Here I examine Smith's own ideas about religion and politics, although what Smith thought about this subject rarely, if ever, mattered to those who reacted to the political implications of his sermon in Reunion Arena. This first chapter asserts that Smith was not actually representative of the political activist strain of conservative evangelicalism arising in the late 1970s, but rather stood in stark opposition to it, just as he rejected Judeo-Christianity itself.

This rejection was a mutual one. In the second chapter, I show how reaction to Smith among both the general public, most American Jews, and a handful of Southern Baptists was a response to the activities and stated goals of the Moral Majority. This will demonstrate that theirs was ultimately not a conversation about Jewish prayer, but about American identity and civil religion; i.e., Judeo-Christianity. I examine both the political and the religious response to Smith, showing how deeply intertwined most religious responses were with ideas about American freedom, and vice versa. While addressing the theological assertions of the American public at large, this chapter's focus is upon how Jewish and Southern Baptists articulated either an assertion of the efficacy of Jewish prayer or a defense of Smith's ideas. In doing so, they revealed what they thought about America's religious landscape being dominated by Judeo-Christianity—and that Judeo-Christianity was more than a sociological category, but also a religious system. As outsiders, Southern Baptists seemed oblivious to these issues. Their responses bring their position as beyond the power centers of American life into glaring focus.

Chapter three examines the beginning of the joint working group that formed between the ADL and the SBC at the end of 1980. It focuses on the guiding philosophy of Jewish neoconservative and ADL national director Nathan Perlmutter, arguing that the ADL appeared to

be an ideal match for Smith and those in the more conservative wing of the SBC, since Perlmutter openly rejected Judeo-Christianity in favor of partnerships with those outside its framework. This chapter compares the ADL's approach with that of the AJC, which had engaged the more moderate element of the SBC in interfaith dialogue over the previous decade or so, and explains why the existing SBC relationship with the AJC provided an inadequate means of addressing the crisis. The AJC's approach could not have been more firmly entrenched in Judeo-Christianity, while Southern Baptists at large existed just beyond its reach.

The fourth chapter shifts attention to how Mark Briskman, North Texas-Oklahoma regional director for the ADL, put Perlmutter's philosophies into practice on the ground with the regional chapter's membership and SBC ministers and laity in the Dallas area and Oklahoma. It shows how Briskman was finally able to shift public discourse away from quick condemnation of Smith and Southern Baptists toward the ways Americans with deep theological commitments that conflicted with one another might still work together toward common goals. Here, the story reveals the partnership's hope of providing a new model for Americans in a post-Judeo-Christian culture. It also shows how each side of the dialogue learned about the other's alien culture, values, and beliefs and came away with a deeper understanding of both themselves and each other, and how this mutual rejection of Judeo-Christianity served as a sort of "glue" to unite these disparate groups.

The fifth chapter addresses the internal divisions within the SBC and the ADL over the things that formed heart of their partnership: the modern state of Israel, American foreign policy, and their institutional identities vis-à-vis Judeo-Christianity. Here, we see that both sides were having serious internal arguments about whether to support Israel or not, revealing divisions over their own identities and relationships with America and the world at large. At this point, the

embrace of the other through rejection of the Judeo-Christian framework begins to appear insufficient, since the values presumed shared were not as pervasive within their respective memberships as initially it may have seemed.

Finally, chapter six focuses on the collapse of the links between the ADL and the SBC when conflicts erupted over how to approach religious terrorism against Israeli Baptists. The debate over the meaning of "religious liberty," an ideal both sides presumed they shared, revealed that the ADL and SBC had mutually contradictory ideas about what they could expect of each other. As the Baptists of Jerusalem sought legal permission to rebuild their church, razed by arsonists, Jerusalem's Orthodox Jews staged protests and lobbied to drive the Baptists out of the predominantly Jewish neighborhood where the church had worshipped since the 1920s. Southern Baptists in America took Jews to task at ADL-SBC dialogue events for failure to stand up for suffering Israeli Christians. Shifts in leadership and institutional priorities for both sides caused existing relationships to wane, then sour. This chapter highlights the ongoing confusion about how American ideals of religious liberty should guide citizens of the United States. It also shows that in spite of their rejection of Judeo-Christianity, dialogue participants still upheld one of its basic assumptions: that there is a universal American moral ethos that all of their countrymen ought to share.

I conclude by revisiting the central theme of this project, seeking to answer the question of what the costs of American ideals of religious freedom and tolerance truly are, and how "religious freedom" and "tolerance" defy definition as "American" values. Both organizations maintain the assertion of fierce commitments to complete religious liberty worldwide. The ADL and the SBC both say their approaches reflect those ideals—and as much as they differ today, they are both correct to say that they are affirmations of the American principle of religious

liberty. Within a system that provides consistently schizophrenic messages of the concept of separation of church and state, no single interpretation of what religious freedom is can win the day.

In sorting out what it meant to be an American in the latter part of the twentieth century, the ADL and the SBC experienced a rare degree of give and take. There may be a temptation to simply detail what the SBC learned, or failed to learn, from its interaction with the ADL—indeed, in spite of the degree to which Jewish participants found Southern Baptists forcing them to revise their preconceptions, much of the working group's efforts focused on educating Southern Baptists about Jews, not vice versa. It would also be easy enough to attempt to choose heroes and villains for a story like this. Yet this is a story without heroes or villains, without one side that educated and another who needed educating. Instead, it is filled with people united in their commitment to the American experiment, whose country failed to give them the tools necessary to reach a consensus on national identity.

CHAPTER ONE:

I DON'T KNOW WHY HE CHOSE THE JEWS

> *I don't know if you've ever been involved in a worldwide controversy—and chances are you probably won't be—but it's amazing the kind of power people [in the media] have [to control your reputation].*[1]
>
> *--Bailey Smith*

It was just an ordinary end-of-summer Wednesday in Del City, Oklahoma, or at least it seemed to be. Sandy Smith was driving her sons home from school. She had the radio on. There was nothing unusual about any of that, yet September 17, 1980, was a day she would speak of thirty years later with fresh emotion in her voice, a day that "dramatically changed our lives." The news playing on the car radio that day, about her husband, Bailey, was a surprise. Sure, the Smiths had made the news before, and Sandy had seen her own picture in the paper on occasion—that is bound to happen when one is married to the president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)—but never anything like this. Apparently, when Bailey had been at the National Affairs Briefing in Dallas that August 22, he had said, "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of Jew." Now, Bailey probably had said something like that, Sandy knew, but surely not for the reasons people seemed to think.[2] The uproar was mostly about how her husband was apparently an anti-Semite who was in charge of the nation's largest Protestant denomination, and what this might mean for the United States presidential election in November, and ultimately

[1]Bailey Smith, interview by author, telephone, 19 March 2011.

[2]Sandy Smith, interview by author, Atlanta, 30 October 2010.

about the future of American religious pluralism. He was said to be the proponent of "invincible ignorance" whose doctrines of "hatred" would lead to an American Holocaust.[3] The man described was one she did not recognize.[4]

In the following weeks, Sandy tried to protect the children from the brunt of the criticism of their father, but that was difficult, and ultimately impossible. One could not turn on the television without being bombarded with the news about the pastor of First Southern Baptist Church.[5] The phone was ringing off the hook. The Smiths changed their home phone number, tired of its constant demands, which gave Sandy some relief even as Bailey continued to receive constant calls at his church office.[6] After that first wave of media coverage, with television, radio, and print sources all weighing in, an avalanche of letters and postcards followed. Most correspondence addressed to Bailey went to the church, and most of their authors sent letters, but one nun in California sent a series of postcards to the Smiths' residence that the children saw when they got the mail. The message on one of them permanently imprinted itself upon Sandy's mind: "I pray daily that your soul will burn in hell for all eternity." The cruelty of some of the critics was overwhelming. "Our lives were threatened. Our children's lives were threatened. … [It] was very difficult. It was."[7]

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[3]For references to an American Holocaust, see E. Glenn Hinson, "An Open Letter to Dr. Bailey Smith," *Western Recorder*, 17 September 1980, 7. Marc Tanenbaum and James Rudin of the American Jewish Committee both referred to Smith's "invincible ignorance." For Tanenbaum's thoughts, see Helen Parmley, "Remarks on Jews Draw Ire," *Dallas Morning News* 17 September 1980, 1. Rudin still used this phrase thirty years later when interviewed about the incident (James Rudin, interview by author, telephone, 11 February 2011).

[4]Sandy Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

[5]I am assuming she means local coverage; I have not found national television coverage of the statement until the PBS special a few weeks later.

[6]"Baptist Urges ADL to Meet Him to Discuss Remarks about Jews," *Religious News Service* 19 November 1980, 19-20.

[7]Sandy Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

Bailey grew weary of the attention he received from the press. He thought he was used to it before this incident, as he had served a year as the president of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO) before his June election as SBC president and had had regular interaction with local journalists, but this was unlike anything else he had previously experienced. Charles Petty, a friend of his from his Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) days who now worked in the North Carolina governor's office, had perhaps written prophetically when he sent a letter to Bailey that July. "Don't ever assume the secular press has your best interest at heart. They seek 'news hooks' and that often means controversy. Words are put in your mouth and attempts are made to get you to attack other people," Petty had said. "If one is not careful, he will spend all of his time mending fences with people he didn't mean to offend."[8] Bailey had answered August 13, with his own seemingly prophetic words: "How right you are about the Press [sic]. Wow! Are they ever a bunch of stinkers! … I have learned to be very cautious in what I say and with my tendency to 'shoot from the hip' and often spiced with humor, I really have to be careful."[9] Perhaps this was a lesson he had not learned as well as he had first thought. Bailey spoke to reporters constantly as that sweltering 1980 summer melted into fall. For him, too, this was a painful season, and he often broke down in tears.[10] His secretary at First Southern,

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[8]Charles V. Petty, Raleigh, North Carolina, to Bailey Smith, 21 July 1980, Bailey Smith Papers, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (SBHLA), Nashville, Tennessee.

[9]Bailey Smith, Del City, Oklahoma, to Charles V. Petty, 13 August 1980, Bailey Smith Papers. In a press conference Smith gave in 1982 after finishing his second and final term as SBC president, he said that the media attention he had was the biggest surprise the office had in store for him. "I had no idea the visibility I would have," he said. "The leader of the denomination is in a different world. The president of the Southern Baptist Convention is a world leader. My name has been in every major newspaper—not only in America, but in Europe as well." Bailey Smith, quoted in "Smith Credits Beliefs for Forging 'New Peace,'" *(Birmingham) Alabama Baptist*, 27 May 1982, 1.

[10]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta, 30 October 2010. "Any time that I was emotional—and I was, I was very emotional—any time people did something real nice for me, I'd come to tears, because I was called everything in the world." The day after the news of Smith's comments broke, he wrote a short letter in response to a woman in Lubbock who had written him earlier that month praising him for his loyalty to his friends. Though the vast majority of those who wrote to Smith in the coming weeks and months would receive form letters, since the

confronted with the onslaught of mail and the emotionally weary pastor, sifted through the letters and showed him only encouraging examples.[11] What was most taxing to the Smiths was the extent to which they felt people misunderstood Bailey's intentions, and how irrelevant that proved to be as time went on.

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Smith has always claimed that people have not understood what he was trying to say on that fateful day in 1980. That he once said, "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew" is the most likely reason people would know the name "Bailey Smith," whether or not they recall when or under what circumstances he had said such a thing, and it would be natural to attempt to recast one's main claim to fame in a positive light, since this made him an object of lasting, international disdain. Yet this chapter argues that Smith has, in fact, been misrepresented in popular memory. In 1980 and ever since, he has typically been taken to be a representative of the surge of political activism among conservative American evangelicals Jerry Falwell led under the name, "Moral Majority."[12] Smith's own beliefs about the relationship between religion and politics were the opposite of what America's historical memory has understood them to be, but

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avalanche of mail had not yet arrived, he had the time to express himself more personally that day. "Yes, the enemies are very real," he complained. "I have been horribly racked [sic] over the coals." Bailey Smith, Del City, Oklahoma, to Skeet Workman, 18 September 1980, Bailey Smith Papers. See also "Baptist Urges ADL to Meet Him to Discuss Remarks about Jews," *Religious News Service* 19 November 1980, 19-20: "I have to admit I have been deeply hurt. We have shed many, many tears over this."

[11]Sandy Smith, interview by author, Atlanta. Those who go through Bailey Smith's papers at the SBHLA will note that the person responsible for sending the documents to the archivist chose to get rid of almost all of the critical mail, leaving only letters that came from religious leaders among Southern Baptists and American Jews that might be classified as negative, and a significant quantity of positive mail from ordinary laypeople. Though Smith reports receiving up to 600 letters every day for some weeks (Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta), and wrote to the archivist asking what to do about the sheer bulk of it since he had to devote an entire office in his church to storing the mail, researchers will only find two small boxes of correspondence today. Yet if copies of letters to Smith sent to others are any indication, he was not exaggerating about his volume of mail. See Bailey Smith, Del City, Oklahoma, to Lynn E. May, 1 April 1981, Bailey Smith Papers.

[12]For a survey of the immediate interpretation of and response to Smith, see the next chapter.

Smith's significance never corresponded to his actual beliefs. Instead, by adding fuel to the fires already burning around him, Smith got caught in his own inferno. This is not to say that Smith did not say (or believe) that God does not hear Jewish prayers, something Smith never denied saying and still maintains is true. Christian theology about the efficacy of Jewish prayer, however, is not the reason why people reference Smith in academic or popular literature. It is worth taking time to examine Smith himself before addressing his interpreters, then. Smith, rather than being a part of the politically activist multitude, was instead quite critical of his co-religionists, but on *their own terms* rather than on the terms of American civic life. His reasons for scorning their activities were related to his concerns about ministerial responsibility, not the business of statecraft. Ultimately, what Smith said was a political statement, though he did not see it as such, but it did not represent the politics most people assumed he advocated. Smith rejected Judeo-Christianity completely, rather than hoping to reshape it as the Moral Majority hoped to do.

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When Smith became a national religious figure with his election to the SBC presidency, the spotlight he entered was one unfamiliar to him. As he said in 1982, the media scrutiny was the biggest surprise the position had in store for him. "I had no idea the visibility I would have," he said, calling the attention he received by virtue of the office he held an introduction to a "different world."[13] This was despite the fact that, during his six years as pastor of Del City's First Southern Baptist Church prior to that event, he had helped it to grow into the SBC's second largest church, with over 14,000 members, second only to W. A. Criswell's mammoth First

[13]Bailey Smith, quoted in "Smith Credits Beliefs for Forging New Peace," *(Birmingham) Alabama Baptist*, 27 May 1982, 1.

Baptist Church of Dallas, a pastor and congregation that had become legendary among American evangelicals.[14] Smith had a greater percentage of the town population attending his church than Criswell did. The population of Del City has never reached 30,000, rising to approximately 28,500 at its peak in 1980,[15] while in 1980 Dallas's First Baptist had around 20,000 members,[16] in a city with a corresponding population of over 900,000.[17] Beyond the number of congregants he attracted, Smith got the attention of the SBC's movers and shakers with an annual baptism record none of its other churches had ever approached in convention year 1980: 2,027.[18] Smith's church had grown, not through the method colloquially known as "fishing in other people's ponds," but through evangelizing on a massive scale. Smith was never satisfied with the size of the congregation. He was even known to stop his car to talk with strangers when he saw pedestrians going by who seemed "forlorn" to him, "walking with their heads down," because he felt his faith could lift their moods.[19] With his election at the age of 41, Smith set two new

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[14]For an account of just how large Criswell and Dallas's First Baptist loom in the SBC imagination, and within the broader American evangelical world more generally, see Joel Gregory, *Too Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America's Super Church* (Fort Worth: Summit Group, 1994).

[15]Thomas L. Hedglen, "Del City," in *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History & Culture* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 2007), online, digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/D/DE008.html, access date 30 March 2011.

[16]"Churchman in Hospital," *Observer-Reporter* (Washington, Pennsylvania) 14 January 1980, A-14.

[17]Population Distribution Branch, U. S. Bureau of the Census, "1980 and 1990 Census Counts for Cities with 1990 Population Greater than 100,000" (September 1996), online, www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/files/c1008090.txt, access date 30 March 2011.

[18]This should not be taken to imply that Smith suddenly burst onto the scene in 1980. When pastor of First Baptist Church of Hobbs, New Mexico, Smith had employed the same strategies, and the church had set state records for most baptisms in one year both in 1970 and 1971. See Daniel Richard Carnett, *Contending for the Faith: Southern Baptists in New Mexico, 1938-1995* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 79-80. Smith had been making a name for himself by setting various records and had been making the rounds of Southern Baptist evangelism conferences throughout the 1970s.

[19]Ken Demaret, "Top Baptist Bailey Smith Wins Souls—and Raises Hackes," *People Weekly* 8 March 1982, 90.

denominational records. He remains the youngest person ever to have held the office of SBC president, and the only person to have ever held both the national SBC presidency and the presidency of a state-level convention, as his BGCO presidency overlapped his first SBC term by a few months. Given his successes, it is easy to overlook just how much, as free-lance journalist Caleb Pirtle put it, Smith "was an innocent when it came to politics."[20] Yes, First Southern was something of a monolith, but it was not the sort of place that one typically envisions as a megachurch, nor was Del City a town with the reputed sophistication or large population of Dallas, and its pastor was not an imposing figure like Criswell. Smith was the son of a Baptist minister of a little church on the outskirts of Dallas that had not been able to pay enough to support his small family. Smith's father had worked two jobs during Smith's childhood, driving a downtown streetcar for the Dallas Railway Company on weekdays to make ends meet and keep himself in the ministry.[21] Both of Smith's parents died young, while Smith was working his own way through Ouachita Baptist University and SWBTS, unwavering in his determination to fulfill the call he felt to become a preacher and satisfied with no other course in spite of the challenges associated with the new responsibilities he had to find provision for his younger siblings.[22]

When First Southern went looking for a new pastor in 1973, the church was a large one by most standards, with 6,000 members, and some questioned whether they should hire a

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[20]Caleb Pirtle, "Target: Bailey Smith," *Plain Dealer Magazine* 7 June 1981, 45.

[21]Bailey Smith, "Walking in the Sunlight," in *Real Christianity* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), 123. See also idem, "A Babbling Preacher and a Strange Gospel," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981), 76; and idem, "No Time to Be Afraid," in *Real Christianity*, 167.

[22]Bailey Smith, "Lessons that Lift Life," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 51-52; idem, "The Tired Pastor and Weary Lord," in *Real Evangelism: Exposing the Subtle Substitutes for that Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1978), 105; idem, "The Worth of the Work," in *Real Revival Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982), 27; and Steven Smith, interview by author, Fort Worth, 28 July 2011.

minister without the usual credentials Southern Baptist churches of that size expected. Smith was in his mid thirties, and though he did have some experience pastoring other churches in neighboring states as he had worked his way through college and seminary and then for a few years afterward,[23] he did not have a doctorate. What Smith lacked in age and education, however, he seemed to have made up in a sort of folksy charisma, and the church decided that was good enough for them. "We don't need a doctor," the chair of the pastoral committee is reported to have concluded. "We're not a sick church."[24]

Thus, First Southern hired the young man. Smith was a bit rough around the edges, but that seemed appropriate for the equally rough town a few miles east of Oklahoma City. In 1981, Pirtle described Del City and its big Southern Baptist church this way:

> Del City, after all, is definitely not silk-stocking row. It hangs with calloused hands onto the threadbare outskirts of Oklahoma City, built as nothing more than a pit stop on the way to Tinker Air Force Base, a pop-a-top refuge for red-necks, blue collars and skinned knuckles. Its streets smell of spilled beer and pizza. And truck drivers, goat ropers and cowboys spend their evenings in the bars, their nights in jail, and their early mornings sipping warmed-over coffee in the Girlie Pancake House (They're Stacked Better). …
>
> Rising above the strip is the church itself, sprawling back behind the Del City Muffler Shop, next door to George's Pawn and Gun Shop and right alongside the 3W Western and Square Dance Apparel store. On Sundays, church members compete with grocery shoppers for parking spots outside Brannons, where you can get plain chili for 89 cents a can, but pay only 69 cents if you buy a can with beans in it.
>
> The church has all the trappings of a high school gymnasium. ... The brick sanctuary is neither fancy nor elaborate, just always full. The rich are there. So are the outcast. First Southern mirrors the streetwise image of Del City chic. It's silk and gingham. It's Brooks Brothers and patched denim. …

[23]See Bailey Smith, "Lessons that Lift Life," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching,* 52.

[24]Pirtle, "Target," 37.

> The black and red and brown and yellow skinned, they're all at First Southern. Bailey Smith has a church of, for, and by the common people. He's one of them—blunt, folksy, full of good humor and cowboy cunning. …[25]

Smith suited First Southern, and First Southern suited him. The church did not look askance at his drawing in the poor or socially undesirable—unemployed high school dropouts, prostitutes, drug addicts, and alcoholics.[26] In fact, the church had developed a reputation over the previous decades for being something of a radical place, one that upset traditionalists. In the 1960s, at a time when most Southern Baptist churches railed against new clothing styles, long hair, and a younger generation's disregard for conventional decorum, it had welcomed shaggy, barefoot hippies who wore cutoff jeans, sat in the floor, and cheered for baptisms. A nearby church had taken out full-page newspaper ads condemning the atmosphere at First Southern, but undeterred, the congregation brought in electric guitars, further bucking tradition. Smith's predecessor, James Draper, reflected on his years at the church as "the best possible situation: I didn't lead them; they led me."[27] If Smith was willing to take risks and disregard cultural expectations, then First Southern would be a good place to work. Later, reflecting on his pastorate, Smith

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[25]Ibid., 37-38. See also Bailey Smith, "Love without Limits," in *Real Christianity*, 21-22: "A preacher may be tempted to associate with those who are already polished, upright, rich, and stable and can contribute to his own financial being. But the person who loves beyond the limits of convenience is the one who loves people because everyone is a creation of God. It should not matter whether a person has a two-hundred dollar suit on or whether his toes are sticking from his shoes and he hasn't got a dime in his pocket."

Smith once reported going to visit a man who had been beating his wife when the woman came to him for help, and said that the man grabbed a gun while they talked in the kitchen of the couple's home. "I grabbed the wrist of the hand already gripping the shotgun, pulled back my right arm, and said, 'Sir, if you pick up that shotgun, I'm going to hit you in the face. I love you, Brother, and I want you to get saved, but I am not going to let you shoot us.'" Bailey Smith, "Let the Church Stand Up in Today's World" (June 1976), in *Real Revival Preaching*, 133.

[26]Bailey Smith, "Trees that Testify," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 11.

[27]James Draper, quoted in John Perry, *Walking God's Path: The Life & Ministry of Jimmy Draper* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 110; see also 105-110.

remembered it as a natural fit. "We'll never have a time in our life when we probably enjoy it as much as those twelve years [there]. ... I cannot think of a more pleasant experience."[28]

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Earlier in the summer of 1980, Jimmy Carter sought out the new leader of his denomination to offer the invocation at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) on the night he accepted the party's nomination for reelection as president. Smith gave the last in a series of four invocations over the course of the DNC's meetings. He observed that, in a nod to the "Judeo-Christian" ethic that had sustained pluralism in the American public square for a few decades, prayers had been offered by a Catholic priest, a Greek Orthodox Christian clergyman, and a Reform Jewish rabbi at previous sessions before Smith made his way to the podium on August 14, 1980.[29] The public might have remembered this, however dimly, had it been televised, but the networks chose not to show this portion of the DNC.[30] Smith's prayer made a small ripple in the SBC's media coverage of the story, but was otherwise largely ignored, despite Smith's prayerful implicit contradiction of the Democratic platform ("And I pray, Father, that you will give us the great concern for our families, for life, born or unborn…").[31]

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[28]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta. Smith said his eventual departure from the church was not based upon negative feelings on the part of pastor or congregation, but because Smith felt he had a new calling to become a full time itinerant evangelist. Smith never pastored another church.

[29]See *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention* (Washington, D.C.: Democratic National Committee, 1980), 214, 358, 501, and 569.

[30]See American Broadcasting Company, "Democratic National Convention (Thursday)," 14 August 1980, Television News Archive (TNA), Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee; CBS Broadcasting, Inc., "Democratic National Convention (Thursday)," 14 August 1980, TNA; and National Broadcasting Company, "Democratic National Convention (Thursday)," 14 August 1980, TNA. All of the networks showed journalists' live reports during that portion of the DNC program.

[31]*Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention*, 569. This was not necessarily a contradiction of Carter's position on abortion; Carter believed that abortion was morally wrong as well, and had said, "We should do everything within the confines of the Supreme Court ruling to discourage it." Jimmy Carter, quoted in "Interview: Jimmy Carter," *Playboy* (November 1976), available from www.playboy.com/articles/jimmy-carter-interview,

Smith's DNC prayer, in contrast to the other clergy's in other sessions, had focused on his friend Carter's need for divine sustenance and wisdom, rather than the greatness of America. It was not a prayer from the world of Judeo-Christianity so much as an evangelical prayer, the most sectarian prayer offered at the DNC. The others fit much more comfortably within Judeo-Christianity. Catholic John Patrick Hannan had asked God to "inspire the delegates and their alternates" with "Your divine blessings," thanking God that "You formed the good earth and that part of it that we call our country. Those who crossed the oceans and struggled to be free gave us our inheritance. We are their children, many races, colors, and creeds, Your children, one nation."[32] Greek Orthodox Archbishop Iacovos had praised the Declaration of Independence in his prayer, noting that many Americans had "often gone astray and allowed ourselves to behave and live contrary to the beliefs and principles with which our nation prospered and grew. … For we truly believe in our hearts that this nation of pilgrims and immigrants can and must chart a new course that would advance the cause of the God-given human rights into a glorious reality for all."[33] Reformed Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman had told God that "we come before You as a grateful people, a grateful nation … for this land, for its fertility and abundance, for the natural blessings which are ours … for the spirit of our people, a nation forged out of the resolute will and vision of those seeking freedom and justice, a nation built on the foundation of truth,

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accessed 10 April 2011. See also James and Marti Hefley, *The Church that Produced a President* (New York: Wyden Books, 1977), 240.

[32]*Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention*, 214.

[33]Ibid., 358-359.

opportunity, and responsibility."[34] None of them mentioned Carter, then president of the United States.

In all respects, Smith's was a more personal prayer as well as a more sectarian one. Smith was grateful for

> Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who came and gave His life upon the cross and shed His blood and through that blood we might have forgiveness of our sins. And after He died, He arose from the grave and reigned victoriously and one day will come back to receive those who have trusted in Him as Lord and Savior. … We pray for President Carter that You would protect him, undergird him, and strengthen him. And I pray that he shall always lean upon you for wisdom, for strength and direction. … In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.[35]

Smith was not interested in political clout or acclaim. "It was a prayer that would not get me invited back," Smith acknowledged, "but it was okay." That did not bother him.[36] When Carter asked him to come to a barbecue he was having in the Rose Garden not long afterward, Smith turned down the invitation. He was scheduled to preach at a revival meeting in Van Buren, Arkansas. Smith had his priorities, and Van Buren needed him more than the U.S. President, he felt. [37] (Carter was already "born again," after all.)

Smith wanted to balance his appearances to avoid giving the impression of endorsing any one candidate, given his position as the leader of his denomination. Wishing not to seem to throw his support behind Carter was not meant as a slight. He was fond of Carter. "He had a smile that made you want to hug his neck…. I really think Jimmy Carter was a good, good, decent, moral

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[34]Ibid., 501.

[35]Ibid., 569-570.

[36]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

[37]Pirtle, "Target," 45; and Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

man."[38] Smith had gone to the DNC based upon his personal relationship with Carter as co-religionists. "[Carter] said, 'I want you to know, now you're *my* president.' Because he was a Southern Baptist, and I was president of the Southern Baptist Convention."[39]

When another friend of Smith's, Southern Baptist televangelist James Robison, asked Smith to come to Dallas to preach a sermon at an event where Ronald Reagan would appear, Smith accepted, in spite of warnings from Carter aide Robert Maddox, also a Southern Baptist, to stay away. Maddox told Smith, "you don't want to get involved with those men [the Moral Majority]," naming several ministers. "Bob, you just named some of my best friends," Smith replied. "I was not going to let anybody talk me out of a loyalty to my friends." Smith thought Christians should vote, and that emphasizing their need to vote was a good idea, one he supported. Maddox was disturbed. "I told him they were positioning him where he didn't want to be positioned." Smith reassured Maddox that he had no intention of endorsing Reagan (any more than he intended to endorse Carter).[40] This seemed like a means of remaining publicly neutral, as he explained to Southern Baptist journalists at the time.[41] As he said in a letter responding to a woman who said she was disappointed that he had chosen to attend the meeting, "There were 4,000 Southern Baptists registered at the Conference in Dallas and I felt that if that many of our people were interested, I should attend and … be informed. That is why I went." He pointed out

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[38]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

[39]Ibid.; see also "One to Another," *Spartanburg (North Carolina) Herald-Journal* 28 June 1980, A5. After telling Smith, "you're my president," Carter told him that he was praying for him.

[40]"Carter Aide Tries to Stop Baptist Leader from Attending Reagan Meet," *Frederick (Oklahoma) Daily Leader* 27 August 1980, 6.

[41]"Smith Shuns Maddox Advice," *Baptist Messenger*, 4 September 1980, 5. The controversy over Smith's appearance at the meeting annoyed some people, who believed Smith should have freedom as a Baptist to go wherever he liked. See Skeet Workman, Lubbock, Texas, to Bailey Smith, 3 September 1980, Bailey Smith Papers.

that he had also gone to the DNC "for the same purpose. I am trying to be the President of all Southern Baptist people and that is why I am going to a great deal of trouble to be informed about current issues. I certainly agree with you that we should never label a candidate as 'God's man'."[42] Smith did not know as much about the Moral Majority, or about Reagan, as he would have liked. He thought going to the meeting would help him learn, and he said that was his main goal. He promised he would keep as low a profile as possible.[43]

Smith's Baptist commitments included an affirmation of the necessity of the separation of church and state, though Baptists tend to give religious, rather than secular, reasons for the principle. "Certainly we have to believe in pluralism," he said, but that was not the point of keeping politics out of the pulpit. Smith's rationale was that ministers should be loyal only to God's mission, not a political one, and that entanglement with such secular causes distracts one from preaching the pure gospel of Christ. "I don't directly bring politics into my preaching, because I have something more important to do. There are many Christians who vote Democratic... I believe what I have to say is more important than politics."[44]

The "National Affairs Briefing" was an event funded by Ed McAteer's Religious Roundtable in Dallas. It was more or less a rally for Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign, where thousands of ministers and laypeople sympathetic to the Moral Majority, as well as a handful of religious leaders and laypeople wary of it, gathered to discuss what their role in the

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[42]Bailey Smith, Del City, Oklahoma, to Karen Craig, 4 September 1980, Bailey Smith Papers.

[43]Pirtle, "Target," 46.

[44]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta. While Smith would probably not use the phrase "separation of church and state," preferring the term more popular among today's Southern Baptists, "religious liberty," his description of his beliefs about this subject is consistent with broader Baptist conceptions of the relationship between church and state.

election, and politics in America in general, ought to be. Many wore buttons reading, "Christians for Reagan." Speakers at the event included a variety of well known televangelists, and Reagan himself, who gushed to the cheering throngs, "I know you can't endorse me, but I endorse *you.*"[45] The Moral Majority claimed to know what kind of America was in everyone's best interest: a Christian America, with a government that embraced laws based upon religious principle. It would be a nation whose schoolchildren said a prayer before they learned their multiplication tables, whose adults would have government incentives to live out a conservative Protestant sexual ethic, and whose dissenters from these ideals would simply have to accept these things as the norm. To some extent, they were waving the banner of an earlier decade's Judeo-Christian self-understanding, although their version of it looked a little different than the 1950s. Jerry Falwell, an independent (not Southern) Baptist from Lynchburg, Virginia, was their leader. At the Dallas gathering, Falwell explained what he termed the "threefold primary responsibility" of a minister: "Number one, get people saved; number two, get them baptized; number three, get them *registered to vote*."[46] The mercenary environment was not reflective of Smith's ideological commitments. Evangelism was not a political force, and getting people registered to vote, or suggesting to them for whom they might vote, was not part of what he felt responsible to do; indeed, such a thing would have been an irresponsible distraction from one's true responsibilities as a pastor. As his son, Steven, later put it: "Dad and Falwell were friends, but I guess … I think of my dad in many respects as the opposite. He didn't feel like that it was

[45]"The New Right," *Bill Moyers Journal.*

[46]See *Life and Liberty: For All Who Believe,* prod. Norman Lear, People for the American Way, 1980, VHS; and Gary North, "The Eschatological Crisis of the Moral Majority," *Christian Reconstruction* 4, no. 3 (January/February 1981): 1-2.

his objective to look at the church and look at concentric circles around the church and influence as many people as possible so that ultimately you could create a culture shift and change. That just wasn't even on his radar." Smith was focused on evangelism.[47]

Smith could at once agree and disagree with his audience's concerns. He was definitely worried about what he saw as a flaw in the moral compass of most Americans, and in the end, he would cast his vote for Reagan, feeling Carter was too liberal in his policies for Smith's personal political comfort,[48] though he would never say so publicly. As for the question of using the church as a force for political mobilization, however, Smith had misgivings, despite his respect for the clergymen who were doing it, men he considered close friends. When he rose to give his scheduled sermon that August 22, 1980, Smith opened with a warning: "I am endorsing no candidate."[49] Instead, he had some thoughts about the surge of political activism among his peers. He explained why the goals of an evangelical minister conflicted with political aims, and reflected upon his experience at the DNC as evidence. It was necessary in order to achieve certain political ends to make interfaith alliances, such as the Moral Majority advocated, but such a public display of ecumenism involved in producing a triad of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish prayers was religiously misguided, and sent the wrong message. One could not let one's politics or patriotism distract one from what was of ultimate importance. Instead of campaigning for candidates and public policies, Smith urged evangelical ministers to use their pulpits to continue preaching about Jesus, to transform the culture from within, rather than through force of law.

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[47]Steven Smith, interview by author, Fort Worth, 28 July 2011.

[48]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

[49]Bailey Smith, Del City, Oklahoma, to Karen Craig, 4 September 1980, Bailey Smith Papers.

Such surface transformations that might be wrought through political gain were meaningless anyway, he said, since "if America is going to know revival, there must be the preaching of the supremacy of Christ. … We need to bring the world to the foot of the cross. … My friend, it is not 'God and country, it's *God!*"[50] As one attendee summarized Smith's point,

> He pointed out that our hope is not in the Republicans, Democrats, liberals or conservatives but in Jesus alone. He said the issue is not even God and country, but simply God! He then made the point that prayer is not some show, some sprinkling of religiosity over our gatherings for window dressing or public relations.[51]

Smith's ideas about church and state were consistent. While he lamented America's moral problems often in his sermons, he never felt that political solutions would effect meaningful changes. In one sermon from this period, Smith explained, "As a pastor, I must desire not only to accomplish what he [God] wants in winning souls and building up the saints and growing an evangelistic church, but also to do it the *way* he wants me to do it. I don't want to just do it in an expedient way, or a political way—I want to do it God's way!"[52] In another, he admonished his listeners that they (the Christian church universal) were the problem with

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[50]See "Campaign Report," *Bill Moyers Journal*, prod. Sydney Smith, Public Broadcasting Service, 26 September 1980, VHS.

[51]Adrian Rogers, "In Defense of Bailey Smith," *(Birmingham) Alabama Baptist*, 11 December 1980, p. 6. The reflections of another witness to Smith's sermon also affirmed that Smith was urging the audience to focus on their religious duties, and not to compromise them for political gain. See Charles S. Lloyd, "Did Bailey Smith's Remark Cause Embarrassment," clipping enclosed in Ron Waters, Marietta, Georgia, to Bailey Smith, 6 November 1980, Bailey Smith Papers. See also Pirtle, "Target," 46: "Ironically, it had nothing at all to do with the evangelicalistic message he was preaching."

This was not the only time Smith was critical of other evangelical ministers for misleading people about what was important, saying of one, "He is making money from little old ladies on Social Security with such ridiculous garbage and nonsense. It repulses me even to think of it." Bailey Smith, "Seven Kinds of People God Will Not Save," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 39. He also worried about the way some Christians had begun to get sucked into a superficial television and radio religion: "Many of the faithful watchers and listeners have become superficial blobs of joy and nothing more. They say, 'praise the Lord' with their lips and 'go to hell' with their lives." Bailey Smith, "Reservoirs of Truth or Rivers of Blesssings," in *Real Evangelism*, 63.

[52]Bailey Smith, "Being Good is Not Enough," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 58.

America, and the solution would be found in fixing themselves, not in electing the right officials. "We have churches all over America filled with people who are proud of their sins. … the problem is not politics … the problem is sin."[53] In fact, Smith felt that a culture that was too outwardly "Christian" would be a problem for those who lived within it, a danger he felt was already present in much of the American South, since it made it less clear who was truly among the faithful and who just kept up appearances. "It's possible to have a Jesus shirt and not a Jesus heart."[54]

At least some of the Moral Majoritarians understood that Smith was critical of them, and it annoyed them. Gary North, who also spoke at the event, later wrote that Smith's ideas were a "glaring exception" to the other speakers', and that Smith had said "he really was not favorable to the political thrust of the meeting, and that he came to speak only because some of his friends in the evangelical movement asked him." North thought Smith's criticism of the Moral Majority was severely misguided (because it clearly *was* "proper for Christians to get active in politics," and "It is our legal right and our moral, meaning religious, duty") and was irritated that he had chosen such an unwise illustration of his point. He found it especially troubling that "the Moral Majority got tarred with that statement by the secular press, when the man who made it had publicly disassociated himself with the Moral Majority."[55]

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[53]Bailey Smith, "The Result of Revival," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 46. See also idem, "Four Things That God Does Not Know," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 83; and idem, "Let the Church Stand Up," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 132-133.

[54]Bailey Smith, "Jesus Excitement," in *Real Evangelism*, 137-140.

[55]North, "Eschatological Crisis," 1.

There were, as indicated above, those at the rally who came simply because they were worried about what the Moral Majority was up to. Milton Tobian, with the American Jewish Committee (AJC), was one such attendee. William Pharr, a Southern Baptist and the Dallas-North Texas Regional Director of the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) was another. Out of all that was said that day, they found Smith's rationale for the necessity of separation of church and state, and his call for the gathered ministers to focus on evangelism, most alarming. Their interpretations of Smith's sermon suggest that they did not understand him to be critical of conflating religion and politics, but of being wholeheartedly in support of marriage between the two. Pharr had made an audio recording of Smith's sermon, an excerpt of which he later transcribed and disseminated among the NCCJ's Dallas board.[56] Milton Tobian quoted the same excerpt of Smith's sermon in a memo to members of the AJC.[57] About a month later, Helen Parmley, the *Dallas Morning News* religion editor, had a copy of Pharr's transcript in hand, sent to her by a Dallas rabbi, and the makings of a front-page story that made headlines internationally the day following its appearance in her newspaper September 16. The story reproduced the transcript in full, quoting:

> It's interesting to me at great political rallies how you have a Protestant to pray and a Catholic to pray, and then you have a Jew to pray. With all due respect for those dear people, my friends, God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew, for how in the world can God hear the prayer of a Jew, or how in the world can God hear the prayer of a man who says, "Jesus Christ is not the true Messiah"? That is blasphemy.[58]

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[56]William J. Pharr, Dallas, Texas, to "All Members of the Board Dallas NCCJ," 9 September 1980, Marc H. Tanenbaum Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 603, Box 95/2, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives (AJA), Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio.

[57]Milton Tobian, Dallas, Texas, to Marc Tanenbaum, 10 September 1980, Marc H. Tanenbaum Papers, Box 95/2.

[58] Helen Parmley, "Remarks on Jews Draw Ire," *Dallas Morning News*, 17 September 1980, 1A.

This excerpt from Smith's sermon hit a nerve with a broad spectrum of Americans, less for what he intended than what he represented.

In fact, this transcript was subtly inaccurate. A few of the inaccuracies—saying Smith had said, "That is blasphemy," rather than, "It's blasphemous," for example—were minor and did not alter his meaning, but one key mistake skewed Smith's message slightly, revealing the underlying fears of Pharr as a transcriptionist, and casting Smith's intentions in a slightly different light. Smith had actually said, "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew, for how in the world can God hear the prayer of a man who says, 'Jesus Christ is not the true Messiah'?"[59] In Smith's actual words, the emphasis was upon a person, incidentally Jewish, who had rejected Christian doctrine about Jesus. In Pharr's transcript, as reproduced in the *Dallas Morning News* and later read internationally, the emphasis was on the Jewishness of the person whose prayers God would refuse to hear: "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew, for how in the world can God hear the prayer of a Jew, or how in the world can God hear the prayer of a man who says that Jesus Christ is not the true Messiah?" Here, there was an either/or distinction: God did not hear the prayers of Jews *or* of people who rejected Christian doctrine. While this was a minor difference that not even Smith himself noticed when asked whether he had said what Pharr claimed, and ultimately probably would not have changed public reaction, it does appear to enforce Smith's consistency. For Pharr, Smith emphasized Jews; Smith, in his understanding and as shown in a detailed analysis of his preaching, emphasized Jesus.

For Smith, the doctrine that God heard everyone's prayers was a pernicious one, though it was also, he acknowledged, a popular one, even among Southern Baptists. "God can do anything

[59]See "Campaign Report."

he wants to do. He is a sovereign God. He does not have to act because we think it is just, merciful, kind, or loving. God can do whatever he wants to do. … [and] there are some prayers in which God is not interested." Smith explained that God refused to listen to the prayers of selfish people ("God will not hear … a person who repeats, 'I want, I want. God, gimmee, gimmee'"), prayers that were intended to harm others ("God does not hear the prayers of those who pray for others to suffer disadvantages"), frivolous prayers about hoping to win football games ("God is not on anyone's side"), prayers from people who had not confessed their misdeeds ("the channel…is clogged up with sin"), or the prayers of hypocrites who mistreated their families, but claimed to be virtuous ("God does not want bitter family strife. God will not hear the prayers of a person like that"). Key to it all, however, was what one believed.

> To get your prayers answered, you must believe. … Faith is not intellectual assent. Faith is affirming "Jesus Christ, I step across the line of my own self-interest and my own desires. I give myself lock, stock, and barrel to you. I believe your word with all my heart. God, the matter is settled. I put my trust, faith, and total existence into you." That's faith, and when you pray with that kind of heart, God says he'll hear your prayers.[60]

Many felt Smith had singled out Jews, but he had mentioned Jews only because of the rabbi's presence at the DNC. In other, less publicized sermons, Smith had warned that anyone who had no personal conversion experience to Christianity would not find favor with God: "For example, the Baptists who were never saved. The Nazarenes who were never saved. The Pentecostals who were never saved. Then, there will be the agnostics, the haughty people, the arrogant people, the guy who slammed the door in the faces of those who came to share Jesus."[61] Being Southern Baptist was not what made a person a Christian, Smith said.

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[60]Bailey Smith, "The Problem of Unanswered Prayer," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 153, 158-159, 161, 163, 165.

[61]Bailey Smith, "Future Events—Five Future Facts," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 139.

> It would be great if every Baptist *were* born again, but every "Baptist" is *not* born again. There won't be any denominational tags such as Catholic, Presbyterian, Assembly of God, Pentecostal, Methodist, or Baptist in heaven. In heaven there will only be people who have been *born again.* … I don't care how formally, wonderfully, and interestingly you got into a Lutheran, Catholic, or Baptist church—if you've not been born again, you are not a Christian.[62]

One could not trust a person's church membership to reveal the state of that person's soul. "Do you think that there is anyone in the world who knows more about the weakness of the church than a preacher of the gospel who has spent all of his life in churches? I not only know bad things about the church—I know bad things about me!"[63] Smith had named Buddhists, Hindus, worshippers of the goddess Athena, practitioners of traditional Native American and Egyptian religions, Muslims, and Shintos as excluded from God's approval at various points.[64] Smith often mentioned Jews in his sermons, but the vast majority of references were to biblical Jews.[65] Smith cited books of the Hebrew Bible almost as often as he did the New Testament.[66] When using New Testament references, Smith often acknowledged the Jewish roots of Christianity, referring

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[62]Bailey Smith, "The Five M's of the New Birth," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 88-89; see also 92: "I don't believe that Methodists are any more lost than Baptists are lost. If you've been saved, your salvation is just as good as a Baptist salvation."

[63]Bailey Smith, "Four Things," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 84. See also idem, "Hour of Decision," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 140.

[64]Bailey Smith, "Coming and Going," in *Real Evangelism*, 47; idem, "Four Things," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 82; idem "Future Events," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 129; idem, "In Defense of Disturbing," in *Real Christianity*, 95-96; idem, "Let the Church Stand Up," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 132; idem, "A New Commitment to an Ancient Commission," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 99; idem, "The Power of Proper Priorities," in *Real Evangelism*, 151; and idem, "Walking in the Sunlight," in *Real Christianity*, 125. See also idem, "A Babbling Preacher," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 68, 72; and idem, "Love without Limits," in *Real Christianity*, 25.

[65]Bailey Smith, "The Battle of Building," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 63; idem, "No Time to Be Afraid," in *Real Christianity*, 166; idem, "Pitifully Pleasing or Pleasantly Powerful," in *Real Christianity*, 38-39; idem, "Prescription or Dosage," in *Real Christianity*, 59; idem, "The Trouble with Trouble," in *Real Christianity*, 171-173; and idem, "Walking in the Sunlight," in *Real Christianity*, 118.

[66]Bailey Smith, "A Life that Matters," in *Real Christianity*, 15, 17.

to Jesus and the apostles as Jews, and either clearly assuming his audience understood that the Jewish God and the Christian God were the same, and that the first Christians had been Jewish, or stating that explicitly.[67] On at least one occasion in the late 1970s, he referred to Jesus himself simply as, "that Jew."[68] Biblical Jews were sometimes the villains of the stories he told, but Smith compared them to other, Gentile villains to make his point about the universality of sin. "Why do you think the apostle was stoned in Lystra? … Why do you think that Bill Wallace had his head crushed against a cell in China[?] …Why do you think that John the Baptist lost his head[?] … Why do you think that John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos[?] … Why do you think Joan of Arc was burned at the stake … [?]"[69] Just as often in Smith's preaching, Jews were the historical guardians of spiritual truth who had God's special favor.[70]

Smith's message was one of unwavering certainty that God did not reject anyone on the basis of class, race, ethnic background, or one's previous failure to live a moral life, only on the basis of what one believed about Jesus and whether one lived as a Christian in the present. "It's not that 'good' people go to heaven and 'bad' people go to hell. It's not that people are bad, they are just *lost.* You do not come to Jesus Christ as a senator; you must come to Jesus Christ as a

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[67]Bailey Smith, "In Defense of Disturbing," in *Real Christianity*, 93; idem, "Detained but Not Defeated," in *Real Christianity*, 109; idem, "The Five M's," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 89; idem, "Love without Limits," in *Real Christianity*, 20, 23; idem, "Prescription or Dosage," in *Real Christianity*, 58-59, 64-65; idem, "Renewal or Reaffirmation," in *Real Christianity*, 84-85; idem, "Seven Kinds of People," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 30; idem, "The Trouble with Trouble," in *Real Christianity*, 173; and idem, "Walking in the Sunlight," in *Real Christianity*, 118-119, 121, 124.

[68]Bailey Smith, "Prescription or Dosage," in *Real Christianity*, 64.

[69]Bailey Smith, "Prescription or Dosage," in *Real Christianity*, 61. See also idem, "In Defense of Disturbing," in *Real Christianity*, 91.

[70]Bailey Smith, "Four Things," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 75; and idem, "Renewal or Reaffirmation," in *Real Christianity*, 84.

sinner."[71] As such, he insisted that human beings could not reject any other people. "This is an ugly world. Its sins are repulsive. Its sins are easy to hate, and some people in this world have some evil denials in areas of morality and purity. Even though they may be scarred, we must love them…"[72] In Smith's time, it would have been relatively easy to find a racist in the pulpit of a Southern Baptist church, but Smith was not among them, in spite of having lived as a white child in segregated Dallas. Addressing his multiracial congregation, Smith spoke with disgust about Southern Baptist racism.

> When white men talk against men who are red or yellow or black, I want to say to them, who are not like Christ at all, 'What did you have to do with being born white?' Not a thing! And yet, often you and I are guilty of calling some people common or unclean while we put our fingers under our vests and brag about what great creations of God we are. … I was in Hawaii doing summer mission work. I remember hearing a Caucasian preach. I saw a Negro man and a Filipino man taking up the offering. When I walked out, a Chinese man and a Japanese man were greeting people and shaking hands. I thought to myself, what a picture of the universality of the gospel to all men.[73]

Similarly, Smith had no patience for Southern Baptist ministers who concentrated their energies on the clean, respectable part of the population: "Just because someone cannot dress like us and go on ski retreats with a few and is unaware of the newest books on making disciples does not mean they should be beyond the scope of our love and ministry."[74] Smith often said that there was only one kind of person in the world. "There are no rich people, poor people, illiterate

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[71]Bailey Smith, "The Five M's," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 90.

[72]Bailey Smith, "A New Commitment," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 102.

[73]Bailey Smith, "Love without Limits," in *Real Christianity*, 24-25. See also idem, "A Babbling Preacher," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 73; and idem, "Cultural Heat without Spiritual Warmth," in *Real Evangelism*, 97.

[74]Bailey Smith, "The Dangers of Deceptive Discipleship," in *Real Evangelism*, 25.

people, educated people, red people, black people, or white people, yellow or brown people—there is only one kind of person and that is the kind of person for whom Jesus died."[75]

Like many of his critics, Smith blamed the Holocaust on bad Christianity, though he had other reasons for thinking Christianity could lead toward violence. Smith did not think the problem had been Christian exclusivism. He blamed Germany's liberal theologians for contributing to a lack of genuine religious fervor among Germany's Christians, and as such, they became apathetic and failed to resist the evil they saw.[76] Similarly, in 1976, he took the Christians of Ireland to task for being bad examples and not living up to their religious affiliations: "When our world reads daily of pubs and bus stops and hotel rooms and men's rooms exploding from terrorist bombs because the Protestants and the Catholics refuse to hear what they preach, the church must stand up."[77]

Smith was against coercion. He wanted everyone to become a Christian because he wanted everyone to *want* to be a Christian, not because there were laws that compelled them toward an approximation of Christian practice. Without sincerity, there were no Christians.[78] Smith did mention politics occasionally when preaching, albeit very rarely. Usually he praised

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[75]Bailey Smith, "Characteristics of a Dynamic Church," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 112. See also idem, "Love without Limits," in *Real Christianity*, 27. "There is a tie between us and every person of the world and it's the tie of blood; the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross which was shed for all."

[76]Bailey Smith, "The Called or the Claimed," in *Real Christianity*, 32-33; and idem, "Reservoirs of Truth or Rivers of Blessings," in *Real Evangelism*, 60-61.

[77]Bailey Smith, "Let the Church Stand Up," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 129.

[78]Bailey Smith, "The Called or the Claimed," in *Real Christianity*, 35; idem, "Cultivation during Harvest Time," in *Real Evangelism*, 71; idem, "Cultural Heat without Spiritual Warmth," in *Real Evangelism*, 95; and idem, "Trees that Testify," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 19. See especially idem, "Seven Kinds of People," in *Real Evangelistic Preaching*, 36: "My friend, the Bible is teaching that a person may walk the aisle of a church. He may be in tears. He may have people all around him to counsel him. It may be an unbelievable, emotional experience. But, if that man does not live a life akin to the life of Christ, he is an apostate. If he makes a profession of belief, but his action does not back it up, God cannot save that kind of man because he is living in the insecure state of never having made a genuine profession of his faith in Christ."

government as a general concept as a force for good, and told his congregations to obey it.[79] He also noted that American culture was not morally pure, but that was not something he said could be corrected through political action. "Now, I don't want to live in a land of immoral people—living in filth." He instructed his congregation to focus on their own lives as a means of counteracting American immorality. "[Y]ou're supposed to be about the business of Jesus. And the business of Jesus is telling others about him and being a witness. It's being an example. It's not being obnoxious."[80] After all, "The world that's in the hog pen today can't stay there if God comes into their hearts."[81] Christians should involve themselves in American politics as individuals, he thought, for reasons the DNC was as likely as the Moral Majority to have supported:

> I agree that we need to do something about the world's condition. We ought to do something about water pollution. We ought to do something about unfairness. We ought to do something about social injustices. We ought to do something about all of the diseases of our land. We ought to do something about discrimination.[82]

Immediately after this, Smith reminded his congregation that there were other, more important things than politics, and that the church as an institution, and as individuals, needed to concentrate on saving people from hell.[83] As for Smith himself, "I have never spent five minutes of my life in a political effort."[84]

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[79]Bailey Smith, "The Gospel in Miniature," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 87; and idem, "Walking in the Sunlight," in *Real Christianity*, 124-125.

[80]Bailey Smith, "The Trouble with Trouble," in *Real Christianity*, 174, 176.

[81]Bailey Smith, "The Result of Revival," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 45. See also idem, "Let the Church Stand Up," in *Real Revival Preaching*, 135.

[82]Bailey Smith, "Renewal or Reaffirmation," in *Real Christianity*, 88.

[83]Ibid.

[84]Bailey Smith, Del City, Oklahoma, to Skeet Workman, 18 September 1980, Bailey Smith Papers.

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Smith was not acquainted with American Judaism. Del City had few Jews, and no synagogues. Smith had met an actual Jewish person for the first time as a college student at the age of 19, and at the time of his election to the SBC presidency, had no Jewish friendships.[85] In that respect, he saw American Jews only from a distance, a distance that sometimes distorted his understanding of what their religious practices might be like, and made him insensitive to the ways that an offhand remark could set off alarm bells for American Jews.[86] His usual folksiness got him into more trouble when, for reasons that are not fully clear, the *Dallas Morning News* ran another story about Smith on the front page of its November 14, 1980 edition, around the time discussion of Smith's theology of Jewish prayer was dying down. While the subject of the story had ruffled feathers in the Oklahoma City area during the immediate flash of controversy in September, it had been quickly forgotten, and unlike the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Daily Oklahoman* did not have anything resembling a national readership. Now, with Reagan elected by an electoral college landslide and acrimony in the public square dying down even as infighting within Southern Baptist and American Jewish circles continued (see chapter 2), the Dallas newspaper quoted a sermon of Smith's that had been broadcast on Oklahoma City radio stations September 14, 1980:

> There are some people with whom God works more intimately than others. Why, do you say? I don't know. Why did he choose the Jews? I don't know why he

[85]Bailey Smith, interview by author, telephone.

[86]Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 12 April 2011.

> chose the Jews. I think they got funny looking noses, myself. I don't know why he chose the Jews. That's God's business. Amen[?][87]

Smith tried to clarify his intent, as he had done locally a few months earlier, when he had called the rabbi of Oklahoma City's Temple Emanuel, David Maharen, to explain. "Rabbi, I want you to know that I would stand shoulder to shoulder with you and fight until I die to defend [your right to believe] what Jewish people believe," he had said.[88] Now he told reporters what had happened. It seemed someone had been teasing Smith about his bald spot before the regular Sunday evening service at First Southern. A child observing this that Smith had described to the *News* as "a little Jewish boy" had interjected, "Don't let them tease you Dr. Smith. Jews have funny noses."[89]

Smith, as those who knew him well would attest, was impulsive and liked one-liners.[90] In the sermon he had prepared on Israel as God's chosen land and people, he began talking about the mysterious ways of God, and looked down at the boy. Remembering the incident, he joked back to the child, not thinking of how it would sound, broadcast without the context the congregants had ("It was not a public meeting," he had protested later), and further, not knowing that such a joke was not harmless. Though exasperated by the continual attention he received on the subject of his opinions about Jews—asking the reporter wearily, "Can't people tease any more at all?"—Smith did acknowledge that it had been a mistake. "I shouldn't have said it," he

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[87]Helen Parmley, "Baptist Official Stirs New Furor with Jews," *Dallas Morning News* 14 November 1980, 1A. For the original report, see Rob Glester, "Embattled Pastor Stands Pat in Jewish Prayer Uproar," *Daily Oklahoman* 19 September 1980, 1-2.

[88]Pirtle, "Target Bailey Smith," 46.

[89]Parmley, "Baptist Official Stirs New Furor."

[90]Jimmy Draper, interview by author, Colleyville, Texas, 3 August 2011.

admitted. "Even in teasing."[91] For the record, he reassured the public, "I personally do not even believe Jews have funny noses."[92] He lamented the limits of audio recordings, saying they meant people "could not see the twinkle in my eye or the smile on my face. [They could not see that] I was simply teasing a friend."[93]

The public was not reassured, however, as detailed in the following chapter. Smith's willingness to "stand shoulder to shoulder with" Jews and "fight until I die" to defend American pluralism got lost in translation. Without their reaction to Smith's comments about Jews, this entire episode might have been forgotten; instead, with it, it became reinterpreted, and Smith, reappropriated, to express cultural tensions and widespread fears across a broad spectrum of American life.

Still, in other ways, those who have seen "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew" as a political statement are right to identify it as such. It is almost impossible to talk about church and state without somehow expressing one's opinion about what one or the other should do in relation to the other. For Smith to have said anything at all, as a minister, would have made total church-state separation impossible by some interpretations, just as suggesting he should have said nothing at all because he was a minister would be to strip him of rights he would have otherwise have had as a citizen on religious grounds. Navigating America's balancing act between free exercise and disestablishment has always been tricky; that it was particularly tricky in 1980 was glaringly obvious to almost everyone. Smith's call to ministers to focus on their

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[91]Parmley, "Baptist Official Stirs New Furor."

[92]Dan Martin, "Bailey Smith Asks Meeting with Anti-Defamation League," *Penn Jersey Baptist*, December 1980, 1.

[93]Dan Martin, "Smith Requests Meeting with Jewish Leaders," *(Nashville) Baptist and Reflector*, 26 November 1980, 2.

faith and let God handle the rest was also a call for a certain kind of civic engagement. Smith believed that ministers who did so *would* end up having an impact on public policy, if in an indirect way. Thus, at its core, those who protested the political implications of his words still responded to Smith's actual goals, even if they misunderstood his methods. Unfortunately for Smith, this has meant he has become an easy footnote for those seeking a representative of the religio-political dynamics of the Reagan era, rather than evidence that the worries about the Moral Majority ran so deeply within American life that they provoked a man who everyone expected to be one of their biggest champions to condemn the political activism of the evangelical ministers of the New Right. This, as much as anything else, made Smith's later adventures with the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith possible.

Far from being the best example of the Moral Majority, as Tobian saw him, Smith was instead a proponent of separation of church and state who saw their activities as a violation of the principle. Religiously, however, he and the Moral Majoritarians had much in common, and many Southern Baptists were involved in the movement. Smith used this common religious ground to explain why he felt they were showing disregard for a shared religious principle, without addressing its relationship to American principles. Largely misunderstood at the time and ever since, Smith thus became appropriated as a sound bite representative of all that was alarming to many Americans about the New Right. In using the religious terms of the Moral Majority to warn against its political activism, Smith became the public example of it instead. Yet one thing seems to have been universally understood: in preaching that sermon on August 22, 1980, Smith had asserted that Judeo-Christianity would not be the savior of America against the Soviets, or any other enemy. As can be seen from the public reaction to this notion, many Americans were

not ready to part ways with the Judeo-Christian framework, and for this reason, Smith became infamous virtually overnight.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE PRAYER OF A JEW

Poor Rev. Bailey Smith. He simply has no mazal! [1]

--Aaron Blumenthal

James Dunn, director of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, had arrived at Reunion Arena at the time previously agreed upon to pick up Bill Moyers and take him to the airport. Dunn walked in and found Moyers with his PBS cameras, just in time to hear Bailey Smith speak the words that would become his claim to international fame. Milton Tobian, a fellow resident of Dallas with whom Dunn had developed a friendship and who headed up the American Jewish Committee (AJC)'s local office, ran up to Dunn. "Did you hear that!?" Tobian exclaimed, in an incredulous tone. Dunn, whose sole experience with the Religious Roundtable had been those few minutes, said he had, and asked Tobian what this was all about. There was not time to discuss it, however, as Moyers had a plane to catch. A few weeks later, a reporter from the *New York Times* would call Tobian's friend looking for a statement, perhaps, Dunn later speculated, because Tobian had directed the journalist to contact him, as a Southern Baptist who would comment on Smith and would give a response Tobian found helpful.[2]

[1]Aaron Blumenthal, "If Not Now, When?" *Jewish Herald-Voice* (Houston), 4 December 1980, 4.

[2]James Dunn, interview by author, telephone, 15 August 2011.

Tobian took responsibility for "the furor created by Smith's comment" ("God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew") while participating in a panel discussion at the Dan Dancinger Jewish Community Center in Fort Worth. He had felt that Smith's ideas about Jewish prayer summarized why evangelical politics should alarm American Jews in a convenient soundbite. "This statement gives a clear signal that if God has abandoned them (Jews) for not believing in Jesus, then why in the world should man do any different[?]" Thus, he had sounded the alarm, sending his transcript to various members of the AJC.[3] Indeed, Tobian's memo to Marc Tanenbaum, copies of which he sent to nine others with the organization, including James Rudin, warned of this possibility in biblical language. "'Now there arose a new pharaoh over Egypt who knew not Joseph.' This watershed statement separated a time of fruitfulness and abundance from four hundred years of slavery." Similarly, in August 1980, the Religious Affairs Briefing had demonstrated itself as a similar watershed, showing "a religio-political development … which is designed to separate American Jews from effective participation and influence in American decision making." Tobian was not certain what might happen. "At worst, it may capture the machinery of government and hold it hostage to a litmus test of particularistic belief which does not and cannot include Jews. At best, it may shift the political center of gravity so far to the right that the traditional alliances in which Jews have been active become powerless and impotent." Tobian's jeremiad described the enemy as "evangelists clutching soft cover Bibles," and quoted Jerry Falwell's charge to "Get 'em saved; Get 'em Baptized [sic]; Get 'em registered" without naming Falwell as the speaker. Smith became the named embodiment of the threat. "This effort to promote 'Christian principles' by electing only those who subscribe rigidly

[3]Frank Trejo, "Jewish Leader Places Blame on Use of Evangelical Politics," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 6 November 1980, 5H.

to those principles—perforce leaves out Jews. Dr. Bailey Smith … was the only one overtly to state this fact …" He identified the demographic as "clergy or clergy connected … white, middle America," seeking power they had lost as minorities had become more successful.[4]

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Tobian's reference to "traditional alliances" reached back only a few decades, but embraced one of the Cold War's national myths: that cooperation among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews had always been the bedrock of American democracy. His claim that Smith represented a group seeking *lost* power contained its own myths, especially with respect to national politics; evangelicals like Smith had largely been excluded (and had excluded themselves in many cases) from the halls of power after the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the 1920s, and the success of Jews in integrating into American society had taken little from them, if anything. As detailed in the introduction, Tobian's "traditional alliances" were among adherents to Judeo-Christianity, a system that had always excluded evangelicals. The AJC had been working to bring evangelicals into the fold of Judeo-Christianity, but on Judeo-Christianity's own terms; in many ways, Judeo-Christianity was a religion to which one had to convert in order to belong, and one could not be a good American if one was not a good Judeo-Christian. The national debate over Bailey Smith was not one best understood in terms of conservative versus liberal, nor was it primarily about anti-Semitism itself. Instead, it is best explained through the lens of a country where some were still holding tightly to Judeo-Christianity, and other factions either ignored or outright rejected the claims the Judeo-Christian system made. Smith's detractors outside his own denomination reveal a greater concern about his challenge to Judeo-Christianity than a perceived

[4]Milton Tobian to Marc Tanenbaum, 10 September 1980, Marc Tanenbaum Papers.

challenge to a secular state, while those who defended him usually did so with a self-conscious rejection of Judeo-Christianty's religio-political claims. Meanwhile, Southern Baptist discussion of the controversy shows a near-total obliviousness to political concerns, perhaps a predictable response given their placement outside Judeo-Christianity itself. Southern Baptists, however they might vote today, betrayed no hope of bringing America into step with any interpretation of Judeo-Christian heritage when they argued over Smith in 1980. If anything, their responses highlight the chasm between the Judeo-Christian power bloc and most of Southern Baptist life.

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While Mark Briskman, North Texas/Oklahoma regional director of the ADL, insists that the uproar about Smith was about politics, not theology,[5] and Smith insists that it was about theology, not politics,[6] most of the national discussion of Smith failed to distinguish between the two. As Tobian himself pointed out when explaining why he had gone to the press, what worried him was that Smith's religious exclusivism was in and of itself a harmful political force. Whether or not Smith intended his statement politically had no ultimate relevance to Tobian and many others. It is clear why many took Smith to have had those intentions, given the context in Reunion Arena that day, yet the quick conflation of religion and politics in public discussion shows that Smith's theology *itself* was troubling to many Americans, because of its perceived *political* consequences. To supporters of Judeo-Christianity, being a true adherent meant being a true patriot, while failure to conform to the civil religion thought both axiomatic and universally American made one both a heretic and a traitor to one's country.

[5]Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011.

[6]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

The immediate controversy surrounding Smith after the *Dallas Morning News* article broke the story[7] led to coverage in newspapers large and small from Florida to Alaska and everywhere in between as well as in Europe and Israel. In America, the reports reflected fears about the widespread political mobilization of conservative evangelicalism. Whether or not God heard Jewish prayers became a sort of religious test for public office in the final weeks of the 1980 election cycle, evidence that voters, if not Supreme Court justices, still often clung to the Judeo-Christian ideals of the 1950s. Over and over, incumbent President Jimmy Carter and challenger Ronald Reagan faced questions about their beliefs about God hearing Jewish prayers,[8] and this concern about the theology of elected officials extended beyond this race as well. For example, U.S. Senate candidates answered the question of whether God heard Jewish prayers at a forum in Tulsa.[9] (The independent candidate for President, John Anderson, was presumably not asked about this because he was neither at the rally, nor Southern Baptist.) Repeatedly, the various candidates universally reassured the American public: God does hear Jewish prayers. The question was never what their *policies* with respect to American Jews or other religious minorities might be, regardless of God's openness to Jewish prayer, but simply whether God, in their opinion, heard Jewish prayers. Like Eisenhower, candidates affirmed their beliefs in an American God—a bland figure somehow derived from Western monotheism, but not one all that particular about how he was addressed. To have answered in any other way—to assert that there

[7]Helen Parmley, "Remarks on Jews Draw Ire," *Dallas Morning News* 17 September 1980, 1.

[8]See, for example, Steven Weisman, "Carter and Reagan Comments Tangle Campaigns in a Controversy Surrounding Evangelical Group," *New York Times* 10 October 1980, D14.

[9]Ed Montgomery, "God Hears Jewish Prayer, Hopefuls Agree," *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma) 24 September 1980, p. 11.

was no god to hear anybody's prayers, to ask *which* god was being discussed, or to say that God heard only Christian prayers (or Jewish prayers)—was unthinkable. In the American civil religion, two things required no explanation, discussion, or reflection: there is a God, and he listens to all Americans. Thus it had been ever since "godless communism" reared its ugly head a few decades before.

Carter was in a difficult position. He had asked Smith to come to the DNC, and Carter was the face of Southern Baptists to most of America. In 1976, hand-wringing about Carter's place outside Judeo-Christianity had been a significant part of media coverage of his campaign. When he said he was "born again," the cultural power brokers heading the major broadcast networks and national newspapers had no idea what he was talking about. His Protestantism was entirely foreign; if not "Mainline," it seemed like a completely separate religion.[10] Judeo-Christianity was tripartite and did not have room for a fourth Musketeer.

The 1980 campaign had already taken an ugly turn, with Carter accusing Reagan of racism and war-mongering, and then backing down on those slurs and promising to avoid making further attacks on his opponent. It was within the general theme of the campaign in those weeks for Carter to include in his prophecies of doom for the Reagan presidency that Reagan's election would cause rifts between Christians and Jews, as he said at an event in Chicago in early

[10]Reports on Carter's religion betrayed an illiteracy of evangelical language that annoyed many native speakers. See, for example, Robert Boyd, William Broom, and Loye Miller, "Carter Says Religion Not a Handicap in Office," *Boston Globe* 5 August 1976, 16; "Carter and His Religion," *New (Norfolk) Journal and Guide* 10 July 1976, 16; Russell Chandler, "'God Factor' Emerging in U.S. Politics," *Los Angeles Times* 30 May 1976, A1; *Evening News*, National Broadcasting Company, 23 March 1976; and James Robison, "Jimmy Carter's Faith, *Chicago Tribune* 25 July 1976, 1. See also Andrew M. Greeley, "Carter Shouldn't Take Catholics, or the Election, for Granted," *The (Baltimore) Sun* 2 July 1976, A15; E. Brooks Holifield, "Three Traditions Mingle in Carter's Religious Ideas," *Los Angeles Times* 13 June 1976, G1; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 148-152; and Marvin R. Wilson, "Changing Christian Perceptions of Jews in America," in *Jews in Unsecular America*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 28.

October.[11] When Jody Powell, Carter's press secretary, said that Carter was "incensed" about the controversy over Southern Baptists and Jewish prayer, it was a means of trying to explain away Carter's mud-slinging;[12] however, there was probably quite a bit of truth in it. There was something deeply personal about this issue for Carter, who found the conservative turn in the SBC troubling, and felt that the way that some of its new leaders had treated him was needlessly harsh, especially considering their mutual religious commitments.[13] At a town meeting in Pittson, Pennsylvania, a 12-year-old Jewish boy approached the microphone to ask the President whether he believed God heard Jewish prayers. The question "cut my heart," Carter later said. Carter responded that he believed God heard everyone's prayers.[14] A few days later, Carter told an audience in New York that included Reagan, "It's a question no American child should ever have to ask his president," warning, "In our zeal to strengthen the moral character of this nation we must not set up ourselves as judges of whom God might hear and whom he would turn

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[11]For an analysis of the impact of Carter's perceived "meanness" on the 1980 U.S. Presidential election, culminating with this speech in Chicago, see Andrew E. Busch, *Reagan's Victory: The Presidential Election of 1980 and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 112-114; and Jeff Greenfield, *The Real Campaign: How the Media Missed the Story of the 1980 Campaign* (New York: Summit Books, 1982), 289-290. See also an insider's account of the campaign: F. Clifton White and William J. Gill, *Why Reagan Won: A Narrative History of the Conservative Movement 1964-1981* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1981), 226-227, 233.

[12]Weisman, "Carter and Reagan Comments."

[13]See Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 455. Carter has expressed his disappointment in the SBC for becoming more conservative in a wide variety of ways, but he himself has grown considerably more liberal in his own religious beliefs since then. At the time, Carter and Smith's doctrinal commitments were much closer together than they are today. See Carter, *Living Faith*, rev. ed. (New York: Times Books, 1998), 33-36, 185-190, 225-229, 234-235.

[14]Carter, *White House Diary*, 473. When reporters with the Jewish Telegraph Agency visited the White House to inquire about Carter's position on Jewish prayer, Robert Maddox, special assistant for religious liaison, an ordained Southern Baptist minister, told them, "I personally believe most Southern Baptists would disagree with the Rev. Dr. Smith." As for Carter, "President Carter has prayed with people like Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and felt a spirit of prayer and communion with them. The President believes God hears all his children when they pray." Joseph Polakoff, "White House Reacts to Baptist Minister's Remark on Jews," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* 25 September 1980, 3.

away."[15] The irony of this statement is, perhaps, that it was what almost everyone *was* doing, just that they were reaching different conclusions than Smith had.

The Jewish prayer controversy put Reagan into a difficult position for somewhat different reasons. Reagan did not express much sympathy for Smith's theology, but a lot of people who would potentially vote Republican did. In any case, Smith had said what he said at a Reagan rally, and thousands of people had applauded. Still, many voters remained undecided, and had genuine concerns about Reagan using Smith's ideology for political decision making. Reagan said the whole notion of him causing a schism between America's Christians and Jews was a ridiculous one, and that saying so proved Carter had reached "a point of hysteria." Reagan figured, for his part, that "since both the Christian and Judaic religions are based on the same God, the God of Moses, I'm quite sure those prayers are heard." Reagan also said that he felt everyone was free to believe what they wanted about whose prayers God heard, noting that "I guess everyone can make his own interpretation of the Bible, and many individuals have been making different interpretations for a long time."[16] Reagan's answer edged away from Judeo-Christianity at the same time as it affirmed it, suggesting that perhaps those outside its rubric could have a place at the political decision-making table, too, even though Reagan himself was a good and trustworthy Judeo-Christian. As the editorial pages of newspapers from the Atlantic to the Pacific pointed out, this was not really about Jewish prayers. It was about what kind of

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[15]James Gerstenzang, "Carter, Reagan Swap Barbs, but Script Called for Humor," *The (Toledo, Ohio) Blade* 17 October 1980, 1. See also "Mayor Ed Koch Sends a Signal," *The (Baltimore) Sun* 21 October 1980, A13. This move did not go over well with many Jewish voters, who saw the story as "hoky."

[16]Weisman, "Carter and Reagan Comments." See also William Buckley, "Evolution Not an Issue on Nov. 4," *The (Newburgh, New York) Evening News* 15 October 1980, 6A; and Jon Margolis, "Regan on Prayer Flap—Oi Vey!" *Chicago Tribune* 4 October 1980, W6.

America would exist after the election. The Moral Majority said they feared divine punishment for what they saw as continual erosion of America's commitment to true morality. Those who were not in this so-called "majority" resented being implicitly called "immoral," and they feared the tyranny of this majority, were it to rise to power.[17] Undergirding it all, however, was an implied debate over Judeo-Christianity, and whose version of it would win the day. This debate took place among political and religious leaders, to be sure, but it also reached nearly every corner of American life. Average people wrote letters to one another and to editors of newspapers about it. One imagines scenes at dinner tables and around water coolers where everyone could be presumed to have heard about Smith, and just about everyone had an opinion about it. In an era before the internet and social media, Smith's comments nonetheless went viral.[18] From within this mosaic of voices, a diverse set of concerns emerged.

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For scores of American Jews who reacted, Smith represented much more than just the SBC, as sociologist Philip Hammond mused in a letter to Oscar Cohen. "Bailey Smith may be a

[17]"A lot of people find the fundamentalist movement frightening. What Moyers showed [in the PBS documentary he was filming in Dallas that September] is it provides a haven and a rallying point for millions of frightened people." Tom Shales, "Televangelists Using the Tube as a Political Pulpit," *Dallas Morning News* 30 September 1980, 7C. "Freedom-loving Americans should quake at the thought of these folks taking over the government." Daniel Lauher, letter to the editor, *Chicago Tribune* 19 October 1980, A4. See also B. S. Fahamisha Jaramogi, letter to the editor, *The (Baltimore) Sun* 18 October 1980, A19; *Life and Liberty*; and Jack Mabley, "Christian Right Is No Joking Matter," *Chicago Tribune* 20 October 1980, 5.

[18]Alongside the numerous examples analyzed in more detail below, there are scores of responses from ordinary Americans who do not fall into the categories within the scope of this chapter. For examples, see Rosalyn Berger, letter to the editor, *(Cleveland) Plain Dealer* 4 November 1980, 16-A; Julius Braun, letter to the editor, *Chicago Tribune* 17 October 1980, B2; Moshe Carmilly, letter to the editor, *New York Times* 30 September 1980, A26; Darrell Holland, "Statement Negating Prayers of Jews Stirs Howls of Protest Here," *The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer* 20 September 1980, 20-A; Beverly Jordan, letter to the editor, *Dallas Morning News* 12 October 1980; Robert Parker, "Prayers," *Philadelphia Tribune* 5 May 1981, 13; "Southern Baptist Leader Rebuked for Remark on Jewish Prayers" (letters to the editor), *(Cleveland) Plain Dealer* 26 September 1980, 5-AA; and Nicholas von Hoffman, "Some Believers Haven't a Prayer," *Chicago Tribune* 27 September 1980, S10.

half-educated yahoo, but there is a lot of support for school prayers out there, for example, and if it gets organized…?"[19] Public outcry was oriented toward these broader implications as well. Many would accuse Smith of being anti-Semitic, sparking a debate on the nature of anti-Semtism and what Smith might have actually meant. They would also criticize Smith for the forum he chose, and extend that criticism to Reagan. Meanwhile, reports that Jerry Falwell, leader of the Moral Majority, had come out agreeing with Smith further inflamed the pages of Jewish newspapers. Falwell was not a Southern Baptist, but since he was a pastor of a Baptist church in the South, he was largely taken to be, so Falwell's public support of Smith only seemed to confirm deeper fears about what Southern Baptists intended for America.[20] The Moral Majority had endorsed Reagan for president, which did not help matters for Reagan among Jewish voters.[21] Some Jews worried that Reagan was too close to the likes of Smith, if he believed Smith's view was reasonable. *Jewish Week* cautioned, "If, G-d forbid, our government were to fall into the hands of such fanatics, Jews would become second-class citizens in no time!"[22]

For some American Jews, these fears were particularly deep. They had seen what the majority might do in self-professed Christian nations, and they did not hesitate to point out that violence in such countries was possible on a level that, as the fresh memories of the Holocaust

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[19]Phillip E. Hammond, Santa Barbara, California, 2 February 1981, to Oscar Cohen, Oscar Cohen Papers, Box 1, Folio 8, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Ellipses Hammond's.

[20]James Rudin still believes that Jerry Falwell lived and died a part of the SBC. James Rudin, interview by author, telephone.

[21]"Reagan Disavows Bigoted Remarks of 2 Clergymen," *(Manhattan) Jewish Week*, 12 October 1980, 34.

[22]I. Usher Kirshblum, "Grateful to Carter: Fearful of Reagan!" *(Manhattan) Jewish Week*, 19 October 1980, 37; also, Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011; and David Brudnoy, "Ingredients of the New Anti-Semitism," *Jewish Advocate* 6 November 1980, A2.

had suggested, was capable of exterminating their people from the face of the earth. That Reagan could say that reasonable people might believe what Smith believed made Reagan seem very dangerous. As indicated above regarding the general national response, there was little effort to separate Smith's religious ideas from their possible impact on public policy. Smith represented the largest Protestant denomination in the world. It was not immediately clear to all who commented on the controversy surrounding Smith that he was not able to state official doctrinal positions for the SBC. Thus, when Smith's widely-publicized dismissal of the effectiveness of Jewish prayers coincided with an outbreak of anti-Semitic violence, both in America and abroad, some American Jews saw in these events a potential army of 16 million Southern Baptists, who had to be resisted at any cost. Ironically, this gave them something in common with Smith—both he and they had reached the conclusion that politically-motivated ecumenism was destructive, and that cooperation with some religious groups was sure to lead to disaster. Smith saw danger to souls; these American Jews saw physical danger. They rejected Judeo-Christianity, favoring a particularism that was in some ways similar to Smith's. As we have seen earlier, Smith's jeremiad had warned against blurring religious lines for political ends as a means to the death of true faith. Union of American Hebrew Congregations president Alexander Schindler warned that ecumenism was a path that led to the "stoning [of] Jews."[23] Along similar lines, The editor of

[23] Kenneth A. Briggs, "Rabbi Attacks Aims of Moral Majority," *New York Times* 23 November 1980, p. 29; see also Naomi W. Cohen, "An Overview of American Jewish Defense," in *Jews and the American Public Square: Debating Religion and Republic*, ed. Alan Mittleman, Robert Licht, and Jonathan D. Sarna (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002): 29-30; and I. Usher Kirshblum, "Grateful to Carter: Fearful of Reagan!" *The Jewish Week*, 19 October 1980, Manhattan Ed., 37. In Schindler's view, one should not enter into dialogue with such people or make political alliances of any sort with them, even on issues where there might be agreement, warning: "they seek our extinction as a particular people. Why then in heaven's name should we give them recognition? Have we lost all self-respect?" Alexander M. Schindler, "Report of the President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to the Board of Trustees," San Francisco, Califonria, 21 November 1980, Alexander M. Schindler Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 630, Box 7, Folio 4, James Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Cincinnati's *American Israelite* considered Smith's statements axiomatically anti-Semitic, and urged "Jews everywhere, today, as in the time of Judah Maccabee" to "stand up and fight…"[24] Morris Stadlen wrote to the editor of Manhattan's *Jewish Week*, saying that the rise of the Christian Right was evidence that interfaith dialogue and ecumenism were misguided altogether. Smith was not anomalous, he felt. He gave voice to many Christians in America, who thought of the nation as "for Christians only." He, too, saw the incident as an urgent call to arms, for what it represented for American politics.[25] Of course, this rhetoric was not geared toward an actual, physical war on evangelicalism, and nobody was likely to truly rise up like Judah Maccabaeus against the Greeks, but the language did link Smith with a long line of enemies of Jewish religious practice, and urge political activism rather than complacency. Apathy seemed possible in a season when so many Jews found all of the candidates for President unappealing, but a choice must be made, nonetheless, as many saw it. Smith's religion was considered inappropriate for the public square, and votes would be the weapons to banish it.

Some wondered what kind of Christianity this was, hinting that there was more than one sort and not all of it should be painted with the same brush. Although Carter had introduced Southern Baptists to the American mainstream four years before, many American Jews had never warmed up to him, always suspicious that there was malice underlying his piety.[26] In general, as Naomi Cohen has observed, most Jews "believed that anti-Semitism and missionizing

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[24]Henry C. Segal, "The Shame of Bigotry," *(Cincinnati) American Israelite* 4 December 1980, 4.

[25]Morris Stadlen, letter to the editor, *(Manhattan) Jewish Week*, 26 October 1980, 28.

[26]See "Carter Assails Anti-Semitism," *Chicago Tribune* 15 May 1977, 14; "Carter Reassures Jews," *Los Angeles Times* 24 May 1976, B3; "Jews and Jimmy Carter," *The (Baltimore) Sun* 13 June 1976, K4; and David Silberberg, "Should Carter Win the Jews," *Baltimore Jewish Times* 24 October 1980, 47.

were 'constants' of the Evangelical equation."[27] Southern Baptists were still strangers, almost foreigners.[28] These American Jews saw Smith's theology as evidence of "a worldwide resurgence of anti-Semitism," as Phineas Stone, editor of Manhattan's *Jewish Week,* had termed it. Stone and others attacked Smith's beliefs as reflecting badly on Jesus:

> He [Smith] did not object to the prayers but bemoaned the fact that the Jewish prayers would be wasted, since no prayers could reach God without first being submitted to censorship by Jesus, who presumably stands at the right side of God, for the express purpose of protecting him from un-kosher prayers. … This, of course, raises a question as to the nature of Jesus. … Some fundamentalists think of Jesus as a hard-boiled guy who counsels others to turn the other cheek, but is real mad at people who do not forward their prayers to him but try offensive short-cuts by praying direct to God. … as a vindictive fellow who will not let a single Jewish prayer get past him … like a goalie working in a soccer game …[29]

Sidney Greenberg sarcastically wrote in *Jewish Digest* that he envied Smith's intimate knowledge of the mind of God and wondered how Jesus himself ever managed to pray, if God did not hear Jewish prayers. Greenberg cited Psalm 145:18 as evidence that God heard his prayers, asking: "Shall I believe Mr. Smith or the Bible on which I was raised?" Greenberg also implied anti-Semitism was inherent in Smith's statement.[30] Janis Perlis Ellin wrote to the editor of Atlanta's *Southern Isrealite*, saying she figured Jesus would be ashamed of Smith. "Not

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[27]Naomi W. Cohen, "An Overview of American Jewish Defense," in *Jews and the American Public Square: Debating Religion and Republic,* ed. Alan Mittleman, Robert Licht, and Jonathan D. Sarna (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002): 29.

[28]Consider the AJC's Ronald Kronish reporting on a meeting he had with another famous Southern Baptist, Billy Graham, in 1969, expressing surprise that Graham was not "a wild raving fundamentalist" and that "He was not loud and pompous, as one might have expected." Ronald Kronish, manuscript entitled "Meeting with Billy Graham and Jewish Leaders at American Jewish Committee," 23 June 1969, Marc Tanenbaum Papers, Box 21, Folio 1, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio.

[29]Phineas Stone, "Baptist President Pictures Jesus as a Goalie Blocking Jewish Prayers," *(Manhattan) Jewish Week* 28 September 1980, 8.

[30]Sidney Greenberg, "Does God Hear the Prayers of the Jew," *Jewish Digest* (December 1980), 50-51, quote from 51.

having a personal dialogue with [Jesus,] … I can only suspect that if Jesus knew he was sacrificing his life to absolve the sins of such a narrow-minded racist as Rev. Smith seems to be, he would likely have second thoughts…"[31]

Smith's theology was not new, but the Moral Majority was, and thus in many respects, so was Judeo-Christianity's contact with evangelical ideas. Here, an assertion that evangelicals really should not be a part of the American political sphere emerged. Some felt could ignore Smith if he spoke about Jewish prayer not being heard in a religious context, "But when people holding such views become a pervasive political force we have reason to get nervous," as Reuben Levine explained.[32] Evangelicals had a right to exist, but they did not deserve a voice in the political process. William Gralnick, executive director of the AJC's Southeast regional office, explained: "The problem with Rev. Smith's statement is that there is a lot more to it than meets the eye. It is representative of a mentality which is beginning to sweep the country. It's a mentality which says, 'Pray like me, act like me, vote like me.'" Even though he protested Smith's statement on political grounds, Gralnick thought it was also evidence of bad theology (with frightful political consequences)—bad *Christian* theology, and not reflective of Jesus. "I think that it's incredible that such insensitivity could be fostered in the name of an individual, Jesus of Nazareth, whose whole doctrine rests on sensitivity. Smith is theologically wrong, and ethically out of line."[33] That so many Jews felt they had a say in determining what good

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[31]Janice Perlis Ellin, letter to the editor, *(Atlanta) Southern Isrealite*, 10 October 1980, 5.

[32]Reuben R. Levine, "The Moral Majority," *(Newark, New Jersey) Jewish News* 1 January 1981, 11.

[33]"Local Leaders Blast Smith," *(Atlanta) Southern Isrealite*, 26 September 1980, 4.

Christian theology was reflects the lingering hold of Judeo-Christianity, and the belief in an *American* faith. The legacy of the unity of the 1950s was an ongoing demand for conformity.

Religiously, too, some saw Southern Baptist existence as problematic. Howard R. Greenstein, the rabbi of Jacksonville's Congregation Ahavath Chesed, wrote a satirical dialogue between God and the archangel Gabriel for the temple newsletter, in which Gabriel approached God because of the controversy. God was confused. "I know who the Jews are, but who are these Southern Baptists?" (God was too busy with other things to worry about these upstarts.) Gabriel asserted that "they have been active for a little more than 100 years," compared to 4,000 years of Judaism. (This statement was factually incorrect.) God was irritated by the Baptist attempt to rewrite his covenant with Abraham, finally declaring, "There's only one word for that kind of accusation against my people … CHUTZPAH!"[34] God's confusion about what a Baptist was also appeared on the pages of *Texas Monthly*, with an editorial cartoon depicting a white-bearded, Orthodox Jew kneeling in front of a menorah while a voice from the clouds asks, "WHAT'S A BAPTIST?"[35] A. S. Robbins wrote to the editor of the *Dallas Morning News* asserting, "my ancestors invented God."[36] The dismissal of Baptists as themselves irrelevant

[34]Howard R. Greenstein, "The Final Word," *(Atlanta) Southern Israelite*, 24 October 1980, 5.

[35]Editorial cartoon, *Texas Monthly*, January 1981.

[36]A. S. Robbins, letter to the editor, *Dallas Morning News* 29 December 1980. For an argument along similar lines, see T. Edward Giles, letter to the editor, *The (New Orleans) Times-Picayune* 25 November 1980, 10: "To be hanging in there for all those centuries, they just may have Somebody on their side."

seems to be undergirding these jokes about God being confused about their existence, a longing, perhaps, to return to an earlier time when they were invisible to Judeo-Christian America.

Condemnation of Baptists outright was what some Jewish leaders hoped to avoid. The strongest defenses of Southern Baptists from among those who denounced Smith himself came from the AJC. Tobian had alerted the media largely because Smith's words were a threat to the AJC's Judeo-Christian project. Now, the widespread condemnation of Smith had begun to threaten their Judeo-Christian goals. Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, director of Interreligious Affairs for the AJC, felt he knew Baptists, having participated in a series of interfaith meetings co-sponsored by the AJC and SBC starting in 1969.[37] There, the Southern Baptists had explained their need to evangelize in such a way that some of the Jewish participants had come to defend the practice, albeit in a modified form. As Dunn, an SBC participant, explained it, this was a shift in thinking about the Southern Baptist practice of "sharing one's faith" in new terms—as "witness" rather than "winning."[38] Tanenbaum's assistant, James Rudin, who had grown up in an area he described as overwhelmingly Southern Baptist, had articulated this shift in thinking for the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* in 1980, asserting that Jews could accept Baptist witnessing because Jews were witnesses to their own beliefs, while Southern Baptists could embrace evangelism as a broader concept that included far more than making converts.[39] The AJC now

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[37]See "2 Religions Join in First Meeting," *New York Times* 24 August 1969, 48; George W. Cornell, "Christians Urged to Stop Trying to Convert Jews," *Washington Post* 27 December 1969, E5; and John Dart, "Jews, Evangelical Protestants Hold Dialog for Understanding," *Los Angeles Times* 10 January 1971, C1.

[38]Dunn, interview by author, telephone.

[39]"… 'mission' may sometimes be insensitive and even coercive, while 'witness' is the actual living out of one's faith without attempting to proselytize or convert another. 'Witness,' by this definition, is what Jews and Christians do every day as they attempt faithfully to serve God. … As Jews and Baptists, we can do this without seeking the conversion of the other; indeed, 'witness' in this sense is free of 'hidden agendas' and/or subliminal messages for our neighbor." James Rudin, "A Jewish Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 17, no 2 (Spring 1980): 170.

saw this work potentially being undone, a frustration for those who hoped to make further progress along the same path. The AJC had long been criticized for such overtures to people many American Jews said were "crackers," "rednecks," "snake handlers," and "bigots." Now explaining the value of the AJC's relationships with Southern Baptists became even more difficult for Rudin and Tanenbaum.[40]

Marc Tanenbaum was very angry as well, but he still had faith in the dialogue project reflective of his belief in Judeo-Christianity as the bedrock of American government. All Smith needed was to get to know actual Jews. He drafted a letter to Smith to collect his thoughts.

> It would seem from your offensive remarks that you know little or nothing about Jews or Judaism. Have you ever read a Hebrew prayer book? Have you ever attended a worship service in a Synagogue or Jewish Temple? Have you ever experienced the depth of piety and devotion that has sustained the Jewish people across the past two thousands of years and that lives vitally today in the souls of millions of Jews who continue to uphold the covenant with Israel that God, out of His own grace, freely elected to confer upon His chosen people?

Tanenbaum appealed to Smith's Biblicism. "Together with millions of other Jewish people, I stake my existence on the truth of the Bible."[41] Tanenbaum cited Deuteronomy 7 and Psalm 89. He did not write out the verses, but one can imagine what he had hoped to highlight:

> For you [Israel] are a people consecrated to the LORD your God: of all the peoples on earth the LORD your God chose you to be His treasured people. It is not because you are the most numerous of peoples that the LORD set His heart on you and chose you—indeed, you are the smallest of peoples; but it was because the LORD favored you and kept the oath He made to your fathers … Know, therefore, that only the LORD your God is God, the steadfast God who keeps His covenant faithfully to the thousandth generation …[42]
>
> I have made a covenant with My chosen one,
> I have sworn to My servant David:

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[40]James Rudin, interview by author, telephone, 11 February 2011.

[41]Marc H. Tanenbaum, draft of letter to Bailey Smith, undated, Marc H. Tanenbaum Papers, Box 24/1.

[42]Deuteronomy 7:6-9, JPS.

I will establish your offspring forever,
I will confirm your throne for all generations. …[43]

Having appealed to the authority of their mutual sacred texts, Tanenbaum asked, "What mortal has the right to abrogate the Lord's plighted words to the people whom He has permanently elected to be His people[?] I cannot believe that you are prepared to say that the Chosen People have been living a lie for 4,000 years." Tanenbaum knew enough about Southern Baptists to consider it safe to assume Smith would not discount the Tanakh as divinely inspired, but he also pointed to the New Testament. "Do you not take St. Paul seriously? Read Romans 9-11[.]" (Romans 9-11 contains a lengthy discussion of God's continuing concern for Jews and refers to Gentile Christians as "grafted in" to the Jewish "olive tree," upon which they are forever dependent. It often came up in interfaith dialogue meetings.) Finally, he urged Smith to consider their common nationality, as well as common religious ideals. "In all brotherly respect, I think you owe the Jewish people a public apology for defamation of our beloved faith. I also think you owe the American people an apology for your offense against the spirit of religious liberty and religious pluralism which are the very foundations of our precious democracy." Learning how similar Jews and Southern Baptists were was always the key, he believed. (It appears Tanenbaum never finished the letter.[44])

Americans ought to know, it appears Tanenbaum thought, what their shared religiosity was and how to express it in the public square. He'd made it his project to educate Baptists on this point. In 1977, he had expressed outrage that Carter had not invited a rabbi to pray at his inauguration, instead having Protestant and Catholic prayers and a cantor singing "God Bless

[43] Psalm 89:3-4, JPS.

[44]Marc H. Tanenbaum, draft of letter to Bailey Smith, undated, Marc H. Tanenbaum Papers, Box 24/1.

America," calling it a departure from "an established American institution" to do so. Praying at inaugurations was one way to show that Jews "were part and parcel of mainstream American society."[45] Smith had taken things a step further than Carter had by not only not inviting a Jew to pray at a political event, but by criticizing the way prayers were used to affirm America's religious grounding. Judeo-Christianity was the only true American way. Smith's hope for redemption could only come by converting.

Tanenbaum may not have been inclined to separate theology from politics, but he did encourage his constituency to separate Smith from Southern Baptists. Recognizing what the statement might represent to American Jews at large, those involved in the existing interfaith dialogue between the AJC and the SBC pushed for a more nuanced perspective. They highlighted the lessons of dialogue, that Southern Baptists were people they knew. They pointed to the special history of Baptists in America as harbingers of separation of church and state, the diversity of opinions one might find among the SBC, and Smith's lack of authority to speak for Southern Baptists as a whole. Tanenbaum wondered if a program of religious education might be in order. The problem was not that Smith had a pernicious theology. He and his supporters were simply not Baptist *enough.* Smith, like the New Right, had "chosen either to forget or to ignore" their religious tradition's historic contribution to the development of "American democratic pluralism." Tanenbaum urged Smith and Smith's supporters to remember that he was a Baptist. Like others, Tanenbaum saw in Smith's words a rejection of the possibility that American Jews should be involved in secular politics, yet he thought it "encouraging that literally hundreds of Baptist pastors, Christian seminary faculties and lay people have issued statements repudiating

[45]"Tanenbaum Criticizes Lack of Rabbi at Carter Inaugural," *(Houston) Jewish Herald Voice* 20 January 1977.

his narrow views as un-Christian and un-American." Implicitly, Tanenbaum cited these as the ones carrying the true Baptist tradition forward; Smith was an anomaly.[46] These Baptists understood their place, at least in Tanenbaum's understanding, within America's Judeo-Christian framework. It would seem that a true Baptist was a true American, and Smith qualified as neither, since the two were so deeply intertwined. A true Baptist would subscribe to the shared civil religion underlying American public life.

It is worth noting that Tanenbaum's interfaith dialogue project had clear missionary aims, if not ones that would have appeared to be so to him, or to others involved in trying to bring evangelicals under the Judeo-Christian umbrella. These efforts sought to include evangelicals in Judeo-Christianity, but only on Judeo-Christianity's terms. Evangelical scholar Marvin R. Wilson wrote of such efforts in 1987, praising them as a success since "Evangelicals are coming to realize that Christians are not called to convert anyone"—again, asserting the benefits of Jews explaining Christianity to Protestants.[47] Similarly, in a letter to the editor of Newark's *Jewish News*, Robert Segal suggested that the best way to respond to the "political acrobatics of those who seem convinced they have a pipeline to the Almighty" was to "be charitable and pray for their redemption,"[48] implying that Smith's religion was, at the time, not yet redeemable without intervention.

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[46]Marc H. Tanenbaum, Statement on "New Right Evangelicals," 2, 6, Marc H. Tanenbaum Papers, Box 24/1. Tanenbaum did, indeed, have a lot of examples to choose from. In addition to the ones detailed below, see "Baptist Remark about Jews 'Unfortunate,' Say Alabamians," *Mobile Register* 4 October 1980, 12-A; "Baptist Leaders Reject Minister's Remark," *Los Angeles Times* 27 September 1980, B7; A. Hillis, letter to the editor, *The (Baltimore) Sun* 22 October 1980, A18; and "How's That Again?" *New York Times* 21 September 1980, E7.

[47]Wilson, "Changing Christian Perceptions," in *Jews in Unsecular America*, 35.

[48]Robert E. Segal, "Right Makes Might in Christian Politics," *(Newark, New Jersey) Jewish News* 25 December 1980, 11.

Another worthwhile observation is that despite Tanenbaum's hopes—and his claims of what he was actually accomplishing among Southern Baptists—Southern Baptist and Jewish dialogue partners often approached the project with different motivations. When Tanenbaum wrote to Southern Baptist Billy Graham regarding his upcoming appearance to accept the AJC's National Interreligious Award from the National Executive Council in 1977, he urged Graham not to say anything about evangelism, since it would not go over well with his colleagues, and balked at a draft of Graham's acceptance speech that included language on the importance of honesty: "Let us not hide our differences under a basket. … [I believe] that when [the] Messiah comes we will all recognize that He is Jesus who was on earth once before. … To force men to believe is the wrong way to evangelize."[49] The picture Tanenbaum wanted to paint of Graham for the AJC looked more like Judeo-Christianity than evangelicalism, but Graham remained well within the evangelical world.

Not all of those among Tanenbaum's constituency considered him qualified to represent American Jews, nor should the discussion above be taken to fully represent American Jewish response to Smith. As Cohen has observed, those in the AJC "now stood for integration within mainstream America not as Jews but as Jewish *liberals.* … As a result, the defense agencies have often appeared more liberal than Jewish."[50] Another way of seeing this, rather than in conservative/liberal terms, is that the AJC was integrating into Judeo-Christianity's homogeneity and leaving religious particularity behind. Smith himself perceived that there was a division

[49]See Billy Graham, draft of acceptance speech for American Jewish Committee's National Interreligious Award, 28 October 1977; Marc Tanenbaum, New York, New York, to Billy Graham, 9 August 1977; and Marc Tanenbaum, New York, New York, to Billy Graham, 10 October 1977, all in Marc Tanenbaum Papers, Box 21, Folio 6.

[50]Cohen, "An Overview," in *Jews and the American Public Square*, 16.

along theological lines among American Jews that predicted whether or not they would condemn him, though he maintains that it was ultimately Christians who denounced him, not Jews—other than very liberal Jews.[51] Smith's perception does appear to be correct to an extent, but ultimately, it was not liberalism itself that predicted whether Jews would condemn Smith; rather, it was subscription to Judeo-Christianity. These intra-Jewish conflicts raised questions about Jewish identity, and how to present oneself as Jewish to the American public (how to be, as many in interfaith dialogue would say, an effective "witness" to one's faith); indeed, how (or even whether to try) to be a good American.[52]

Will Herberg's *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* ignored Orthodox Jews almost as glaringly as it did evangelicals.[53] Herberg's work was part of a trend among Jewish sociologists who saw American Jewish identity as "symbolic," as Herbert Gans put it. Lila Corwin Berman summarizes this sociological trend this way: "one could be connected to an ethnic group without feeling many particular demands on one's life," i.e., one could be Jewish without being particularly religious or distinctive from mainstream society. In this era, "Religion remained a piece of what distinguished Jews from non-Jews—or one ethnic group from another—but not because social researchers thought belief mattered."[54] Belief, however, did matter to Judeo-

[51]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

[52]Of course, this was a part of an ongoing theme in American Jewish history. See, for example, Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 12-30, 119-139.

[53]Herberg saw American Judaism as something that "resembled very closely the original moderate Reform program," and said that American Orthodoxy was more like European Reform Judaism than anything else. See Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, New York: Country Life Press, 1955), 209.

[54]Berman, *Speaking of Jews*, 114, 117.

Christianity, and the rabbis who took it upon themselves to represent Jewishness to America made sure to speak of it in Judeo-Christian terms. Rabbi Morris Kertzer, for example, assured his countrymen that Judaism and Christianity were compatible, since they both held up "the democratic ideal as a guide to the political and social order."[55] Christians and Jews believed in the same sort of God, and strove to be like that God. The Rabbis who represented Jewishness in the media tended to be Reform (or sometimes Conservative) ones, not Orthodox; Orthodoxy suggested a very different approach to religion than Judeo-Christianity might allow. It is not surprising that Herberg emphasized Reform Judaism as the normative way of being American and Jewish; Reform rabbis tended to interact with non-Jews much more than their Orthodox counterparts.[56] Judeo-Christianity required community, not spiritual isolation from one's Christian countrymen.

As a group that had never been enfolded into Judeo-Christianity, Orthodox Jews were more concerned about their own communities than what Smith thought of their prayers. They generally did not have much to say about it, unless asked. When they did express themselves, however, they ignited passionate responses. The *Southern Baptist Advocate*, a newspaper those involved in the SBC's conservative wing began publishing as an alternative to existing SBC periodicals they felt did not give them a fair hearing, ran an article detailing an interview with an Orthodox rabbi in Boston, Marvin Antelman, in its October issue that year. Antelman said he had no issue with Smith, seeing him as consistent. He did, however, take umbrage at Tanenbaum's attempts to represent American Judaism to the public:

…to me he is not a Rabbi. His ordination violates Jewish law and he is surely not

[55]Kertzer, quoted in Berman, *Speaking of Jews*, 133.

[56]See Berman, *Speaking of Jews*, 8, 152.

> representative of the religious Jewish community.
>
> He is part of a group that makes unholy alliances and violates all that orthodox Judaism stands for … The American Jewish Committee from with Mr. Tanenbaum speaks is neither American nor Jewish. It is not American for they do not support the U.S. Constitution nor are they Jewish for they do not follow the teachings of classical Judaism.
>
> The issue is not anti-semitism, it is theology… [57]

Upon reading the copy of the article that a San Francisco Southern Baptist affiliated with the AJC-SBC dialogue project had sent him, Rudin's exasperation reached a breaking point. This was not going to help matters at all. How was dialogue ever going to work if people who had only a surface knowledge of what was going on kept throwing wrenches into the works? "What the hell is he talking about … The idiotic comments which Antelman makes on AJC would not be disturbing (please note that he refers to Marc as Mr.!) but the fact that this publication must have some kind of circulation, which, according to them, is mailed to 14,000 Southern Baptist churches, is troubling."[58] It is not insignificant that Antelman claimed the AJC was "not American." Just as Tanenbaum read the Baptist tradition as indicating that a true Baptist was a true patriot, Antelman understood Jewish tradition in a way that underscored the Jewishness of American values—a true Jew was also a true patriot. True Americanism, however, was not Judeo-Christianity, as that, too, was not true Judaism.

A more intense quarrel erupted among readers of Houston's *Jewish Herald-Voice.* Ariel Bar-Sela's letter to the editor asserted his opinion that Smith was right that God was not listening to Jews: "I have six million witnesses," he said.[59] Although Bar-Sela was known for frequently

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[57]"Jesus, Prayer, and the Jews," *Southern Baptist Advocate* 1, no. 3 (October 1980), 10.

[58]James Rudin, New York, New York, memo to Ernest Weiner, 20 January 1981, March H. Tanenbaum Papers, Box 24/1.

[59]Ariel Bar-Sela, letter to the editor, *(Houston) Jewish Herald-Voice* 20 November 1980, 4.

writing incendiary articles about the rabbinate in this newspaper, his reference to the Holocaust brought immediate outrage. Jack Segal, a local rabbi, denouncing Bar-Sela's views as bad theology, implied that bad Jewish theology made for bad American politics by comparing Bar-Sela to Falwell.

> Frankly speaking, Dr. Bar-Sela sounds to me like a Jewish Reverend Jerry Falwell. Reverend Falwell says there is only one Christianity—his, and Dr. Bar-Sela seems to be saying the very same thing. "There is only one Judaism—mine. All those who conduct themselves in a different manner are merely treading the wrong path."
>
> In fact, it is difficult for me to understand why Dr. Bar-Sela even bothers with this entire subject, since, according to him, it is merely a moot subject—God pays no attention to the Jews.[60]

There was a wide variety of perspectives on prayer in Jewish scripture, Bar-Sela responded. It seemed much more important what the Tanakh said than what Protestant ministers said. "I cannot help but wonder why would anybody pay attention to a certain Smith."[61]

The same newspaper's editor also thought one should pay no attention to Smith, but on regional rather than on theological grounds (the paper was published in Houston). Aaron Blumenthal wrote an editorial that suggested a certain intimacy with Southern Baptists, urging American Jews to recognize the mess for what it was—"a good story," but not a call to arms. Texans knew and understood Southern Baptists better than alarmist organizations based in New York, did they not?

Do you know of anyone who refused to go to Shul on Yom Kippur[62] because God

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[60]Jack Segal, letter to the editor, *(Houston) Jewish Herald-Voice* 4 December 1980, 4.

[61]Ariel Bar-Sela, "It's about Time," *(Houston) Jewish Herald-Voice* 25 December 1980, 5.

[62]News of Smith's comments had come out during the High Holy Days, and some newspapers printed the story on the eve of Yom Kippur. Blumenthal may be referencing this, or there may be other, theological implications, as Yom Kippur is Judaism's most important holiday, and usually the date of highest synagogue attendance; perhaps a reference to "reasonable," Yom Kippur-observant Jews, rather than "fanatic" *shomer Shabbat* Jews.

> does not listen to the prayers of Jews?
>
> Now, suppose that I had taken a full-page ad in the Post and the Chronicle, one week before Easter, announcing that Jesus was an ordinary mortal and that there had been no resurrection. Would any Christians have stayed away from church on Easter because of it?
>
> …Jews and Christians have learned to ignore each other's foolishness and to accept the fact that we disagree about a number of theological matters. The only difference is that Jews have defense agencies and the Christians do not. We get better "protection" than they do.

As for Smith, his comments were unsurprising to Blumenthal: "that is not so terribly illogical, especially for one who has a high enthusiasm for his own faith. I am certain that the Satmer Rebbe believes the same thing about Christian prayers." Perhaps here Blumenthal was suggesting that everyone had their religious fanatics; the Satmer Rebbe, religious leader of a Hasidic group of immigrant Jews in Brooklyn, would be the American Jewish equivalent to a hyper-enthusiastic, and perhaps "medieval," Christian fundamentalist.[63] Nobody needed to fight; nobody needed protecting. They needed to be more *Jewish*. "With a little more respect for Jewish tolerance and tradition, and for the freedom of expression … that tape would have been destroyed. The remark is not anti-Semitic. … It would be a further contribution to such inter-faith amity if we were to reduce the number of our 'defenders' who want to save us from 'enemies' anxious to destroy it." Blumenthal saw the real problem as the AJC, though he recognized that Tanenbaum had made efforts to diffuse tensions.[64]

Later, Blumenthal took up the theme again, defending Smith: "Poor Rev. Bailey Smith—he simply has no mazal[65]!" He took the AJC to task more aggressively than before for being the

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[63]Theodore Freedman, following his experiences with Smith's congregation in Del City, Oklahoma, would compare Southern Baptists to Hasidic Jews, which he felt was the best way for American Jews to understand Southern Baptists. See chapter 4.

[64]Aaron Blumenthal, "If Not Now, When?" *(Houston) Jewish Herald-Voice*, 16 October 1980, 31.

[65]Luck.

cause of Smith's streak of bad luck. "Did you notice that none of the ultra-Orthodox Jews who lift their voices in prayer to God at least three times every day, were in the least disturbed by Rev. Smith? The ones who did react were of the AJC, most of whom do not pray daily. God wasn't hearing their voices anyway."[66] Rejecting the homogeneity of Judeo-Christianity, Blumenthal affirmed Smith's particularity, and with it, Jewish particularity as well.

Marc Liebhaber, a Conservative rabbi and publisher of Minneapolis's *American Jewish World*, also believed this situation was an opportunity to look within one's own community, rather than outward toward one's detractors. "God listens to our prayers," he joked.

> The reason is very simple. First of all, the Jew prays less. Statistics of Jewish and Christian attendance in churches and synagogues prove this. Secondly, there are less Jews in the world to pray. So the Almighty has time left… Then also, God is better versed in Hebrew than in all the other languages, especially the new African dialects of peoples just converted by missionaries.

None of that really mattered, though; "To me, it is of little importance to whose prayers God listens. … The problem I have is, do we listen to His requests to us? Do we act as He wants us to act? Are we worthy to be called human beings as He is surely worthy to be called Our Father?" Liebhaber figured that Christians "have a peculiar way of confusing the Almighty with their prayers," and "With a Khomeini and a Baptist minister as the soldiers of the Almighty, I do not envy our Father in Heaven."[67]

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[66]Aaron Blumenthal, "If Not Now, When?" *Jewish Herald-Voice* (Houston), 4 December 1980, 4.

[67]Marc Liebhaber, "Does He? Does He Not," *(Minneapolis) American Jewish World* 14 November 1980, 2. One Orthodox Rabbi, Hayim Halevy Donin, author of *To Pray as a Jew*, also lamented the American Jewish disinterest in prayer. "Our prayers have managed to survive several thousand years. They are masterpieces that reflect the biblical tradition and the best efforts of our sages and religious poets," he said. "And there is tremendous power there. But most American Jews regard prayer today as boring. And even for the devout Jew who prays daily out of a sense of religious obligation it is a routine he does thoughtlessly. And that's precisely what prayer ought not to be." See Bruce Buursma, "God Hears All Sincere People, Rabbi Says," *Chicago Tribune* 8 November 1980, S12.

Among all those who responded to the Jewish prayer controversy, Southern Baptists were the least likely to appeal to shared civil religion or to collapse the religious and the political into one. In their discussion of Smith, which seems to have included a greater percentage of their religious community than in other circles, they did not argue over how to be good Americans, but how to be good Southern Baptists. Given what we have seen about Judeo-Christianity and the exclusion of Protestants outside the "Mainline," this is perhaps not surprising; as it was a conversation they had rarely been invited to participate in, it was not one whose rhetoric they employed. For them, the questions involved whether Smith should represent them to the American public, not because of their patriotism, but because of their desire to provide the best witness to their faith. Their responses show that they did not necessarily know (or care) what Smith meant to say, but that what mattered was the way this revealed, in many Southern Baptists' estimations, what the stakes of the denominational Controversy[68] really were. Whatever their position on Smith's statement, they felt that those who disagreed with them were not true Southern Baptists, and often suggested that their opponents in the debate did not belong within the denomination. For the most part, the Southern Baptist debate over Smith (which was, by far, the lengthiest of any group in America) reveals a near-total obliviousness to the political implications of religious belief. Given that voices both inside and outside Southern Baptist life had long insisted, explicitly or implicitly, that their religious beliefs actually *had* no political implications, this is unsurprising.

There were exceptions, of course; one sometimes sees hints of Judeo-Christian rhetoric, if not actual Judeo-Christian doctrine, in Southern Baptist responses. The faculty of Meredith

[68]For an explanation of my choice to use this term rather than "fundamentalist takeover," see the introduction.

College unanimously passed a resolution just after the news of Smith's comments broke. Written by philosophy professor Allen Page, the resolution claimed that the faculty was "Standing within the Judeo-Christian tradition," but did not condemn Smith's beliefs as heretical, only as not ones they shared with him. "While we recognize Mr. Smith's right to his views, we do not accept this as our view. … God is the God of all people and … God alone is judge." They said nothing about being Americans, but instead that they were "proud of our Baptist heritage."[69] Although Judeo-Christianity's terminology may have been prevalent enough to have inspired Page to place the faculty of Meredith College "within the Judeo-Christian tradition," the freedom he wrote about was not American and had nothing to do with twentieth-century geopolitics. Instead, he wrote about soul freedom, a doctrine Southern Baptists self-consciously upheld as the thing that set them apart from non-Baptists, within a historical framework of radicalism and dissent from the mainstream. Baptists had earned their name by what they did not do—baptize infants (who could not consent)—and by what they did—baptize those who asked for it themselves. A theological rubric that asserted both the responsibility and the freedom of each individual to determine matters of religious belief for himself or herself undergirded their baptismal practices.[70] Page wrote about "the freedom of the individual conscience" as a part of being

[69]The Board of Trustees unanimously voted to approve the statement September 26, 1980. Faculty of Meredith College to Bailey C. Smith (September 18, 1980), reprinted in Carolyn C. Robinson, *The Vision Revisited: A History of Meredith College 1971-1998* (Raleigh: Meredith College Press, 1999), 100. My thanks to Martha Fonville at Meredith College's Carlyle Campbell Library for assistance in finding this citation. Page originally intended it as a personal letter, but after discussing it with colleagues, took it to the faculty. See "Meredith College Faculty Critical of Smith's Remark," *Baptist Press*, 25 September 1980, 3-4.

[70]See Susan M. Shaw, *God Speaks to Us, Too: Southern Baptist Women on Church, Home & Society* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 4-8, 246-268. "Soul freedom" is also known as "soul liberty," "soul competency," or "freedom of conscience." This may be overstated at times, of course; Southern Baptist parents exert plenty of influence on their children's choices regarding baptism. "Choosing" not to be baptized at some point prior to one's mid-teens would likely invite a lot of scrutiny. In recent decades, the age at which most Southern Baptists are baptized has fallen significantly, and today baptism of four- and five-year-old children is not uncommon. These early baptisms often lead adolescents to request a second baptism, with the assertion that they did not fully understand what they were doing the first time around. See 54-55.

Baptist. This meant Smith could think what he wanted, just as the faculty of Meredith College could disagree with him, and neither would be counted as heretical.[71]

The most direct influence of Judeo-Christianity comes through in a similar resolution passed by the faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS). Unlike Meredith College, SEBTS did not mention Smith by name at all, but rather wrote about similarities between Baptist and Jewish concerns, without any use of the term "Judeo-Christian." If anything, SEBTS's resolution appears to be seeking a middle ground between Southern Baptists and Judeo-Christianity, quoting a 1972 SBC resolution against anti-Semitism, which condemned bigotry in general and encouraged Baptists "to follow the Christian attitude and practice of love for Jews, who with all other people 'are equally beloved of God.'"[72] The resolution did not praise Jews for being good Americans or Judaism as a valid religious outlook, however, as one might have anticipated from among the prophets of Judeo-Christianity, and did not set them (or Americans in general) apart as *particularly* "beloved," over and against, say, Hindus, as the *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* rubric might suggest. It did express concern about the potential consequences for interfaith dialogue—perhaps a reflection of the AJC's work with Southern Baptist seminary professors. In fact, it used Rudin's language, referring to "interreligious

[71]Faculty of Meredith College to Bailey C. Smith (September 18, 1980), reprinted in Robinson, *The Vision Revisited*, 100.

[72]Resolution passed in the Called Faculty Meeting of October 29, 1980, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Faculty Document Book, 428 (Item 2). According to Sheldon Alexander, the meeting seems to have been called specifically for that purpose, after a motion made at the Called Faculty Meeting of October 15, 1980 electing a committee from the biblical, historical, theological, and ministry areas of the faculty to draft the resolution. My thanks to Nathan Finn of SEBTS' library for locating and sending me this document. The quote is, as indicated, from the 1972 SBC resolution "On Anti-Semitism." See *Annual*, Southern Baptist Convention, 1972, 75.

communication and witness," which was "precious to us and to the Jews."[73]

Baptist media reports on the SEBTS resolution revealed where Southern Baptist focus actually was: inward, reflecting the fractiousness of intra-denominational relationships in the late 1970s and 1980s. Rather than America's destiny as a nation, Southern Baptists were worried about their future as a denomination. The SEBTS faculty was concerned that saying anything more would cause unnecessary problems, as a spokesman told the *Baptist Press.* "They did not think it served anyone well to enter into a confrontation with the SBC president."[74] Given the storm of controversy surrounding the seminaries at that time, that may have been a decision based upon self-preservation on the part of those involved. Still, the choice of language is unlikely to have been coincidental in its mimicking of Rudin's. In gesturing toward evangelism with the word "witness," and saying that Jews valued it as well, they suggested openness to the AJC's view of the practice. That openness would not go over well with many of the Southern Baptist rank and file, but since the rank and file would have been much more familiar with more traditional Southern Baptist uses of the term, they were unlikely to have noticed that SEBTS was saying anything unusual.

For professors at Southern Baptist schools, wariness of drawing attention to beliefs that might be viewed as liberal did have roots in a legitimate potential for backlash. E. Glen Hinson, a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) who had been involved in interfaith dialogue events, wrote about his belief that Smith was misguided theologically and

[73]Resolution passed in the Called Faculty Meeting of October 29, 1980, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Faculty Document Book, 428 (Item 2). This may also be another case of dialogue partners having differing understandings of their goals.

[74]"Seminary Faculty Reaffirms 'Love, Support for Jews,'" *Baptist Press*, 6 November 1980, 4.

diplomatically disastrous in an open letter to him that first appeared in Kentucky's *Western Recorder* and was later picked up by several other Baptist newspapers. Hinson said, "Statements such as this one are the stuff from which holocausts come." [75] Some Baptists responded in defense of Smith, which meant attacking Hinson as the "liberal" one in the fold. They felt that such an opinion made Hinson ill-suited to be a Southern Baptist seminary professor, and utilized the opportunity to criticize the orthodoxy of the SBC's seminaries in general.[76] Hinson then defended his orthodoxy in another letter that appeared in multiple Southern Baptist newspapers,[77] and others rallied to support him as well.[78] Similarly, J. William Angell, a professor at Wake Forest University, wrote a personal letter of apology for Smith's words to a rabbi. When the contents of the letter reached the press,[79] Angell was also subject to attack on the basis of being a representative of the "liberalism" rampant in the SBC, and one of several

[75]E. Glenn Hinson, "An Open Letter to Dr. Bailey Smith," *Western Recorder*, 17 September 1980, 7. See also *Baptist and Reflector*, 1 October 1980; *Baptist Standard*, 2 October 1980; and *Maryland Baptist* 2 October 1980.

[76]The teachings and beliefs of seminary professors were a major source of controversy during this period. See, for example, John B. Draper, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 5. In response to Hinson, Draper wrote: "I hesitate to train for ministry where 'honest scholars' cannot confidently assert Jesus' Messianic claims, where his true identity may be questioned, or where the historical basis of His gospel can be in doubt." See also Wendell McClellan, letter to the editor, *Maryland Baptist*, 16 October 1980, 2; and Eldridge L. Miller, letter to the editor, *Baptist Messenger*, 16 October 1980, 2.

[77]Hinson affirmed that he believed Jesus was the Messiah and that he still accepted SBTS' "Abstract of Principles," a document all of its professors were required to follow in teaching. The letter or excerpts of it appeared in the following newspapers: *Baptist Messenger*, 16 October 1980; *Baptist Record* 30 October 1980; *Baptist New Mexican*, 18 October 1980, 8; *Florida Baptist Witness*, 16 October 1980, 4; *Maryland Baptist* 9 October 1980; and *Western Recorder*, 8 October 1980.

[78]James A. Britt, letter to the editor, *Florida Baptist Witness*, 30 October 1980, 2; and Rogna R. Tankersley, letter to the editor, *Western Recorder*, 8 October 1980, 5.

[79]Angell's letter reportedly said, among other things, that "Bailey Smith is one of a group of Southern Baptist power politicians who, unfortunately, have maneuvered themselves into places of leadership. They think and act in terms of forced uniformity and ruthless control. … They are not the people of God." See "Criswell Denounces Remark," *Baptist Messenger*, 30 October 1980, 5; and "Criswell Expresses 'Regret' at Statement," *Baptist Standard*, 22 October 1980, 9.

people who were, according to Vaughn W. Denton of Memphis, "taking a stand against everything that is holy and right" and thus had "no place among conservative Southern Baptists." In the research undertaken for this study, Denton was the only Southern Baptist I found who identified such views as a threat to *American* ways rather than simply Baptist or more generally Christian ways—saying that Angell and others who thought like him were communist sympathizers in favor of legalized pornography, gay rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution. The overwhelming majority of Southern Baptist responses, by far, focused on religious conflicts without reference to political implications.[80]

In one of the stranger incidents that came out during this period, former SBC president and champion of the conservative cause W. A. Criswell found himself needing to clarify his own opinions after he sent a copy of Angell's letter to a Dallas rabbi saying that it expressed "the heart and persuasion of our Southern Baptist people."[81] According to an unsigned manuscript in

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[80]Denton, letter to the editor, 5. Stanley Peek said that Smith's opponents were more guilty than Smith was, in attempting to "discredit this noble man of God" in a letter to the editor, *Biblical Recorder*, 13 December 1980, 12. George E. Hays said he was pleased that Smith's critics were finally demonstrating their true characters, and thus the statement was probably due to the Holy Spirit's prompting, in a letter to the editor, *Florida Baptist Witness*, 13 November 1980, 2. L. E. Tapp expressed a similar sentiment ("I would to God more of the denominational liberals would identify themselves. It should serve as a good tool for the trustees when they begin to weed them out, as I surely hope they shall.") in a letter to the editor, *Western Recorder*, 8 October 1980, 5. See also Walter K. Price, letter to the editor, *Western Recorder*, 15 October 1980, 4. Meanwhile, Smith's opponents felt that his words were indicative that those accusing them of liberalism were a threat to the SBC. Max Sparlin cautioned, "If this quotation correctly defines the 'conservative' state of mind, then it seems…we Baptists had better be careful that we don't go overboard for it." in a letter to the editor, *Baptist Messenger*, 9 October 1980, 2. Wallace W. Rogers predicted, "If this is but one more evidence of what is coming out of the so-called conservative movement within the Convention, our days as a united denomination are numbered!" in a letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 9 October 1980, 4. Clearly Smith's comments had opened the floodgates to the expression of what Southern Baptists really thought about one another in the midst of their most turbulent years. This kind of response provoked others to beg for their fellow Baptists to stop fighting, because the rancor was not in keeping with what Christ would have wanted them to do. See Janice Baldwin, letter to the editor, *California Southern Baptist*, 23 October 1980, 2; N. Paul Callahan, letter to the editor, *Word and Way*, 11 December 1980, 2; Jerry B. Hodges, letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 3 October 1980, 4; Frankie R. Latham, letter to the editor, *Baptist Standard*, 22 October 1980, 2; Laura Murphy, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 5 November 1980, 5; and Raymond R. Purcell, letter to the editor, *Baptist Message*, 4 December 1980, 3.

[81]"Criswell Expresses 'Regret' at Statement," *Baptist Standard*, 22 October 1980, 9.

the personal papers of the *Southern Baptist Advocate*'s first editor, Russell Kaemmerling, Smith had been distraught by Criswell's refusal of support. "I had also requested of the pastor that he make some statement of support of Bailey Smith," Kaemmerling wrote. "I indicated that these were crucial times in the life of Southern Baptists. That we needed to stand with a united front against the opposition."[82] (By "opposition", Kaemmerling referred to less conservative Baptists, not an external enemy.) The Baptist Press reported that "sources close to the pastor" had said Criswell was not fully "aware of the contents of" the letter when he had sent it to the rabbi. Criswell later said he supported Smith and was confident that Smith was not anti-Semitic, but did not affirm Smith's theological claims.[83] Kaemmerling's manuscript described a meeting he attended between Smith and Criswell in which Criswell had privately affirmed Smith's theology, but had said he received large sums of money and a great deal of social acclaim from Jews in Dallas, and therefore would not say anything more about it publicly.[84]

The discussions of Smith were not just public or private contretemps between individuals. In an unprecedented way, the Jewish prayer controversy (and its implications for Southern Baptist orthodoxy) played a significant role in Baptist state conventions in 1980. Usually much more mild in tone and tending to ignore major national controversies, the outcry over Smith provoked messengers at convention meetings in six states and Washington, D. C., to

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[82]Unsigned manuscript dated October 1980, Russell Kaemmerling Papers, Archives of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Library, Wake Forest, North Carolina.

[83]"Criswell Expresses 'Regret' at Statement," *Baptist Standard*, 22 October 1980, 9.

[84]"He never apologized. He simply kept referring to the friends he had in the Jewish community, to the relationship he had with the Jewish community. How they invited him to their feasts and to their banquets and to their parties. How they had been generous [financially] to him personally but he told Bailey, 'Bailey, I know theologically you are exactly right.'" Unsigned manuscript dated October 1980, Russell Kaemmerling Papers, Archives of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Library, Wake Forest, North Carolina.

officially discuss the controversy.[85] In nearly every case, the messengers' discussions became heated and somehow a means of accusing other messengers of heterodoxy. Most such battles reflected specific theological concerns related to prayer and evangelism, and are discussed further below; however, some were simply sites for re-enacting the contentiousness of the national convention earlier that summer. Indiana and Oklahoma officially commended Smith, but avoided mentioning Jewish prayers. Indiana focused on Smith's baptismal records.[86] Messengers in Oklahoma resolved to pray for Smith.[87] Many messengers wanted to take a more explicit action regarding Jewish prayers, but Smith discouraged this: "Several of you have come to me asking if you could make a resolution of support for the statement [on Jewish prayers], per se. I would just like to say to you that I would believe it would be inappropriate." Thus when the resolution passed without mention of Jewish prayers, Smith said: "This is just exactly what I wanted. We are leaving the other matter behind."[88] Oklahoma seemed to be able to avoid the acrimonious debate taking place elsewhere, but that was the exception rather than the rule,[89] with a messenger in West Virginia accusing fellow messengers who disagreed with his view on the issue as guilty of the sin of "deny[ing] that Jesus was the Messiah"[90] and Texas Baptists unable to agree on even the question of resolving to pray for Smith, whether or not they specified what

[85]See Dan Martin, "Conventions Draw Messengers But Controversy Stays at Home," *Baptist Press*, 21 November 1980, 3. Attempts to obtain audio recordings of these conventions were unsuccessful.

[86]*Annual*, State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, 1980, 33.

[87]*Annual*, Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, 1980, 144.

[88]"Bailey Smith Declines Second Oklahoma Term," *Baptist Press*, 13 November 1980, 2. See also "Resolution supports Smith as SBC President," *Baptist Messenger*, 20 November 1980, 4.

[89]Richard T. McCartney, "The 1980 Convention," *Baptist Messenger*, 30 November 1980, 2.

[90]"W. Va. Tables Resolution on God's Hearing Prayer," *Baptist Press*, 11 November 1980, 1.

their prayers might contain.[91] In North Carolina, messengers did manage to pass a resolution offering "a message of encouragement" to Smith and assuring him of "our prayerful support," but W. W. Finlator, a messenger from Raleigh, demanded that the record reflect his desire to rise "to a point of personal privilege to express agreement with the action just taken except as it may relate to the much-publicized statement … concerning the prayers of Jews not being heard by God." (Finlator presumably could not bring himself to pray about that.)[92] While messengers proposed three resolutions relating to the controversy at the Tennessee Baptist Convention, they only voted on one, which passed, with the Resolutions Committee ruling that proposed resolutions on prayer and commending Bailey Smith were inappropriate.[93] The resolution they passed condemned anti-Semitism in language very similar to the 1972 SBC resolution referenced by the faculty of SEBTS.[94] Southern Baptists did agree that anti-Semitism was deplorable, but beyond this, consensus was impossible. Some said that Baptists needed to support Smith,

[91]*Annual*, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1980, 74-75. The Baptist Press referred to this as "a mini-controversy." The motion to amend failed by a three to one margin. Orville Scott, "Texas Baptists Avoid Doctrinal Conflicts," *Baptist Press*, 31 October 1980, 5. See also Toby Druin, "Texas Baptist 'Family' Renews Commitment," *Baptist Standard*, 5 November 1980, 3-4.

[92]*Annual*, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, 1980, 92. Curiously, the Baptist Press did not report on this as a controversial resolution, but merely reported is adoption. See "North Carolina Messengers Laud Newspaper, President," *Baptist Press*, 13 November 1980, 6.

[93]"Tennessee Baptists Shoulder Bold Missions Thrust Burden," *Baptist Press*, 14 November 1980, 5.

[94]*Annual*, Tennessee Baptist Convention, 1980, 203-204. Compare to *Annual*, Southern Baptist Convention, 1972, 75.

whether they agreed with his statements about Jewish prayer or not.[95] Others disagreed.[96] Notably, none of them had anything to say about being good Americans, or Judeo-Christianity.

Ultimately, all of the discussions Southern Baptists had in the last several months of 1980 and into 1981 about Smith's statement can be roughly grouped in three themes: whether Smith had acted responsibly as a representative of Southern Baptists to America at large, whether he was right in his claim that God would not listen to Jewish petitions, and concerns about evangelism. In the end, however, the first two questions were linked tightly with concerns about evangelism as well, with many of those who argued over either the issue of Smith's responsibilities or of the theology of prayer returning to what they would say was the key to the whole issue: was this effective evangelism? If it was not, this was yet another opportunity to pronounce one's opponent a heretic, because the core of Southern Baptist identity was a sense of mission to evangelize, however that might have expressed itself.

On the subject of whose prayers God heard, or might not hear, many questioned the orthodoxy of those who disagreed with them by citing their common sacred texts, an unsurprising battle ground for those who viewed the Bible as a primary source of religious authority. Smith's defenders used various biblical references, saying that clearly the Jews were

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[95]See "Criswell, Rogers Defend Smith," *Baptist Courier*, 13 November 1980, 15; and "Controversial Remark's Dust Hasn't Settled Yet; Rogers and Criswell Go to Bat for Bailey Smith," *Western Recorder*, 12 November 1980, 1. The *Western Recorder* quoted Rogers as saying Smith was "sincere, doctrinally-pure," and "not stupid." Rogers later gave more details on why he supported Smith, remarking, "I wonder if those who have called Smith a bigot are so bigoted themselves as to expect him as a believer to keep silent concerning the primacy and uniqueness of Jesus." His remarks originally appeared in the *Bellevue Messenger*, the newsletter of Rogers's Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis. They are reprinted as Adrian Rogers, "In Defense of Bailey Smith," *Alabama Baptist*, 11 December 1980, 6.

[96]"Brooks Hays Honored; Reacts to Smith on Jews' Prayers," *Baptist Press*, 30 October 1980, 3-4.

as "lost" as the pagans until they accepted Christ and thus God would not hear their prayers.[97] ("Lost" here refers to those who would be "lost" to God's care upon death if not "found/saved" prior to that event; i.e., condemned to hell.) They also said that God would not hear the prayers of the wicked, appealing to numerous verses and saying that rejection of Jesus as the Messiah was a wicked act that would hinder one's prayers.[98] They dismissed disagreement with Smith as being patently unbiblical (Don E. McQueen even compared Smith's opponents to Satan).[99] If

[97]Dick Barber, letter to the editor, *Biblical Recorder* 1 November 1980, 8 (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5); Gilbert L. Barr, letter to the editor, *Baptist Message*, 9 October 1980, 7 (John 3:18); James N. Burkitt, letter to the editor, *Religious Herald*, 23 October 1980, 5; Jerry H. Bryan, letter to the editor, *Alabama Baptist*, 30 October 1980, 3 (John 8:44; Rom. 10); June Davis, letter to the editor, *Florida Baptist Witness*, 23 October 1980, 2 (Gen. 15:5-6; Is. 59:1-2; John 3:3, 9:31, Rom. 4:3; 2 Cor. 6:14-15; Heb. 11:17-20); Stephen D. Hensley, letter to the editor, *Biblical Recorder* 1 November 1980, 8 (1 John 5:14); Hunt, letter to the editor, 8 (John 6:29, 14:6, 13; Acts 4:12); Ed Malone, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 5 November 1980, 5 (John 8); Delano McMinn, letter to the editor, *Ohio Baptist Messenger*, 4 December 1980, 3; Don E. McQueen, letter to the editor, *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, 9 October 1980, 2 (John 3:18, 14:6); Bill Read, letter to the editor, *Rocky Mountain Baptist*, 16 October 1980, 8 (Matt. 10:33, 10:40, 11:27; John 10:30, 14:6; Rom. 2:28-29); R. W. Sherrill, letter to the editor, *Religious Herald*, 6 November 1980, 10; Dee Thompson, letter to the editor, *Florida Baptist Witness*, 9 October 1980, 2 (John 14:6; Acts 4:12); M. Yeo, letter to the editor, *Baptist New Mexican*, 18 October 1980, 7 (John 13:31, 14:6, 13-14, 16:16; Heb. 7:25; Phil. 2:11); and Rob Zinn, letter to the editor, *California Southern Baptist*, 30 October 1980, 3 (John 12:46-50, 16:23-24; Acts 4:12).

[98]Ken Babington letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 9 October 1980, 4 (John 9:31, 14:6, 14, 15:16, 16:23ff; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1-3); Harold E. Clark, letter to the editor, *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, 4 December 1980, 6 (2 Chr. 7:14; John 14:13-14); Margaret Combs, letter to the editor, *Western Recorder*, 8 October 1980, 5 (John 14:13, 15:16; Rom. 8:26-27; Jude 20); Mike Cothran, letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 16 October 1980, 3 (Ps. 66:18); Vaughn W. Denton, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 5 November 1980, 5 (John 9:31); Mary L. Hebert, letter to the editor, *Baptist Message*, 9 October 1980, 7 (Luke 12:8-9; John 5:23, 44, 14:6, 15:23); Hunt, letter to the editor, 8 (Prov. 1:24, 28; Jer. 11:11; Mic. 3:4); Don E. McQueen, letter to the editor, *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, 9 October 1980, 2 (Is. 59:2; John 3:18, 14:6); Mendoza, letter to the editor, 5 (2 Chron. 7:14; Prov. 15:29); Morris, letter to the editor, 4 (Matt. 17:5, John 9:31, 14:6); Joyce Steele, letter to the editor, *Illinois Baptist*, 8 October 1980, 3 (Prov. 14:12; John 9:31; Rom. 10:9, 17); and Roy L. Thompson, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 5 November 1980, 5 (Gen. 3:15, 4:4; John 17:4-5, 24; Gal. 3:16-17; Heb. 11:4; 1 John 4:3; Rev. 13:18).

[99]"However, if you take the humanistic view and do not believe the Scriptures to be infallible, then this, too, might seem somewhat outmoded. … But then, that is what Satan says, isn't it!" Don E. McQueen, letter to the editor, *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, 9 October 1980, 2. See also Dick Barber, letter to the editor, *Biblical Recorder* 1 November 1980, 8; Cynthia S. Burris, letter to the editor, *Biblical Recorder*, 8 November 1980, 6; Harry Grove, letter to the editor, *Maryland Baptist*, 16 October 1980, 2; Hardin Hosey, letter to the editor, *Western Recorder*, 15 October 1980, 4; Tom Schiefer, letter to the editor, *Rocky Mountain Baptist*, 13 November 1980, 8; Lou Shelton, letter to the editor, *Baptist Messenger*, 2 October 1980, 2; and L. E. Tapp, letter to the editor, *Western Recorder*, 8 October 1980, 5.

prayers could reach God without Jesus, they said, then Jesus died in vain.[100]

Smith's critics countered with their own references to biblical passages indicating that God was still concerned about the Jews,[101] and to Cornelius, a God-fearing but non-Christian man whose prayers God heard (Acts 10:2).[102] They further questioned the exegetical methods of the supporters of Smith, accusing them of prooftexting. They said John 9:31 ("God does not listen to sinners"), which Smith's defenders commonly cited, addresses whether one is a sinner, not whether one is Jewish or Gentile (pointing out that Jews were an ethnic group as well as a religion, and that it was possible to be a Jew and a Christian).[103] In addition, the statement was what a blind man said to a group of Pharisees, quoting a common Jewish saying to defend Jesus, not one attributed to Jesus himself.[104] Smith's critics also felt that his defenders were guilty of equating salvation with prayer. For them, the ability to pray was a part of God's common grace to all people, while salvation was limited to those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Common

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[100]Margie B. Farr, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 15 October 1980, 5. See also H. Franklin Brown, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector* 15 October 1980, 5.

[101]Minton, letter to the editor, 5 (Rom. 10:12-13); and Sample, letter to the editor, 6 (Rom. 11). See also Robert C. Carnes, letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 2 October 1980, 4.

[102]Christian Life and Public Affairs Committee of the Baptist Convention of Maryland, "A Letter to Bailey Smith," *Maryland Baptist*, 30 October 1980, 8; Ron Kirkland, letter to the editor, *Baptist New Mexican*, 18 October 1980, 7; and Thomas W. Simmons, letter to the editor, *Florida Baptist Witness*, 6 November 1980, 2. Kirkland also mentioned the prayers the Bible records God hearing from other nonbelievers, including Hagar and the sailors with Jonah. Smith's supporters countered with the claim that Cornelius was praying for salvation, and thus his was the prayer of one seeking Christ. See Blaine Sturgill, letter to the editor, *The Maryland Baptist*, 16 October 1980, 2.

[103]Diana D. Greer, letter to the editor, *Rocky Mountain Baptist*, 23 October 1980, 8; Lynch, letter to the editor, 4; and Winters, letter to the editor, 5. Some supporters of Smith, however, did acknowledge that Smith had unfortunately not clarified that he spoke of Jews religiously, not ethnically. See C. E. Colton, letter to the editor, *Baptist Standard*, 8 October 1980, 2; Mike Cothran, letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 16 October 1980, 4.

[104]A. D. Adamson, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 29 October 1980, 5; David E. Lynch, letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 23 October 1980, 4; and Simmons, letter to the editor, 2. Some pointed out that Jesus did not insist on prayers being said in his name, such as when he taught the Lord's Prayer and made no reference to himself. See Larry Smith, letter to the editor, *Florida Baptist Witness*, 30 October 1980, 2.

grace often led one to saving faith, so there was good reason to believe God would hear the prayers of the lost. They cited additional verses to support this point.[105] One woman wrote that Smith's defenders were suggesting that young children could not pray, highlighting Southern Baptist belief that even their own children were not Christians (or "saved") unless and until they assented to their doctrines of salvation, something they could not be reasonably expected to do in early life.[106] Efforts to determine whose prayers God heard were unnecessarily limiting God's sovereignty.[107] A few of Smith's defenders responded by implying Smith's critics were not true Christians, stating that those who *were* Christians would immediately see that Smith spoke the truth.[108] Seeming to anticipate such claims, the D. C. Baptist Convention affirmed a standard Southern Baptist doctrine in its resolution: "Jesus Christ is the only Saviour [sic] of the world."[109]

The link between the proper theology of prayer and evangelistic efforts also revealed

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[105]Kennedy, letter to the editor, 4 (John 14:3); Kirkland, letter to the editor, 7 (Ps. 65:2); and Norman K. Sewall, letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 23 October 1980, 4 (Matt. 5:45; Rom. 2:4). See also Danielson, letter to the editor, 7; and Harry L. Wells, letter to the editor, *Baptist Standard*, 8 October 1980, 2.

[106]Irene P. McColley, letter to the editor, *Religious Herald*, 23 October 1980, 5-6. See note 70, above, on how "early life" might be defined.

[107]Kennedy, letter to the editor, 4; Frank Meeker, letter to the editor, *Florida Baptist Witness*, 30 October 1980, 2; and Susan Wilson, letter to the editor, *Baptist Record*, 9 October 1980, 4. This was the only thing the D. C. Baptist Convention had been able to resolve, and would not mention Smith or Jews at all, even though it was obvious why they suddenly felt the need to assert that God "hears and answers prayers from whomever He wills," given that "God is sovereign." See "D. C. Baptists Address Controversial Issues," *Baptist Press*, 17 November 1980, 9.

[108]"Every blood-bought saint, saved by grace and sealed by the Holy Spirit, knows that Bailey Smith was right." Delano McMinn, letter to the editor, *Ohio Baptist Messenger*, 4 December 1980, 3. See also Carolyn Fitch, letter to the editor, *Western Recorder*, 8 October 1980, 5: "How can anyone who has been saved by grace…condemn Dr. Smith or be 'dismayed' by his statements?" and David Browning, letter to the editor, *Baptist Messenger*, 9 October 1980, 2: "The reaction of Jewish people I can understand… But the reaction of those who are supposed to be of the same faith can in my opinion hardly bear reasonable explanation."

[109]"D. C. Baptists Address Controversial Issues," *Baptist Press*, 17 November 1980, 9.

itself in the wake of Virginia Baptists' 1980 resolution on prayer, which, in contrast to their nearby D. C. counterparts, called Smith out by name. God "hears the sincere prayers of all hearts who seek Him with an humble spirit of sincerity and truth," Virginia Baptists asserted. According to the Baptist Press, the messengers adopted this resolution "by a large margin,"[110] but there was a struggle. Numerous motions to amend or table this resolution failed. There was no vote on another resolution commending Smith on his record-breaking baptismal statistics.[111] The debate continued after the convention ended, as evidenced by this letter to the editor of Virginia's Baptist newspaper, the *Religious Herald*:

> …[T]he General Association of Virginia Baptists goofed twice. Once in a carefully prepared statement, fully debated, that says Jesus is "central" to man's salvation, but refuses to say that He is the "only mediator" as the Bible often emphasizes. Then it goes on to say that God hears the prayers of every person. This strongly suggests that God accepts the worship of Moslems, Jews, Buddhists, and any others in any sort of worship without any need of their knowing or trusting Jesus. If we accept this suggestion, we can be content to let everybody go his own way to heaven (or wherever) and not press our sectarian view of Jesus on them. … God already accepts them according to GAVB. Lottie Moon didn't know.[112]

The invocation of Lottie Moon, as the hero of Southern Baptist missions who had been immortalized in legend and annual Christmas offerings, and who had been held up often as an example of sacrificing one's own happiness and comfort for the spiritual salvation of others, was a means of appealing to the one thing Southern Baptists might be persuaded to agree on. If citing

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[110]"Virginia Baptists Reject Messenger Test Formula," *Baptist Press*, 14 November 1980, 8. See also "Resolutions Include Denunciation of 'Creeping Creedalism,'" *Religious Herald,* 20 November 1980, 8-9.

[111]*Annual*, Baptist General Association of Virginia, 1980, 116, 126-127. The "large margin" was closer than it may have seemed; at 573 to 333 the resolution passed with only about 63% of the vote, and even the *Washington Post* noted that the atmosphere was tense. See "Va. Baptists Reject Limits on Freedom," *Washington Post* 14 November 1980, D12.

[112]Truett T. Cox, letter to the editor, *Religious Herald,* 18 December 1980, 5.

Bible verses would not do the trick, then surely they would be shamed into understanding the evil of their ways with appeal to the closest thing Southern Baptists had to a canonized saint.[113]

Many of Smith's critics thought he should not have said what he said partly because the general public would think that the president of the SBC spoke for all Southern Baptists, and they did not want to be associated with his words, which the public largely understood to be anti-Semitic (particularly given the remark about the "funny-looking noses").[114] Often, they sought to counter Smith's representation with their own. A group of Waco pastors and Baylor professors wrote a statement together which was read both in synagogues and Southern Baptist churches

[113]See Shaw, *God Speaks to Us, Too*, 142-143. See also Jane Ford, *The Nature of Grace* (San Jose: Writer's Club Press, 2001), 42-44; Lydia Huffman Hoyle Hoyle, "Queens in the Kingdom," in *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers: Missionary Women in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Dana L. Robert (Maryknoll, New York: Oribis Books, 2002), 110-111; and Irwin T. Hyatt, Jr., *Our Ordered Lives Confess: Three Nineteenth Century Missionaries in East Shantung* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 131-132.

West Virginia experienced similar struggles. The convention's discussion of a proposed resolution affirming belief that God heard only Christians' prayers and praising Smith for his courage was so passionate that the messengers decided to postpone voting until the next year. The Baptist Press quoted one messenger saying to the evenly divided convention, "If you don't vote for the resolution, you deny that Jesus was the Messiah." Another messenger said the squabble was merely a matter of semantics. See *Annual*, West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists, 1980, 38; and "W. Va. Tables Resolution on God's Hearing Prayer," *Baptist Press*, 11 November 1980, 1. The *West Virginia Southern Baptist*'s report on the convention, unfortunately, gives no further details; in fact, it gives fewer than the Baptist Press article. See "Convention's 10th Annual Meeting a Three 'C' Event," *West Virginia Southern Baptist*, November 1980, 3-4. In 1981, cooler heads prevailed for West Virginia Baptists, and the resolution passed regarding the issue commended Smith for his work as an evangelist and affirmed that the messengers believed salvation was possible only through Christ. There was no mention of Jews or the prayers of non-Christians. The resolution passed unanimously. *Annual*, West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists, 1981, 25; and "Optimism Permeates 1981 State Convention," *West Virginia Southern Baptist*, November 1981, 1.

[114]Chester Brown, letter to the editor, *Religious Herald*, 23 October, 1980, 6; Paul Clay, letter to the editor, *Baptist Messenger*, 16 October 1980, 2; Judson Clement, letter to the editor, *Illinois Baptist*, 31 December 1980, 5; Kathy Evangelista, letter to the editor, *Rocky Mountain Baptist*, 23 October 1980, 8; Clara Landers, letter to the editor, *Baptist New Mexican*, 18 October 1980, 7; Donald E. Lewis, letter to the editor, *Baptist Standard*, 10 December 1980, 2; E. Gene Lynch, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 29 October, 1980, 5; D. Wayne Martin, letter to the editor, *Biblical Recorder*, 8 November 1980, 6; Paul Meers, letter to the editor, *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, 9 October 1980, 2; W. Coy Sample, letter to the editor, *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, 30 October 1980, 6; and W. S. Williams, letter to the editor, *Biblical Recorder*, 29 November 1980, 11. Some Baptist newspapers received letters from Jewish people as well. See Yitzbak Ban Abraham, letter to the editor, *Illinois Baptist*, 29 October 1980, 7; and Jacob Coopersmith, letter to the editor, *Rocky Mountain Baptist*, 23 October 1980, 8. The *Baptist Press*, meanwhile, reported that the comments had hindered the work of Baptist missionaries in Israel. See "Smith Quote Causes Dismay in Israel," *Baptist Press*, 19 September 1980, 5.

affirming a commitment to combat anti-Semitism and apologizing to American Jews for Smith's remarks.[115] Similar actions were taken by deacon boards and general lay membership during official business meetings at churches throughout the Baptist South.[116] Other Baptist associations countered with defenses of Smith's public actions, as did his own congregation in Del City, Oklahoma, placing large ads in the *Daily Oklahoman*.[117]

Concerns about how they would be perceived in relation to Smith were rooted in concerns over evangelistic effectiveness. The Union Baptist Association in Houston decided not to invite Smith to speak at their evangelism conference as they had previously planned because Smith appeared to be anti-Semitic, highlighting this link.[118] John W. Laney wrote to the editor of the *Maryland Baptist* explaining why Smith was hindering evangelism:

> It seems strange that those who seem to claim a monopoly on the term "evangelical" would publicly proclaim such a repulsive view of God as to place a tremendous and unnecessary stumbling block in the way of persons who, otherwise, might be more interested in knowing more of our faith.[119]

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[115]"Texans Apologize to Jews," *Baptist Messenger*, 30 October 1980, 5.

[116]Southern Baptist "territory" contains more than just the Old South; see Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987). For examples of churches publicly distancing themselves from Smith, see Diaconate of the Northside Drive Baptist Church, "Open Letter," *(Atlanta) Southern Israelite*, 26 September 1980, 5; Resolution adopted October 6, 1980, Deacons of First Baptist Church, Greenville, North Carolina, "Reply to Smith," *Baptist Courier* 16 October 1980, 4; Resolution adopted September 28, 1980, Deacons of St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, Louisiana, "Smith is Wrong," *Baptist Message*, 9 October 1980, 7; and Peter Rhea, "Statement Ill Conceived," *Rocky Mountain Baptist*, 9 October 1980, 8.

[117]Baptist Minister's Conference, Marion County (Mississippi) Baptist Association, "The Bailey Smith Statement," *Baptist Record*, 13 November 1980, 4; First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Oklahoma, advertisement in *Daily Oklahoman* 24 September 1980; and Upper Cumberland (Kentucky) Association of Baptists, *Minutes* (1980), 35-36. See also"Ads Support Smith's Views." *Baptist Messenger*, 2 October 1980, 6; and Upper Cumberland Association of Baptists, "For Bailey, Against Daley," *Western Recorder*, 15 October 1980, 4. The Upper Cumberland Association also criticized C. R. Daley, editor of the *Western Recorder*, for his newspaper's coverage of the story.

[118]"Invitation Won't Be Given," *Baptist Messenger*, 30 October 1980, 5.

[119]John W. Laney, letter to the editor, *The Maryland Baptist*, 25 September 1980, 2.

One critic even said that it did not matter whether what Smith said was true or not, given the possible negative impact of his words, because

> The irony is that if the statement is false, it has done far less harm than if it is true; for if the statement is false, the worst it can have done is drive our Jewish friends closer to God.
>
> The tragedy, however, is that if the statement is true, I fear it has closed, indeed, slammed the door to many an open mind and inquiring heart; thus closing one, possibly the only channel of effective communication between them and God—our witness.[120]

Smith's defenders countered with the claim that Smith should have said what he said about Jewish prayers, because not saying it would have been a failure to present the true gospel. One could not be so diplomatic that the point got lost. Often these letters indicated that Smith's critics were in favor of preaching a watered down and ineffective gospel—in other words, that not supporting Smith was itself a heresy.[121] They said that the SBC had been failing at evangelism because too many were concerned about what others thought of them, and accused Smith's critics, particularly those involved in interfaith dialogue, of a lack of desire to evangelize: "I sense there is more interest in dialogue than in a positive witness. We lack the offense which is so important."[122] Smith, after all, had baptized over 2,000 new members of his

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[120]Clois R. Winters, letter to the editor, *Rocky Mountain Baptist*, 6 November 1980, 8. See also Betty Danielson, letter to the editor, *Baptist New Mexican*, 18 October 1980, 7; Joy Davenport, letter to the editor, *Baptist New Mexican*, 18 October 1980, 7; James M. Kennedy, letter to the editor, *Florida Baptist Witness* 16 October 1980, 4; Landers, letter to the editor, 7; James E. Martin, letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 16 October 1980, 4; A. S. Michel, letter to the editor, *Word and Way*, 30 October 1980, 2; L. E. Minton, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 15 October 1980, 5; Howard W. Roberts, letter to the editor, *Maryland Baptist*, 16 October 1980, 2; William A. Turner, letter to the editor, *Western Recorder*, 8 October 1980, 6; and Harry L. Winters, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 29 October 1980, 5. Martin said he prayed Smith would not be reelected the following June.

[121]Charles P. Bass, letter to the editor, *Baptist Record*, 6 November 1980, 4; Gerald D. Hill, letter to the editor, *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, 16 October 1980, 2; William T. Hunt, letter to the editor, *Biblical Recorder*, 1 November 1980, 8; Mary Lee, letter to the editor, *Baptist Standard*, 8 October 1980, 2; Delano McMinn, letter to the editor, *Ohio Baptist Messenger*, 4 December 1980, 3; Haskell L. Morris, letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 9 October 1980, 4; and Donald W. Tillman, letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 30 October 1980, 4-5.

[122]Fred A. Steelman, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 15 October 1980, 5. See also Jesse T. Austin, letter to the editor, *Baptist New Mexican*, 18 October 1980, 7; Ken Babington letter to the editor, *Baptist Courier*, 9 October

church in the previous year, so questioning his effectiveness as an evangelist seemed disingenuous to many people.[123]

Editors of Southern Baptist newspapers filtered through a seemingly endless onslaught of letters from angry Baptists, but these letters were not occupied with concerns about American democracy. If the volume of letters cited above is not indication enough of the quantity of mail they were receiving on the subject, consider Lynn P. Clayton's statement that, as editor of Louisiana's *Baptist Message*, he was still receiving letters weekly toward the end of November.[124] These editors ignored Judeo-Christianity and America's political landscape just as much as the letters they received from readers did. Like many others, some editors were annoyed by Smith's comments because the public would think he spoke for all Southern Baptists. They felt that this damaged the public image of Southern Baptists and hindered their efforts to evangelize, and furthermore rested on shaky theological ground. Still, however, the majority of such editorials encouraged their readers to work toward unity rather than division over Smith's words.[125] From the side more supportive of Smith, Edgar R. Cooper, editor of the *Florida Baptist*

1980, 4; Gilbert L. Barr, letter to the editor, *Baptist Message*, 9 October 1980, 7; Philip Beard, letter to the editor, *Baptist Messenger*, 9 October 1980, 2; Clay Frazier, letter to the editor, *Baptist and Reflector*, 29 October 1980, 5; Jimmy Hopper, letter to the editor, *Baptist Messenger*, 2 October 1980, 2; Michael S. Mendoza, letter to the editor, *Illinois Baptist*, 31 December 1980, 5; Claude Segrest, letter to the editor," *Baptist Standard*, 5 November 1980, 2; and M. Yeo, letter to the editor, *Baptist New Mexican*, 18 October 1980, 7.

[123]Truett T. Cox, letter to the editor, *Religious Herald,* 18 December 1980, 5; Jerry F. Zgarba, letter to the editor, *Baptist Record*, 6 November 1980, 4. Cox accused Smith's critics of simply being jealous of his success.

[124]Lynn P. Clayton, "Bailey Smith and Remarks about Jews," *Baptist Message*, 27 November 1980, 4

[125]Lynn P. Clayton, "Bailey Smith and Remarks about Jews," *Baptist Message*, 27 November 1980, 4; Larry E. High, "Does God Hear the Unbeliever?" *Maryland Baptist*, 2 October 1980, 2; John F. Hopkins, "Innocent Words Merit Watching," *Baptist Digest*, 8 December 1980, 2; Richard T. McCartney, "Spitting into the Wind," *Baptist Messenger*, 16 October 1980, 3; John E. Roberts, "Who Speaks for Baptists?" *Baptist Courier*, 25 September, 1980, 3; Jackson C. Walls, "Smith on the Prayers of a Jew," *West Virginia Southern Baptist*, October 1980, 3; C. Eugene Whitlow, "The Editor's Page," *Baptist New Mexican*, 4 October 1980, 8; Presnall H. Wood, "Smith's Statement and Supremacy of Christ," *Baptist Standard*, 8 October 1980, 6; and James Lee Young, "Be

Witness, said good could come of the controversy, in that an opportunity for Southern Baptists to evangelize had presented itself, implying that many Southern Baptist reactions against Smith had given evidence of a belief in universalism.[126] Jerry Don Abernathy never mentioned Smith in his editorial for the *Nevada Baptist*, but clearly agreed with Smith in saying, "God doesn't hear prayer until it is proper," defining "proper prayer" as that which comes through Jesus Christ.[127]

Southern Baptists talked about Jewish prayer more, and for a longer period, than any other group of Americans, yet for a glaringly different reason. This may be why Smith maintains that the problem people had with him was theological rather than political. Perhaps Southern Baptists were so immersed within their own culture that they did not see the controversy as a threat to their American identity, or perhaps that identity was less important to them than being Southern Baptist. Southern Baptists already felt like outsiders, and to an extent expected to remain on the outside of the American mainstream. In any case, this reveals a chasm between the Southern Baptists and American Jews who would attempt to discuss the matter with one another. American Jews tended to seek solidarity among the American populace, while Southern Baptists mostly sought theological unity among themselves and took disagreement with other Americans as a given. Even if they did not state it outright, Southern Baptists who ignored the political aspects of the debate over Smith seem to have drawn a clearer line in their own minds between church and state than many other Americans.

Careful," *Rocky Mountain Baptist*, 25 September 1980, 8. See also Joe McKeever's editorial cartoon in *Baptist Message*, 27 November 1980, 8.

[126]Edgar R. Cooper, "Statement Lacks Tact—But," *Florida Baptist Witness*, 9 October 1980, 4.

[127]Jerry Don Abernathy, "What is Proper Prayer?" *Nevada Baptist*, November 1980, 2-3. In a guest editorial for the *Rocky Mountain Baptist*, Noble A. Cobb expressed similar ideas. See "Smith is Correct," *Rocky Mountain Baptist*, 9 October 1980, 8.

This is not to suggest that Southern Baptists somehow got it "right" while others did not; indeed, there were political ramifications to one's theology that they typically failed to see. While they may have had lines in their own minds that clearly separated the religious and the civil, in so doing they ignored the realities of their own world, and they missed the way in which what Smith had said was politically radical. If prayer at political events was the signal of affirming Judeo-Christianity, and of the American cause, saying it was likely doing more harm than good (or was at best pointless) was a challenge to the way Americans had tended to think about their own identity for most of the Cold War. *Not* offering the tripartite prayers of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews to bless political events would suggest that American government might not rest on the bedrock of American religion after all, and that what divided them from the Soviet Union was, perhaps, quite a bit different—and quite a lot less purely virtuous—than many assumed.

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At the center of a battle for America's political soul, a debate over the merits of interfaith dialogue with Christians perceived to be "rednecks," "crackers," "snake handlers," and "bigots" among American Jews, and his own denomination's continuing infighting over doctrine, a beleaguered Smith found himself unable to redeem his public image. He agreed to appear on the *Phil Donahue Show* to explain, then reconsidered. Donahue would be interested in controversy and ratings, not putting out the fire that engulfed Smith.[128] As the weeks went on, Smith seemed more and more isolated. Falwell had issued a public statement asserting that God heard Jewish

[128]Bailey Smith, interview by author, telephone, 19 March 2011. Smith was, indeed, scheduled to appear on *The Phil Donahue Show* on October 29, 1980, but canceled at the last minute. See "TV Listings," *The (Baltimore) Sun* 26 October 1980, TW36.

paryers. James Robison told the press that Smith's views should not be construed to be those of the organizers of the Religious Affairs Briefing. The SBC's conservative power brokers said little to nothing publicly despite the constant outcry within the denomination, and privately they told Smith that whether or not it was accurate to state that God does not hear Jewish prayers (they believed this as well), they felt he had made a serious mistake in preaching that sermon in Dallas.[129] Feeling abandoned by his closest friends, Smith probably could not have predicted that the tide would turn, or that a certain group of American Jews would be the ones to help him turn it. Like Smith, they rejected Judeo-Christianity. Unlike the AJC, who encouraged Americans to unite around their presumed religious commonalities within the Judeo-Christian framework, the Anti-Defamation League sought allies who self-consciously rejected the claims of Judeo-Christianity in general and the AJC in particular. Smith would be, at least at the outset, a perfect partner for the post-Judeo-Christian era.

[129]Jimmy Draper, interview by author, Colleyville, Texas, 3 August 2011; and Paige Patterson, interview by author, Fort Worth, Texas, 3 August 2011. See also the discussion of Criswell above, and chapters 5-6.

CHAPTER THREE:

THAT'S WHAT MAKES ME A JEW AND HIM A BAPTIST

> *[S]ome liberals attach satanic qualities to the evangelical fundamentalists, much in the manner that some evangelical fundamentalists, on religious issues, see those who differ as satanic. And I have the feeling that the generalizations which some liberal Jews tend to make about evangelical fundamentalists are just that—generalizations, no less mischievous than generalizations about Jews … Bailey Smith was the liberals' [S]atan. We met with him. The bottom line is I think Bailey Smith's a nice man.*[1]
>
> *--Nathan Perlmutter*

The approximately 20 New York journalists who had sat waiting downstairs at Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL) headquarters for the previous four hours were eager to get their story, and the wait had not aided their patience. When they saw Nathan Perlmutter, the ADL's national director, approach with Bailey Smith by his side, they pounced. Their first question, pretty much the only question they had, was whether Smith now believed God heard Jewish prayers. Smith stood looking out over the crowd, tight-lipped, and refused to answer. The assembled ADL officials observing this knew this was not a helpful line of questioning; of course Smith was not about to say otherwise, but if he were to repeat that he still believed what he always had, the resultant story in tomorrow's papers would be bad for everyone—suggesting the meeting was a failure, because clearly the press believed the point of this meeting was to

[1]Nathan Perlmutter, in *"Not the Work of a Day": Anti-Defamtion League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs*, ed. Oscar Cohen and Stanley Wexler (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1987), 1:125. This compilation contains several interviews edited into one flowing text for each person profiled, with the interviewers questions removed. There are many limitations to a data set like this, but *"Not the Work of a Day"* is still a valuable resource. While it is impossible to pinpoint when Perlmutter said what and in response to which question, according to my best estimates Perlmutter's oral history interviews were conducted ca. 1981-1983.

change Smtih's theology to bring it in line with Judeo-Christianity.[2] Smith did not feel he had gotten a fair hearing in the press, and to a degree, they agreed that he had not. It was understandable that he would not give them new ammunition; he was quite clearly beleaguered by the experiences he had had over the past few months. Smith had a prepared statement to read, which the ADL officials and the Southern Baptist group he had brought along with him had worked out over the previous hours. His deep, slow drawl was a sharp contrast to the rapid-fire questions of the aggressive reporters listening to it:

> 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. …
>
> For the above reasons, they agreed to establish a joint working relationship in which Baptists and Jews will explore and plan improved methods of communication.[3]

The statement also explained that Smith was expressing "deep regret for any hurt to the Jewish community," and if he had the opportunity, knowing how others would interpret him, he would not have made the remarks he made that August in Dallas. This did not satisfy the journalists, who still wanted to know whether Perlmutter had managed to convince Smith that God heard Jewish prayers. Smith refused to answer any of the questions put to him by the reporters, but he did say that he never met with any nicer people,[4] and that although he remained

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[2]Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011. Scholarship that references this meeting also refers to it as a failure, perhaps taking their cue from the journalists of the time. See Marianne R. Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong: The American Jewish Committee, 1945-2006* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 221: "meetings … failed to get a retraction…"

[3]Joint statement of Anti-Defamation League and Southern Baptist officials, quoted in Jim Newton, "Smith Expresses Regret, Condemns Anti-Semitism," *Baptist Press* 19 December 1980, 1.

[4]Newton, "Smith Expresses Regret," *Baptist Press* 19 December 1980, 1.

uncompromising in his Baptist theology, he stood firmly with the ADL in its commitment to total religious liberty worldwide.[5]

Not finding a direct response from Smith, the reporters turned to Perlmutter. Perlmutter tried to explain that his goal was something quite different than convincing Smith that God heard the prayers of Jews. Smith was free to believe what he liked. Perlmutter did disagree with Smith, of course, saying, "I am not satisfied with his beliefs and he is not satisfied with mine, either." Mutual disagreement was to be expected.[6] "That's what makes me a Jew and him a Baptist," he told them, but Jews and Southern Baptists could find common ground without compromising their religious beliefs, and that was why they had chosen to form a partnership. "I'm satisfied that what he (Smith) said had no anti-Semitic intent. He expressed what I gather to be sincere anguish. … I mean, the guy flies here from Oklahoma and tells you he never met a Jew until he was umpty-umpt years old. He's learning."[7]

Perlmutter and Smith were in some respects ideally matched, or at least on the surface, as this chapter shows. Perlmutter's guidance had transformed the ADL into an organization that would more easily mesh with Smith than other American Jewish groups. The ADL was no longer involved in Judeo-Christianity, and had rejected it in favor of a new approach that sought out others excluded from the system. Both Perlmutter's own background and philosophies and their moment in world history meant that in 1980, Perlmutter's ADL and Smith's SBC formed a

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[5]"Smith Offers Apology to ADL Officials," *Baltimore Jewish Times* 2 January 1981, 28.

[6]Newton, "Smith Expresses Regret," *Baptist Press* 19 December 1980, 2.

[7]Nathan Perlmutter, quoted in "Smith Apologizes to Jews," *Dallas Morning News* 19 December 1980, 10A. Smith says he did not meet a Jewish person until he was 19. Bailey Smith, interview by author, telephone, 29 September 2005. See also "The Baptists and the Jews: Planning Ahead," *ADL Bulletin* 38, no. 2 (February 1981), 3-4. Some papers give the quote I chose for this chapter's title somewhat differently: "That's what makes him a Baptist and me a Jew." See Newton, "Smith Expresses Regret," *Baptist Press* 19 December 1980, 2.

natural partnership, though the journalists in the ADL's lobby ultimately missed the point of their union that day.

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Perlmutter had initially responded to Smith's assertion about God's deafness to Jewish prayer in much the same manner as most other theologically liberal Jews. His irritation first expressed itself in sarcasm: "Dr. Smith did not say how he came upon this information. A phone call from God? A mail-o-gram from Torquemada? A chance encounter with a burning bush?" Like they had, Perlmutter said he thought, however ridiculous it was, Smith's statement still had ominous implications. "Jews, he means to tell us, are incomplete. Christians, or at least, Baptists, or, at the very least, Southern Baptists are whole. Because Jews are incomplete God does not hear them. Get with it Jews—he is saying—if you want God to hear you, convert."[8] This was a dangerous slope. "I think that history has shown us that if you believe that God does not hear the prayers of a Jew or whoever, it's a short step to assuming that that person or that group is in disfavor with God and still another short step to believing that person should be punished. There is no question about the potential mischief of the statement."[9]

The ADL was alarmed primarily because of the apparent potential political consequences of Smith's sermon—there, in Reunion Arena, at the Religious Roundtable, with Ronald Reagan on the program.[10] Having become accustomed to the use of the media to promote their agenda

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[8]Nathan Perlmutter, in Nathan Perlmutter and Ruth Ann Perlmutter, *The Real Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Arbor House, 1982), 166.

[9]Perlmutter, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:125.

[10]Further, Abraham Foxman explained, there was a greater degree of shock because it happened in America and not somewhere else. "I think many of us have come to expect more in America. And that was probably a greater tolerance, if not respect—tolerance is not such a great thing…many of us have expected a greater sensitivity, sophistication. Again, it's one thing to believe it. Bailey Smith believes in his heart. … [But] you don't go and proclaim it." Abraham Foxman, interview by author, New York, 16 September 2011.

and feeling they had strong alliances within the American press,[11] when the news broke in mid-September, ADL officials were shocked that nobody had reported on Smith's sermon in August. (They later realized that the journalists covering the meeting had been with Reagan at a press conference, rather than in Smith's audience, that day.) For one thing, as Mark Briskman, the ADL's north Texas-Oklahoma regional director put it, "Was this the opening shot of a campaign that would over time begin to marginalize Jewish Americans? To deny them their religious liberties and democratic rights under our system of government? We had no idea." Another potential problem, and an equally serious one for the ADL, was that this threatened a new relationship between the government of Israel and American evangelicals that many Jews had hoped would influence American foreign policy in a direction favorable to Israel.[12] Perlmutter had reached the conclusion that American Jews need not worry about the ADL's historical concerns any longer—being prevented from joining social clubs, synagogue vandalism, discrimination in hiring, or admission to institutions of higher education—but that they did need to worry about the indirect anti-Semitism of American foreign policy with respect to Israel. This

[11]See, for example, Maxwell E. Greenberg, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 2:64; and Nathan Perlmutter, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:159.

[12]Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011; and Abraham Foxman, interview by author, New York, 16 September 2011. Caitlin Carenen cites Eli Evans's assertion that this was not just a one-directional shift. Southern evangelicals began to identify with Israel more in the late 1970s, when they observed the way Israel responded to threats in the Yom Kippur War. Evans explained this as "the appeal of the underdog, the respect for toughness and scrappiness, and the admiration for military daring and bravery in the face of overwhelming odds," which had turned it somehow "into Southern myth." See Evans, quoted in Carilin Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals, and Israel* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 168. Jewish organizations responded in a variety of ways to the mutual discovery of a common interest between American Jews and evangelicals, but many, like the ADL, seized the opportunity to build new alliances. Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace*, 181.

shift in the ADL's focus had largely been Perlmutter's project, and having Israel become skittish of American support because of Smith was the last thing he felt they needed.[13]

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Several weeks prior to Perlmutter and Smith's appearance before the New York media, Theodore Freedman, ADL national programs director, had told Perlmutter that Briskman had called from Dallas saying, "You're not going to guess who gave me a call!" Smith wanted to meet with the ADL and talk things over. Briskman thought it best if this were handled on a national level, and suggested Freedman and Perlmutter work things out with Smith.[14] An official exchange of letters had followed, and they determined an agreeable place and time. At first, Smith suggested the meeting take place in Dallas. Since Smith had indicated that he wanted Briskman there, the New York headquarters had sent for the director of its Dallas office as well.[15] There was a buzz about the meeting long before it took place. Jewish, Southern Baptist, and secular media all carried stories about Smith's upcoming trip to New York. The stories noted

[13]See David K. Shipler, "Israel is Cultivating Some Unlikely New Friends," *New York Times* 1 December 1981, A2. For details on Perlmutter's opinions, see Perlmutter, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:81-85, 88-90, 117, 132; and Perlmutter and Perlmutter, *The Real Anti-Semitism*, 94-98, 108, 155.

[14]Briskman, interview by author, telephone. For more on Briskman's relationship with Smith and how it began, see the following chapter. Nearly everyone in this story has, at some point, claimed credit for having the idea of talking to Smith to better relations. Foxman told me he had the idea and brought it up with Perlmutter (Foxman, interview by author, New York). Yechiel Eckstein told a reporter with the *New York Times Magazine* that *he* had been the one to contact Smith (Zev Chafets, "The Rabbit Who Loved Evangelicals (and Vice Versa)," *New York Times Magazine* 24 July 2005). Even Jerry Falwell took credit for contacting Smith and mending "Bailey's bad mistake." (Joe L. Kincheloe and George Staley, "The Menachem Begin-Jerry Falwell Connection: A Revolution in Fundamentalism," *Journal of Thought* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 35). Smith himself says he does not remember whose idea it was. (Smith, interview by author, Atlanta). Ultimately, Briskman's claims are the most plausible, given the archival record. In Smith's initial letter to the ADL requesting a meeting, he asked to meet in Dallas, which is a not-insignificant distance away from his home. It is unlikely that Smith would have asked to meet in Dallas without some other reason, and the probable reason is that he had already been talking with Briskman, whose office was in Dallas. See Bailey Smith, Del City, Oklahoma, to Nathan Perlmutter, 17 November 1980, in Oscar Cohen Papers, Box 23, Folio 5, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio.

[15]Briskman, interview by author, telephone.

Smith's apologetic tone: "I deeply regret any hurt which has come to you or your people because of remarks credited to me."[16] Smith's continued insistence on his love for Jews came across slightly differently than it had in the previous months. "I am determined to do everything I can to convince the Jewish people that I love them."[17] They also noted Perlmutter's openness to Smith. "The man has written us a nice letter," Perlmutter said, explaining why he agreed to meet with someone so marked as anti-Semitic.[18] "I am confident that no matter our differences and no matter your past statements and our responses to them, the amplitude of reason in the Judeo-Christian heritage will guide us to understanding."[19]

In the immediate flurry of new attention this brought to Smith's public comments about Jews and Judaism, Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) president Rabbi Alexander Schindler publicly chastised the ADL for granting Smith a hearing. "If all this is true," he said, referencing the statements Smith had made, "as it manifestly is, why does organized American Jewry continue its flirtation with the Christian right? We know the reasons, of course. Most Jewish leaders are willing to forgive anyone anything so long as we hear a good word about Israel." While evangelicals might have been supportive of Israel, Schindler saw this as a misguided strategy. Their support itself, he claimed, was anti-Semitic. The ADL's actions

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[16]"Baptist Urges ADL to Meet Him to Discuss Remarks about Jews," *Religious News Service* 19 November 1980, 19-20.

[17]John Dart, "Who Is Bailey Smith? Anecdotes are Revealing," *Nashville Banner* 1 December 1980, 9. See also John C. Long, "Outspoken Southern Baptist Chief is Taking Steps to Redeem Himself," *Courier Journal* 8 December 1980, 1; Dan Martin, "Smith Requests Meeting with Jewish Leaders," *(Nashville) Baptist and Reflector* 26 November 1980, 2; "Rev. Smith Contacts ADL," *Southern Israelite* (Atlanta) 28 November 1980, 5; W. A. Reed, "Baptist-Jewish Execs to Talk," *The Tennessean* (Nashville) 4 December 1980, 21; and Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, *News* (Nashville, Tennessee), 20 November 1980.

[18]"Smith, Jewish Leaders Schedule Discussions," *Baptist Press* 3 December 1980, 1.

[19]Long, "Outspoken Southern Baptist Chief," *Courier-Journal* 8 December 1980, 1.

were unjustifiable. "It is madness—and suicidal as well. How blind we are!" Seeking Smith's favor out of hope for American favor toward Israel was to "make a pact with the devil for transient boon, even while we know or ought to know that in the end we serve his purposes!" Schindler agreed that they could at least talk with evangelicals. They probably should have a conversation with a troublemaker like Smith. Yet they should also recognize that Smith represented a major threat to Jewishness itself, found in aggressive conservative evangelicalism. These were not allies to seek, regardless of their rabid support of Israel, so the conversation should not be about how to work together. "This is their apocalyptic vision in all its fullness: they seek our extinction as a particular people. Why then in heaven's name should we give them recognition? Do we have no sense of honor? Have we lost all self-respect?" Bailey Smith was "Julius Streicher with an Oklahoma twang."[20] One of the reasons for Schindler's sounding the alarm was that Israel's Jabotinsky Foundation had given Jerry Falwell an award, and this frustrated Schindler, seeing Falwell and his fundamentalist evangelical supporters as enemies of Jewish survival.

Schindler was not alone in his concern about the willingness of some Jewish groups to make alliances with evangelical Christians.[21] Baltimore Hebrew College held a forum on the Moral Majority that February. Before it began, attendees murmured among themselves about the

[20]Alexander M. Schindler, "Presidential Address to the Board of Trustees of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations," San Francisco, California, 21 November 1980, in Oscar Cohen Papers, Box 5, Folio 2, James Marcus Rader Center of the American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. See also Kenneth A. Briggs, "Rabbi Attacks Aims of Moral Majority," *New York Times* 23 November 1980, 29; "Schindler Blasts Moral Majority," *Baltimore Jewish Times* 28 November 1980, 14; and "Schindler Links Radical Right, Anti-Semitism," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati, Ohio) 4 December 1980, 1.

[21]In addition to the responses detailed in this chapter, see Carl Schrag, "American Jews and Evangelical Christians: Anatomy of a Changing Relationship," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 17, no. 1/2 (Spring 2005): 171-181. Despite the ADL's continuing pragmatism, most American Jews remained continuously wary of evangelical "motivation" for supporting Israel.

dangers of "fanatics" and their worry that the Christian Right was an arm of the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi party. They asked questions like, "Didn't a Christian-Right leader say God doesn't hear the prayers of Jews" of the panel, a panel that did not include any representatives of the group they found threatening. The forum's moderator and religion editor of the *Baltimore Sun*, Frank P. L. Somerville, suggested that perhaps the discussion represented "the danger of just talking to ourselves," but for the most part, those present saw no need to actually talk to evangelicals. Instead, the experts called upon to answer the questions were those that the group present found far less threatening: Nathan Z. Dershowitz, the American Jewish Congress' Commission on Law and Social Action's director, and Charles V. Bergstrom, executive director of the Lutheran Church Council's national Office of Governmental Affairs. They had an easy audience, one that applauded for most of their responses to questions, especially Bergstrom's affirmation of the place of religion in politics but rejection of the Moral Majority's poor theology. Bergstrom's words were no threat to Judeo-Christianity. Dershowitz criticized Jews who would seek friends of Israel among the ranks of America's conservative evangelicals, saying their support came from the belief that Jews had to return to Israel in order for Jesus to return and make all the Jews into Christians. "That doesn't make me feel very comfortable with that support," he said. Love of Israel was not enough to link people with such mutually exclusive ultimate goals. The Baltimore Jewish Council, which co-sponsored the event, said it did not include any representatives of the Christian Right because "we did not want to lend legitimacy to their group." The forum ended with a call to action on the part of America's

religious establishment to engage in political activism to save American pluralism—most likely a nod to Judeo-Christianity's status quo.[22]

Perlmutter responded to Schindler's attack, saying that the rabbi was "looking at the fundamentalists as a monolithic group," and that there were other enemies to Jews than merely Christians. "I respectfully remind Rabbi Schindler that the Soviet Union, the prime exporter of anti-Semitism, is neither Christian nor fundamentalist. … There are good Christians and bad Christians, good Jews and bad Jews. To hear some of the talk lately we'd also have to say there are foolish Christians and foolish Jews."[23] To link Smith with Schindler (as both "foolish"), as Perlmutter seemed to do, was a bold move, but Perlmutter saw unwillingness to cooperate with conservative evangelicals as harmful to Jews. Linking Smith to Streicher, meanwhile, was ridiculous, he thought. Reflecting on it later, Perlmutter said, "In short, this was not some Nazi who was expressing himself. This was, by eastern liberal standards, a country boy who was saying simplistically, 'God only hears me, because I'm a true believer.' The orthodox Jews … [believe] God only does it the Orthodox way. Does that make them Nazis? It's nonsense."[24] As for concerns about theology, Perlmutter appealed to the sovereignty of God, for if there were a God, he would be the one to determine whether evangelical apocalyptic visions came to pass. In 1972, he had mused, "who says that God Himself is altogether free of anti-Semitism?"[25] Five years after his meeting with Smith, Perlmutter wrote, "When the millennium—and the

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[22]Merrie Eisenstadt, "The Dangers of the 'Righteous Right,'" *Baltimore Jewish Times* 6 February 1981, 26-32.

[23]"Falwell Rejects Schindler's Charges," *Baltimore Jewish Times* 5 December 1980, 30.

[24]Nathan Perlmutter, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1: 126.

[25]Nathan Perlmutter, *A Bias of Reflections: The Confessions of an Incipient Old Jew* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1972) 43.

messiah—comes, then there will be time in which to consider our options. Meanwhile, let us remain steadfast … in our suspicion of smug assumptions—about ourselves as well as about Fundamentalists."[26]

Along these same lines, Manhattan's *Jewish Week* editor Phineas Stone expressed his thoughts about Jews who refused to accept evangelical alliances. "It may be that the problem is … our taste for anti-Semitism. If you can't get enough of the damned thing, then you need more anti-Semites and have to recruit them." Scorning conversations with evangelicals was, in Stone's estimation, recruiting anti-Semites because one wanted to have an enemy more than one desired the welfare of one's people. "But then there are those who really detest anti-Semitism so much that they would shake hands with anyone who disavows anti-Semitism, especially if he makes meaningful gestures against anti-Semitism." Instead of condemning those who would talk with evangelicals, "I would go still further. I would shake hands with any former anti-Semite who has come to realize the error of his ways and is willing to help undo the mischief that anti-Semites have wrought. But then there are undoubtedly those who might prefer to have the anti-Semites remain in their intellectual and moral depravity."[27] The desire to bring evangelicalism into the

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[26]Nathan Perlmutter, "Jews and Fundamentalists," *Reconstructionist* (December 1985), 23. See also Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 232. David A. Rausch saw Perlmutter's position as an extreme not many American Jews, even those interested in evangelical support of Israel, supported, because it seemed to lack caution about potential dangers from the partnership. See Rausch's analysis in *Communities in Conflict: Evangelicals and Jews* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 86-89. Indeed, some in the ADL did want to exercise extreme caution when dealing with evangelicals. See Ted Freedman, New York, memo to Mel Cooperman, 9 February 1977, Oscar Cohen Papers, Box 22, Folio 1, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, where he makes a distinction between "evangelicals with a small e" and those "with a capital E. In the instance of the latter group—forget it!"

[27]Phineas Stone, "Shall We Go On Recruiting for More Anti-Semites," *Jewish Week* (Manhattan) 23 November 1980, 26.

American political scene reflected a rejection of Judeo-Christianity as it had developed; the forum in Baltimore, meanwhile, reflected the desire to protect it against such a transformation.

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There was no surprise in finding a throng of reporters willing to wait four hours to hear from the Oklahoma minister and his new Jewish acquaintance gathered downstairs, but the participants in the discussion that took place before the press conference and out of the hearing of the assembled journalists did make a number of other discoveries they did not expect. Smith had brought along his wife, Sandy, and a few other Southern Baptists he trusted: Russ Bush, a professor from his alma mater, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS); Glenn Ingleheart, director of the Interfaith Department of the Home Mission Board of the SBC, who had written a chastising letter to Smith quoted in the *Dallas Morning News*[28]; Jim Lee, a deacon from Smith's church who worked as an attorney, and his wife, Diane; and fellow pastor John Silvey from Logan, Oklahoma's Mountain View Baptist Church. They and Perlmutter; Freedman; Briskman; Perlmutter's assistant, Abraham Foxman; Kenneth J. Bialkin, the chair of the ADL's National Executive Committee; and Ronald B. Sobel, the rabbi of New York's Temple Emanu-El who chaired the ADL's National Program Committee, sat down at a long conference table to hash out their differences. In a city so infused with American Jewish life, it was hard for the New York-based officials to fathom how Smith could really be so ignorant of anti-Semitism's lingering presence in the United States. Smith expressed his surprise and dismay that white supremacist groups were writing to him, encouraging him in his supposed crusade

[28]See introduction.

against the Jews. These were not ideas or groups with which he wanted to be associated.[29] ADL officials explained that Smith's words had the potential to do real harm to American Jews, and to them, Smith appeared genuinely distraught. At first, at least some of those present were incredulous at Smith's seeming lack of understanding of this before this moment. Briskman, Foxman, and Greenberg seem to have had similar reactions. As Briskman put it,

> So the initial response on my part is like, "*Really*? You don't *know* that there's a big problem out there? How can that be?" And then, you know, the more you interact, the more you see, he's relaxed and these are genuine conversations, the more you realize he really *doesn't* know, and this relationship is really valuable to help educate him.[30]

Yet Smith did not know, even from observation, what it meant to be Jewish in the United States, or what sorts of true discrimination American Jews faced or feared, and thus had not imagined what would or could happen as a result of his public assertion that God did not hear Jewish prayers. The idea of hating Jews was totally repugnant to him, and he had thought every American would find it as repellant as he did, so it had at first seemed like petty attacks on him

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[29]Smith, interview by author, telephone, 29 September 2005. For example: "BRAVO and God Bless you for your outspoken truth about the Kikes." Oscar Rasmussen, Mountain Home, Arkansas, to Bailey Smith, 12 February 1981, Bailey Smith Papers 1980-1981. White supremacist groups who had at first seen Smith as their ally were dismayed by his upcoming meeting to the ADL. Donald V. Clerkin of the Milwaukee Euro-American Alliance wrote Smith in December, "I do not know what the A.D.L. gave you to say that the Jews gave you the Scriptures and the Saviour, whether they frightened you into acquiescence, but I am relatively certain that they are responsible … You, however, must live with your fear, your ignorance, and the terrible pangs of conscience that you will surely suffer," Donald V. Clerkin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Bailey Smith, 26 December 1980, Bailey Smith Papers 1980-1981, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee. White supremacists were still perturbed that February, as one wrote: "Jews of today are not God's people. … Jesus was not a Pharisee—'Jew.' He was an Israelite and/or Judahite. … The word 'Jew' has been added since the Bible was originally translated. …To teach that Jesus is a 'Jew' and that the 'Jews are God's Chosen people' is blasphemy. … Their goal is to wipe out the White race. They think that if they can exterminate the White Race them can wipe Christianity from the face of the earth. Do the White Christians know this? They do not. Who is responsible for this ignorance? The blinded clergy. … These enemies of God are behind race-mixing." Idris W. Howard, Calistoga, California, to Bailey Smith, 17 February 1981, Bailey Smith Papers 1980-1981.

[30]Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011. See also Abraham Foxman, *Never Again?: The Threat of the New Anti-Semitism* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 137: "Smith said that until this controversy he had never realized there was anti-Semitism in the United States!" and Maxwell E. Greenberg, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 2:76-77.

when the outrage poured in. "As far as me ever having a real knowledge of Jewish people growing up—no, I grew up in a poor part of east Dallas, and I didn't know any Jewish people," Smith admitted. "But I knew that my dad was strong for Israel. He believed that God had given Israel that land, and there's never been an anti-Semitic bone in my body."[31] Smith was firm in maintaining his belief in the need for one to pray through Jesus in order to be heard, and insisted he would not apologize for that, "but I will apologize for how it hurt you [that he had said so at the Religious Roundtable]. I am sorry that it hurt you."[32] Perlmutter leaned forward. He responded that he respected Smith's firmness of conviction, and that it was not his intention to try to change his mind. Indeed, Perlmutter said, he would have had no respect for Smith if Smith had been willing to simply disown what he had said.[33] He was convinced that Smith was being honest with him, and that Smith honestly intended Jews no harm. With relief and a sense of both sides having been heard and understood, the Southern Baptists and the ADL then moved on to talk about what they had in common and what they might do together to further the relationship in a mutually beneficial way.

Israel, religious freedom and democracy, and problems with the Soviet Union all seemed like valid possibilities. Smith considered it a religious duty to defend and protect Jews, in America and otherwise, and all concerned thought America should remain a nation where its

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[31]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

[32]Ibid. See also Theodore Freedman, "Bailey Smith's Pulpit Daunts Jewish Speaker," *Baptist Press* 19 June 1981, 1.

[33]Sandy Smith, interview by author, Atlanta. This is consistent with Perlmutter's own statements about his reaction to Bailey Smith. See Nathan Perlmutter, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:125-126, esp. 126: "To his credit, Bailey Smith never denied what is, after all, basic to his religious beliefs."

residents could freely practice, or not practice, any religion they chose. Foxman later remembered Smith's enthusiasm for joining in the ADL's efforts to combat anti-Semitism:

> He basically came with a *mea culpa* saying, "I didn't intend this, and I didn't think that this was out there, and *I'm sorry.* And now I want to join you in your struggle and your effort. And how do I do it? I will stand up. I will write letters. Help me answer letters. I am your—I've become a member of … *your* synagogue, when it comes to fighting anti-Semitism in *my* church."

Baptists were also facing persecution in the Soviet Union, so both the ADL and the SBC had special concerns about the Soviet government as well. They sat down to draft the statement Smith would soon read to the New York press. Though the tone was somewhat somber, those present felt something good had been accomplished. At the conclusion of their meeting, they joined hands and offered a silent prayer to their mutual God.[34]

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Perlmutter could empathize with Smith's cultural isolation. As a child growing up in the New York City neighborhood of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, Perlmutter later wrote that he had assumed that the entire world was Jewish, or at least that the vast majority of it was. In any case, *his* entire world was Jewish. He had had a dim awareness of then-president Herbert Hoover being Christian, and that George Washington had been, but he believed almost everyone else (including Abraham Lincoln) was Jewish. The neighborhood's Christians all being janitors, Perlmutter had concluded that all Christians were janitors. All of them also being Polish logically meant that all Christians were also *Polish* janitors. "I sometimes wondered at the fallen state of George Washington's descendants," he later reflected.[35]

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[34]Abraham Foxman, *Never Again*, 137. Otherwise, Foxman wondered, "Who do we pray to? Do we pray to Jesus? Do we pray to our Lord?" Foxman, interview by author, New York.

[35]Nathan Perlmutter, *A Bias of Reflections,* 23.

Growing a bit older, and venturing out into other neighborhoods, Perlmutter discovered that Christians also came in Irish and Italian versions, but all these various ethnic permutations were Catholic. Discovering Protestants as a young man shook up Perlmutter's understanding of the world outside Jewish Williamsburg. "Theretofore I had considered Christians as being pretty much all the same, and if differing amongst themselves, inconsequentially, like the physiological differences between a Thai and a Cambodian." But the Protestants he encountered seemed more civilized, more cultured, than the Polish janitors of Williamsburg, or the Italian and Irish Catholics of the surrounding neighborhoods in Brooklyn, and Perlmutter preferred the Protestants. He rationalized that they could be classified "as not being fully Christian, like the Catholics were, the 'real' Christians."[36] Had the demographics of the world actually matched Perlmutter's childhood assumptions, Perlmutter might have uttered dangerously prejudiced words himself, rather than merely humorously inaccurate bases for personal discrimination.

Such innocence could not last forever, and the shattering of Perlmutter's came when he first began looking for a job after graduating from high school. Flipping through help-wanted classified ads in the *New York Times*, Perlmutter made a discovery. Seemingly endless columns were filled with tiny ads with the disclaimer, "Chr only." Then, at 18, Perlmutter strategized. "I experimented with pronouncing my name as Perl-mutere, hoping that this imagined Frenchifying of Perlmutter would permit me to pass. It didn't." Thus, while interviewing on Wall Street, Perlmutter ratcheted up his efforts. "I not only gave them the Perl-mutere bit, but introduced

[36]Ibid., 24.

myself as Nathaniel Perl-mutere." That failed as well. For the first time, "Being Jewish pinched."[37] Perlmutter wanted to devote his life to getting rid of the pinch of Jewishness.[38]

It would take some time before he developed any true sensibility of non-Jews, however. Perlmutter inherited some of his prejudices from his immigrant parents. When his mother said good-bye to him at the airport as he set out for his first job with the ADL in Denver as the regional office's assistant director, she betrayed her own lack of understanding of the American Gentile world beyond New York, as well as her aversion to it, warning, "*Nathan, Reitz zich nit mit de Indianer.*" ("Nathan, don't start up with the Indians.")[39] As an adult, Perlmutter still often referred to non-Jews simply as "Them," with a capital "T."[40]

Perlmutter's time away from the centers of the American Jewish population, first in Denver, and then through his ADL-related travels, had expanded more than just his knowledge of Christians. It had also expanded his understanding of what it meant to be Jewish, and how all Jews were connected. As an adult, Perlmutter fought against his immediate sense of aversion to Jews of other regions as not "real" Jews.

> I suppose it's because for me, "real" Jews come either from urban America or from Russian or Polish ghettoes. Of course, I have extended diplomatic recognition and deported myself with civility to other Jews, but the truth is before I fully accept them, I must get past their small town ways, or their French accent or their British dress. … They're "different." Their accents are neither New York nor the Pale, they often behave more like Charlton Heston than Menasha Skulnik, … more suggestive of the First Families of Virginia than the Workman's Circle.[41]

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[37]Ibid., 27-29.

[38]Ibid., 62-63.

[39]Perlmutter, in *"Not the Work of a Day*," 1:15; see also 1:11.

[40]Perlmutter, *A Bias of Reflections*," 15.

[41]Ibid., 73-74. Here, Perlmutter is speaking specifically of Israeli Jews, but elsewhere describes how different Jews of various other places are from his New York Jewish experience.

His time in the west gave him a strong sense of Jewish identity he had not had in New York, and did not realize was missing before he found it. "[W]hen all the world is Jewish," he concluded, "nobody's Jewish." Moving to Miami Beach afterward gave him the same sense of isolation in an entirely Jewish community.[42] Being in Denver had given him "the stuff of a sense of community" and belonging, largely because of the constant awareness of being in the minority, an entirely new sensation to him.[43] This awareness of difference, he believed, was key to having a strong sense of connection to one's Jewishness.[44] He reflected upon his daughter's school years in Florida with a certain degree of sadness, blaming the predominantly Jewish surroundings for causing her ignorance of her own difference. He first realized her lack of his sensibility of Jewishness when, at 13, she had reported on the influx of Cuban refugees to her school after Castro took over Cuba. "Yes, and they have such crazy names," she had said. "Menendes, Morales, Gonzales." Here she had stopped to think for a moment, and went on, "but some of them have American names … Goldstein, Schwartz."[45]

Perlmutter then began to worry about America's kindness to Jews. "My daughter didn't even know she was Jewish! More accurately, she didn't *feel* Jewish, and if you don't feel Jewish how can you *be* Jewish?"[46] From another perspective, one might point out that Perlmutter was an American, and Goldstein and Schwartz (like Menendes, Morales, and Gonzales) are indeed

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[42]Perlmutter in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:38: "When all the world's Jewish, as it was in Miami Beach, then nobody's Jewish."

[43]Ibid., 1:15-16.

[44]Ibid., 1:38.

[45]Perlmutter, *A Bias of Reflections*, 45. Ellipses Perlmutter's.

[46]Ibid., 46.

American names, yet by his worry over his daughter's acceptance of herself and of Jews more generally as simply Americans, he revealed his uneasiness with the growing openness of American culture and Jewish assimilation into the mainstream—in other words, with the way Jews, particularly Jews from major urban centers, had become one equal arm of the nation's tripartite faith. Judeo-Christianity was distasteful to Perlmutter. He was troubled that the new generation of Jews grew up to become social drinkers, rather than people who drank more or less only for religious reasons—just like their non-Jewish counterparts.[47] Here, too, Perlmutter and Smith might have had some common ground, if one reflects upon Smith's beliefs as detailed in previous chapters—both men felt that one could only truly identify as a part of their respective groups if they lived apart from "the world," in, but not of, the surrounding culture.[48] They both rejected Judeo-Christianity's partial erasure of distinctions. In contrast to Smith's, however, Perlmutter's was not a religious sensibility. Perlmutter did not observe Judaism, as an agnostic.[49] He had become "this virtually religious advocate of civil liberties," yes, but that had been the extent of his religiosity.[50] Beyond this, Perlmutter felt his personal "mission" was one that he could not speak openly about casually, the way Smith could about his. It "was a mission with me, so deeply felt … [but] I was and am incapable of loving, or for that matter, bleeding in public; of being, in short, a Missionary."[51] Still, Perlmutter was every bit as passionate about his

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[47]Perlmutter, *A Bias of Reflections*, 52.

[48]Cf. John 17:16.

[49]Perlmutter, *A Bias of Reflections*, 15, 21; and idem, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:124. In *A Bias of Reflections*, Perlmutter wrote that he thought his agnosticism was what made him most Jewish. "Sometimes I have even thought being Jewish is a stage which agnostics have outgrown" (15).

[50]Perlmutter in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:8.

[51]Perlmutter, *A Bias of Reflections*, 62.

mission as Smith was about his. Perlmutter felt civil liberties, internationally, were the key to preservation of the Jewish people. Israel was the one thing that united all this variety of Jewishness. Jews had lost faith, he said, but they still had Israel. Israel had "replaced the synagogue, almost replaced tradition as that which binds the American Jewish community."[52] Losing Israel would murder the Jewish soul.[53] Protecting Israel meant protecting civil liberties generally—in Nicaragua, in El Salvador, and especially, in the Soviet Union.[54]

As intently focused on the need for conversion as Smith was, he had a perfectly mirrored opposite in Perlmutter, who had commitments to a sort of *laissez-faire* multiculturalism and actively avoided trying to convert people to universalism, even when he thought their own beliefs to be severely misguided. Perlmutter's pluralist ideals were, in his own words, "conservative" rather than "liberal." He felt the liberal concept of pluralism was hypocritical. "I would say something else that's not so heretical, although it may be in the universalist-minded organizations. Certainly it's no surprise to the orthodox. I am not persuaded that you can on the one hand talk about the importance of a pluralistic society and on the other hand do everything in your power to homogenize that society."[55] It was better to appreciate the differences among groups than to attempt to get them all to think and behave alike. "This in a larger sense helps make for a truly pluralistic society in which all of the groups are themselves rather than

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[52]Perlmutter in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:116.

[53]Or "*neshumah*," as Perlmutter put it. Perlmutter in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:84.

[54]Ibid., 1:84-86, 116-117. There were those who sharply criticized Perlmutter for this approach, pointing to what they saw as gaping holes in his logic. "Can one seriously declare that, on the one hand, Jews suffer from bigotry while, on the other, they may cease to exist because of their widespread acceptance by the non-Jewish society?" Allan Brownfeld, "Anti-Semitism: It's Changing Meaning," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16, no. 3 (Spring 1987): 55.

[55]Perlmutter in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:30.

homogenized."[56] Foxman remembered his former boss many years later as willing to embrace anybody who shared one of his goals, no matter their other opinions: "For Nate, who didn't come with baggage of faith, of religion, of belief, of synagogue, it was easy! It was easy. You want to be my friends on a practical, political basis? *Hello!*"[57]

In Perlmutter's view, too often liberal ideals of pluralism failed to be consistent, anyway, and overlooked flaws among its own in-group. Liberal multiculturalism was tolerating anti-Semitic policies, as he saw it, with respect to Israel. The support Israel had taken for granted from liberal Protestants was waning following the Six Day War in 1967, when Israelis occupied Palestinian land.[58] The National Council of Churches (NCC) Executive Council adopted a resolution condemning Israel in July 1967. After Jewish protest, Henry P. Van Dusen, a former president of Union Theological Seminary in New York, wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* defending the NCC and comparing Israel's actions to Nazi Germany's, saying, "All persons who seek to view the Middle East problem with honesty and objectivity stand aghast at Israel's onslaught, the most violent, ruthless (and successful) aggression since Hitler's blitzkrieg across Western Europe in the summer of 1940…"[59] The United Nations (UN) had also seemed like less and less of a friend to Jewish interests in Israel. On November 10, 1975, a year after the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) received "observer status" at the UN, the General Assembly passed Resolution 3379 by a vote of 72 to 35, claiming "Zionism is a form of racism

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[56]Ibid., 1:31.

[57]Foxman, interview by author, New York.

[58]See Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 221.

[59]Henry P. Van Dusen, letter to the editor, *New York Times* 7 July 1967, 32. See also "'Not an Anti-Semite, Falwell Says," *Baltimore Jewish Times* 27 February 1981, 30; and Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 146-147. Perlmutter explicitly stated in later reflections that Smith was a better ally than the NCC. See Perlmutter, *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 138.

and racial discrimination," and condemning Israel by comparing its policies to South African apartheid.[60]

Also in the name of multiculturalism, Perlmutter claimed liberalism was tolerating Jesse Jackson's outbursts, simply because of his minority status. Both before and after Smith's hour in the national spotlight, Jackson made national news for comments Jews found alarming, but it was not Jackson's better-known 1984 reference to New York as "Hymietown" that occupied Perlmutter's mind when he mentioned Jackson as a reason he considered Smith a better friend than many liberal ministers. In 1979, following a revelation that Ambassador Andrew Young had met secretly with Zehdi Labib Terzi, the PLO's representative to the UN, in flagrant contradiction to State Department policy, the government of Israel and American Jews protested. On August 15, Young, an African-American minister who had been involved in the Civil Rights Movement, was forced to resign his ambassadorship. Many African Americans blamed Jews for Young's resignation, although they had not requested it. On August 22, 1979, African American leadership met at National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) headquarters. There, they discussed Young's resignation, began denouncing Jews, and issued a statement asserting that Jews were "apologists for the racial status quo." In the aftermath of this meeting, Jackson appeared on television saying that Jews would not share their "power" and were self-interested to the extent that they were harming America. African American leadership that had formerly been considered Jewish allies was generally silent in the face of the expression of anti-Semitic sentiments by Jackson and other black leaders.[61] As Perlmutter summarized it in

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[60]Paul Hofmann, "U.N. Votes, 72-35, to Term Zionism Form of Racism," *New York Times* 11 November 1975, 1; see also Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 200.

[61]See Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 213-214.

the early 1980s, "In no time this episode erupted into a Black-Jewish confrontation, with men like Jesse Jackson suggesting abrasively and shrilly that the Jews got Andy."[62] Perlmutter found this development distressing. "Hey wait a minute, you can't say that to us, no matter that you happen to be black, no matter that you happen to be other than a classical anti-Semite."[63] Perlmutter felt betrayed by American liberalism, and with it, Judeo-Christianity. Reflecting later upon the so-called "Andrew Young Affair," Perlmutter said, "It was almost as if fighting bigotry had a fashionableness about it so long as the victim was black. But somehow or other, if the perpetrator of the bigotry was black and the victim was Jewish, it wasn't as fashionable to take up arms any longer in defense of the Jew."[64]

Perlmutter was one of many American Jews who felt this way. The radical New Left, which would condemn Israel's actions in the Six Day War and its later invasion of Lebanon, and the Black Power Movement, with its separatist tendencies, provoked a counter-movement that became known as neoconservatism. While there were non-Jewish neoconservatives, it was mostly Jews who led the movement, and they made it distinctively Jewish. Traditional

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[62]Perlmutter in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:76. See also Perlmutter and Perlmutter, *The Real Anti-Semitism in America*, 191-199.

[63]Perlmutter in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:77.

[64]Ibid., 1:96. Jackson's later 1984 reference to New York as "Hymietown" may have solidified Perlmutter's sense that a close alliance with the American left was poor strategy for Jews. See Perlmutter's comments in Ari L. Goldman, "Head of Jewish Group Says Jackson Is an Anti-Semite," *New York Times* 1 June 1984, B6. Meanwhile, African Americans were angry because American Jews had tended to explain their involvement in the Civil Rights Movement as motivated by general principles of equality and fairness, not self-interest. As Jews like Perlmutter rejected affirmative action programs based on the Jewish history of discrimination through racial quotas, they made much of how a race-blind meritocracy would allow anyone to succeed. Cheryl Lynn Greenberg has called out neoconservatives like (and including) Perlmutter for placing "their faith" in "a myth." American Jews turned inward for the most part after the Six Day War, focusing more and more on concerns relevant primarily to Jews, and not general social justice causes. Greenberg calls this evidence that Perlmutter and others like him were "narrowly self-interested." See Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, "How Affirmative Action Fractured the Black-Jewish Alliance," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 52 (Summer 2006): 86-88.

conservatism did not embrace the more liberal ideas of the neoconservatives, who believed in the expansion of the availability of education, increased job opportunities, the need for the welfare state, and racial, gender, and socioeconomic equality. Neoconservatives also felt America should be proud of its reputation for absorbing populations around the world through extensive immigration. Their hope was a defense of liberalism as they understood it, rather than an advocacy of true conservatism. At the same time, they believed that their contemporaries were often threatening social stability through 1960s radicalism. The Civil Rights Movement itself, in many ways, helped to create the neoconservative movement. Though many involved in neoconservatism, including Nathan Glazer, one of its primary leaders, had actively participated in the Civil Rights Movement, they now felt that racial minorities were beginning to ask too much of the government. They were especially opposed to affirmative action programs, and insisted that minorities take control of their own lives, rather than relying on government intervention.[65]

The Six Day War was also especially important for fueling neoconservative passions among American Jews. In large part, neoconservatives drew upon a sense of victimhood as intrinsic to Jewish identity. In general, they focused on political, rather than religious, anti-Semitism, and the ADL was no exception to this rule. The primary way neoconservative Jews saw to prevent further victimization (although they believed this to be inevitable) was to create the largest buffer zone they possibly could between anti-Semitism and themselves. As Seth

[65]Antony W. Alumkal, "American Evangelicalism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: A Racial Formation Theory Analysis," *Sociology of Religion* 65, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 201. Perlmutter was vehemently against affirmative action, saying, "Kissing backsides isn't the way to strengthen relationships—it's an old and familiar snivel." See Anti-Defamation League, Press Release, 26 June 1985, in Alexander M. Schindler Papers, Box 2, Folio 9, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Forman has described it, "the neoconservative program was … more an attack against a liberalism 'gone mad' than a prescription for an affirmative Jewish life."[66] Many Jews around the world took it for granted that it was only a matter of time before European-style anti-Semitism would develop in the United States. Hence, they redoubled their devotion to preserving their own Jewish nation in Israel.[67]

In Perlmutter's estimation, evangelicals, whatever their ultimate intentions, could be counted on to defend Jews. Indeed, Perlmutter felt a certain kinship with American evangelicals. Perlmutter believed that the evangelicals in America were undergoing the same process of victimization in the liberal press as Jews often experienced (and he did believe the media at large in the United States had a liberal bias[68]). Jerry Falwell was "their devil." Jesse Jackson was not. "Because we really have a greater animus against religion, re Falwell [sic], than we do against blacks who by definition are underdogs. In this kind of racist thinking who will be forgiven or who will be blamed is determined by race. Jesse Jackson gets away with rhetorical murder. Jerry Falwell, gets crucified for his rhetorical misdemeanors."[69] Perlmutter may have thought that Smith was being "crucified" as well. "I sometimes think that Jews have been conditioned to be neurotic and if we haven't something to worry about, something is wrong. So right now, we worry about the fundamentalists, and it makes us feel comfortably Jewish and normally

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[66]Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 202-206, quote from 206.

[67]Malachi Haim Hacochen, "'The Strange Fact That the State of Israel Exists': The Cold War Liberals between Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism," *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 38.

[68]Perlmutter in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:153: "It is all part of a liberal bias that permeates the media."

[69]Ibid., 1:104-105.

worried."[70] This was the wrong approach. Smith and his co-religionists were in some respects American Judaism's closest counterparts, potentially their greatest friends.[71]

That was not to suggest that Perlmutter was totally comfortable with evangelical philo-Semitism. He never quite understood how Max Goldfarb, whom he had met while travelling on ADL business, could teach Bible classes for Brook City Baptist Church, for example, or why the Brook City Baptists would want him to teach them. When Jews in regions dominated by evangelical Protestantism told him, "We get along fine here. No trouble," Perlmutter was bewildered. He thought they had "paid a price for getting along fine," which was to not be like the Jews of New York—too religious and not secular enough to be Jews. (No matter how much he tried, he could never shake the sense that New York Jewishness was the gold standard against which all other Jewishness must be measured.) He did feel, however, that evangelicals who loved Jews on the irrational basis that they were Jewish had a way of making one realize one was Jewish in much the same way that discrimination against Jews made one realize one was Jewish, and thus saw it as beneficial to Jews. Unlike his daughter, Jews living in Smith's part of the country (beyond the reach of Judeo-Christianity)—yes, they were "real" Jews, he had to remind himself—"know who they are." For these Jews, "Theirs was a diaspora within the diaspora. Ironically, these strange soils preserved them as identifying and identifiable Jews." When "your total environment is Christian" rather than Jewish,

> There's no forgetting that you are Jewish … Point and counterpoint, with customers in the Jew store, with Christian friends who look to you as an authority on the Old Testament, and on Sundays, walking Sunday-dressed Main Street.

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[70]Ibid., 1:118.

[71]In some ways, this reflects what Robert Wuthnow termed a "restructuring" of American religion in the 1980s. Alliances were no longer made with someone who shared one's religious beliefs, but rather with someone who shared one's political hopes—a change in "symbolic boundaries." See Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), esp. 9-10.

> Some days you know you are Jewish because of anti-Semitism. But some days you know it because of philo-Semitism. Baptist: "We don't abuse our Jewish folks. Oughtn't nobody abuse them 'cause they're here to save us."

Christians there might not know who Jews really were, and that was problematic, but it was not anti-Semitic. That, too, solidified Jewish identity, an identity "buoyed by neither hostility nor friendship, but innocence … In a way, then, it was necessary to remain Jewish for Their sake, to meet Their expectations."[72]

Perlmutter hoped to be able to channel this philo-Semitism, to educate evangelicals about the diversity of American Judaism and the potential danger in making remarks based upon stereotype without also turning away their devotion. An incident with Moral Majority leader Dan Fore gives an example of Perlmutter's dealing with evangelicals from Texas. Fore had publicly stated that he loved Jews and admired their "supernatural ability to make money." Perlmutter saw this as a mistake born of true ignorance rather than anti-Semitic intent. "It is distressing that someone who declares that he loves the Jewish people 'deeply' should nevertheless repeat discredited and anti-Semitic cliches and stereotypes," he said. Perlmutter did not rush to condemn potential allies, however, and said he would accept Fore's goodwill. "He expressed feelings of love, which we welcome, but his ignorance of the broad spectrum and diversity of Jews can be exploited by haters," Perlmutter said, balancing understanding with criticism.[73] In meeting with Smith, the ADL hoped to strike a similar balance of education and acceptance.[74]

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[72]Perlmutter, *A Bias of Reflections*, 67-68.

[73]Nathan Perlmutter, quoted in "Official Under Fire for Remarks," *Baltimore Jewish Times* 3 February 1981, 22.

[74]Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011.

As for the surge of the Religious Right into the political arena, Perlmutter felt ambivalent in spite of his initial reaction to hearing about Smith's comments on Jewish prayer. He did not support their goals, especially reinstating prayer in public schools, as he later said, "But I do suggest that there is a certain hypocrisy in the failure of these same guardians of separation of church and state to speak out … against the religious backbone of so much of the civil rights movement … No one argued the right of rabbis to involve themselves politically. … I am saying that the hypocrisy lies in our opposition to church-state cooperation when the political consequences are not to our liking." Perlmutter believed that American Jews could tolerate, should they end up being asked to do so, "a kid's silent prayer," as Reagan had advocated. "I would like to see a more giving heart on our part in understanding that Christianity—and this is not the Christianity of our parents' Poland—that Christianity, a complicated and heartfelt issue as Israel is to us, also needs that special understanding … a little bit more understanding of this overwhelming desire on the part of some Christians to in some way slake the spiritual thirst they feel without surrendering the First Amendment. Not every wink results in pregnancy."[75]

Thus, for Smith to have stumbled upon the ADL was somewhat fortuitous (or providential, as he would be likely to describe it). Despite the long relationship of those within the American Jewish Committee with many SBC leaders, the AJC would have been unlikely to have given Smith the same reception as the ADL under Perlmutter's leadership did. Perlmutter knew this all too well, having spent four years as the AJC's executive director (1965-1969) prior to a four year stint as vice president of Brandeis University and his ultimate return to the ADL in

[75]Perlmutter in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 120-123. For the broader contexts in which Perlmutter's alliance with conservative evangelicals may fit, see Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 205-222.

1973. The AJC's style simply did not suit Perlmutter. The AJC took its time. It studied things. It hoped to bring about slow changes in attitude through scholarly reflection. Further, the AJC represented the upper class of American Jewish life, whereas the ADL had a more middle class constituency. The ADL focused on immediate results and problem-solving. It was not inclined to waste time on Brotherhood Weeks and generating warm feelings among Gentiles haunted by a faddish sense of guilt over the Holocaust (as Perlmutter interpreted the AJC's activities). Perlmutter felt the ADL better represented a broader swath of American Jewish life. Perlmutter's pragmatic style and belief in the need to let evangelicals be evangelicals meshed well with Smith's disdain for what he saw as meaningless dialogue that made people feel good.[76] Perlmutter had no intention of asking Smith to renounce his belief that God (if there was a God at all) was not listening to Jewish prayers. He had other things in mind.[77]

Indeed, while the AJC was seeking evangelical support of Israel, having seen that they had a growing political prowess, Marc Tanenbaum, its Interreligious Affairs director, had aggressively pushed Falwell to give his unequivocal support of the idea that God heard Jewish prayers. He was not satisfied with Falwell's initial response to requests for a statement: "God hears the prayers of every redeemed Gentile and Jew." That was not enough. Falwell's meeting with Tanenbaum in New York resulted in a far different sort of joint statement than Smith's had

[76]For Smith's opinion of the SBC's existing interfaith dialogue with the American Jewish Committee, see Bailey Smith, Del City, Oklahoma, to Fred A. Steelman, 17 October 1980, Bailey Smith Papers 1980-1981: "The approach is wrong and many people agree that it is. We are trying to be so friendly that we have become bland."

[77]See Perlmutter in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:47-52. Perlmutter's approach to Smith was consistent with the ADL's general approach to evangelicalism during this period. The ADL had also sought Pat Robertson's public support of Israel earlier that year, as *Newsweek* observed, "without pressing him on his theological view of Jews." See Kenneth L. Woodward and Stryker McGuire, *Newsweek* 10 November 1980, 76. See also Maxwell Greenberg, *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 33-34, on his experiences with the AJC and ADL.

with Perlmutter. "God hears the cry of any sincere person who calls on Him."[78] Tanenbaum expressed relief. "These are not crackers anymore, or rednecks." There were too many of them to continue to consider them a harmless annoyance. "That's a massive reality Jews have to take into account. Can you imagine what state we'd be in if they had decided to go anti-Semitic?"[79] Tanenbaum, as seen in the previous chapter, was on a mission to bring evangelicals into the fold of Judeo-Christianity, on Judeo-Christianity's terms. Perlmutter, faced with his own version of Falwell, would not take Tanenbaum's approach.

Perhaps what Smith said was in contradiction to American ideals about religion and government, and Perlmutter had developed a sense of American identity at least as strong as his sense of Jewishness.[80] Yet it was silly to react as strongly as many Jews did to this threat, in his estimation. "The Jewish community sometimes seems incapable of taking note of its changed circumstances," he complained later. "If you sat in on virtually any major American Jewish community relations organization and participated in a discussion on the subject of separation of church and state, you would, if you had dropped in from Mars, be convinced that we were still living in some Polish Pale and that there were tyrannical priests with drunken goyim holding sway over our lives." The fact was, "one can take judicial notice of the fact that the more educated a Gentile is, the less anti-Semitic he is, and the more atheist he is, the more anti-Semitic he is."[81] Smith was a very religious man, but Perlmutter did not believe that a very religious

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[78]Kenneth L. Woodward and Stryker McGuire, "The Evangels and the Jews," *Newsweek* 10 November 1980, 76.

[79]Marc Tanenbaum, quoted in Elsa Solender, "Interfaith Rabbi," *Baltimore Jewish Times*, 21 June 1981, 51.

[80]See Perlmutter, *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 1:3, 1:21.

[81]See Ibid, 1:80-81.

Protestant was a threat to an American Jew simply on that basis, as many seemed to think. "[T]he more religious one is the less anti-Semitic that person."[82] He would welcome Smith as an ally. "I suppose that what I am trying to say is that I would rather have a Gentile educated in his religion than not. In America, it has always been better for Jews that way—without, as I say, giving ground on basic church-state principles here in the United States."[83]

Here Perlmutter seemed to presume some sort of agreement on church-state principles that Americans shared, but on the ground, things were considerably messier, as his contretemps with Schindler and others reveals. Schindler, like Dershowitz and Bergstrom at the forum in Baltimore, believed that religious groups should be involved in American politics, but that there was something about the Moral Majority's involvement that was anathema to the American spirit of religious liberty and the Judeo-Christian status quo. In seeing this as hypocrisy, Perlmutter highlighted the conflicting messages one received in 1980s America on the issue of separation of church and state. Those who rejected the Moral Majority's aims as seeking to impose religious ideals on the populace through government nonetheless thought there were times when religious ideals should have a say in civic life—so long as they were certain ideals expressed in a certain way, and not heretical to the Judeo-Christian system. For Perlmutter, school prayer would not necessarily trample church-state separation, yet here he parted with many of his contemporaries. The tensions between freedom to practice one's own religion (or not any at all) and the freedom from the imposition of someone else's religion were difficult to resolve. Perhaps Smith managed to develop an internally consistent system by sidestepping these strictly "American" principles

[82]See Ibid., 1:81. Perlmutter based this on the ADL's polling.

[83]See Ibid., 1:82.

altogether in favor of a religious rationale for the ideal relationship between religion and government, but this was a rare response to the conflicting messages in the public square. Instead, left to work out just what it meant to be committed to the American system, most chose among the various options and, in so doing, claimed that theirs was the *true* American ideal. Perlmutter claimed, "we were simply doing that which was American. That is the American ideal. … In the end, you judge people for what they are."[84]

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Americans would not read such nuances in the pages of their newspapers that week, as Christmas season advertisements competed for their attention. Though Helen Parmley and the *Dallas Morning News* remained vigilant in their detailed coverage of Smith's activities in New York, most papers ran only a small blurb similar to that in the *New York Times*, saying that Smith had not changed his mind. The *Times* ran a scant three short paragraphs about the meeting.[85] The New York journalists seemed to think this was a non-story, and most American media followed their lead, especially about a local issue like this one. Foxman' wife watched the press conference on the evening news, and even she remained skeptical of Smith's benign intentions, despite Foxman's assurances:

> When he agreed to come, he understood that what he said, not that he didn't believe it, but it was not the right thing. And the way he explained it was, he didn't realize. And you know what? I believed him. I remember I came home and my wife watched television and the press conference and she says to me, "You believe him?" And I said, "Yeah." She was skeptical. But he said what brought him here… was the realization as to how much anti-Semitism there was and how this triggered it. That was our issue. … And he said it shocked him. He said he knew there was anti-black bias, but he said what scared him was the letters that he got from his constituents saying, "You tell 'em, Bailey. Let 'em have it." And so,

[84]Ibid., 1:21.

[85]"Jewish and Baptist Leaders Meet," *New York Times* 19 December 1980. See also "Smith Offers Apology to ADL Officials," *Baltimore Jewish Times* 2 January 1981, 28.

> it was that spirit that he came. It wasn't in the spirit of arguing with us, defending himself. It was in the spirit that he learned something that he didn't know. … We didn't have to go and say, "Take it back" or "don't believe it" or whatever. … He understood what we were about.[86]

In the months that followed, there were other, less public things that occupied the participants' time. ADL and SBC officials held another meeting in Fort Worth that February, which Smith attended, to discuss plans and draft another statement of solidarity and formalize the tentative plans made in New York in December. Smith called the ADL-SBC working group formed February 9, 1981 a "mechanism to deal with issues of mutual concern," including religious liberty, anti-Semitism, and preservation of Israel. They formally agreed to set up a "Baptist-Jewish Academic Institute" at Fort Worth's Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, to establish pastoral workshops on Jews and Judaism for Southern Baptist pastors, and to publish articles on American Jews and anti-Semitism in Southern Baptist periodicals and Sunday School literature. In addition to solidifying the nebulous plans developed in New York, this meeting brought in the SBC's moderate wing, including some of those who had been highly critical of Smith publicly, and attempted to unite the SBC's existing scholarly dialogue with the AJC with this more grassroots-level ADL program.[87] While this generated an article or two, the press largely waited for the human drama that would unfold in April, when the pastor from Del City, Oklahoma, who had inflamed the world with his cultural insensitivity would bring his family to read the Haggadah—and *pray*—with a group of Texas Jews. Perlmutter's role in the story concluded, and his youthful Texas subordinate took his place.

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[86]Foxman, interview by author, New York.

[87]"Joint Jewish, Baptist Work Group Organized," *Baptist Press* 18 February 1981, 1.

CHAPTER FOUR:

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM

You know, it's hard to really dislike somebody you know real well. [1]

--James Draper

Steven Smith remembers his mother being very concerned that her sons dress appropriately and be on their best behavior for the excursion to Plano, a suburb of Dallas, to celebrate the Passover seder of the Jewish year 5741 with the Briskmans. Perhaps she had not played much of a public role in the developing relationship between the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), but she probably was aware that her family's performance on that April 20, 1981 would have significant public consequences (even more so if things did not go well than if they went off without incident). But Steven was only twelve. He did not grasp the importance of keeping his suit clean and pressed, and just chalked it up to his mother's usual brooding about manners among strangers.[2]

Journalists had begun calling Mark Briskman again about a month before this momentous occasion, Helen Parmley of the *Dallas Morning News* among them. They kept asking, in tones he later mimicked as having a combination of excitement and incredulity, "Is he still coming for Passover?" Briskman was baffled by the continued fixation on Bailey Smith. The secular media had carried no news about the ADL and SBC for months. He had thought the story was dead, and the ADL had issued no press releases about this private dinner, so he had not expected any media

[1]James Draper, interview by author, Colleyville, Texas, 3 August 2011.

[2]Steven Smith, interview by author, Fort Worth, Texas, 28 July 2011.

attention. He told the various reporters that indeed, Smith and his family were still planning to eat with the Briskmans. Parmley and a handful of others pushed Briskman to let them sit in to observe, but he held firm in his refusals. He later recalled telling Parmley, "Absolutely not! I'm not going to let you in the house! A journalist, to be in a seder! That's ridiculous!" Briskman was accustomed to journalists in general, but not this level of media scrutiny, and certainly not generating interest so far beyond the Dallas area.[3]

Despite his unfamiliarity with handling matters on such a large public stage, ultimately, dialogue between the ADL and SBC succeeded in the early 1980s primarily because of Briskman and Briskman's attention to the regional and cultural distinctives of the Southern Baptists involved. While Perlmutter may have been baffled by the phenomenon of Judaism thriving in its own way outside major centers like New York, beyond the reach of Judeo-Christianity, Briskman felt right at home in his Southwestern context. Knowing the Southwest and its version of Southern Baptists made him a natural choice for heading up the project. Just how vital Briskman was to its continued success would not be made clear until the collapse of dialogue examined in the following chapter. Briskman's connections with prominent Southern Baptists like W. A. Criswell and Paige Patterson were only part of the story. Accustomed to cooperating with evangelicals, Briskman encouraged the ADL at large to focus on solidarity with Southern Baptists more generally, not merely upon their potential alliances to influence foreign policy. He believed that the education went both ways, and that American Jews had things to learn about Southern Baptists. The New York leadership of the ADL involved in the dialogue seem to have

[3]Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011. The *Dallas Morning News* ran yet another story on Smith and the ADL the weekend before the meal. See Helen Parmley, "Southern Baptist to Celebrate Seder," *Dallas Morning News* 18 April 1981, 35A.

proved his point about those outside his region not knowing much about Southern Baptists, and about how that knowledge through personal contact could make a difference in improving relationships. One did not have to embrace Judeo-Christian uniformity in order to get along, which Briskman hoped he and Smith could demonstrate to the nation. This chapter examines the major activities of the ADL with the SBC through the end of Smith's SBC presidency in 1982. It argues that theological differences did not hinder their ability to cooperate. Instead, increased familiarity with the other meant warmer feelings on the part of both sides of the dialogue, something Briskman knew all too well. As Texas Jews were excluded from the Judeo-Christian power structure in ways similar to evangelicals, they had a common foundation upon which to build relationships.[4] Both Southwestern Baptists and Southwestern Jews faced the double marginalization of being part of a region most of their country, as well as most of their co-religionists, at best ignored and at worst openly disdained.

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Though Helen Parmley and the *Dallas Morning News* had remained vigilant in their detailed coverage of Smith's activities in New York that December, most newspapers ran only a small blurb similar to that in the *New York Times*, saying that Smith had not changed his mind

[4]Although the vast majority of scholarship on American Jewishness and Judaism focuses on Jews in northern urban centers, a handful of historians and sociologists have written about how living outside those areas has shaped Jewish culture in other regions. Eli Evans has written that living in the "Bible Belt" made Jews into "teachers" for their Christian neighbors, a role Briskman had been playing for years and continued to play for Smith and his Southern Baptist colleagues. See idem, foreward to *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil: A New History*, ed. Marcie Cohen Ferris and Mark I. Greenberg (Lebanon, New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 2006), xi. At the same time, Melvin I. Urofsky has noted that Jews south of the Mason-Dixon line are "the most assimilated part of American Jewry," people who "differed both qualitatively and quantitatively from that of Northern Jewry," having "imbibed its values and became part of it." See idem, "The Tip of the Iceberg," preface to *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), xii. See also Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), esp. 8-9.

about Jewish prayers. The *Times* ran a scant three short paragraphs about the meeting.[5] The New York journalists seemed to think this was a non-story, and most American media followed their lead, especially about a local issue like this one. In response to the coverage about Smith and the "failed" ADL meeting, Sydney Feldman wrote a letter to the editor of Philadelphia's *Jewish Exponent* chastising Briskman for inviting Smith to dinner. "It is not appropriate," Feldmen wrote, "to give respectability to a Baptist leader who holds such publicly expressed views" as "God's non-response to Jewish prayers."[6]

Briskman had been disappointed and troubled by the media coverage. Of course Smith had not changed his mind. Nobody was trying to change Smith's religious beliefs. But Briskman still felt that there was more to be done, and that both Smith and the ADL would benefit from closer media attention to their actual goals. Although Nathan Perlmutter and Briskman shared the opinion that the ADL's focus should be upon gaining support for the modern state of Israel, Briskman's own experiences meant that he would approach Smith, and the media, somewhat differently than Perlmutter. Smith had found an ideal counterpart in Perlmutter, but not one who would go to bat for him in a way that would get anyone to really pay attention. With Briskman, Smith found a different kind of ally, one who had spent years among his people, was fluent in his language, and would go into the trenches with him.

As the two settled in for their return flight to Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, where Smith would take a connecting flight to Oklahoma City and Briskman would return home to the Dallas suburb of Plano, Briskman reflected upon their experiences in New York. He was

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[5]"Jewish and Baptist Leaders Meet," *New York Times* 19 December 1980. See also "Smith Offers Apology to ADL Officials," *Baltimore Jewish Times* 2 January 1981, 28.

[6]Sydney Feldman, letter to the editor, *(Philadelphia) Jewish Exponent* 30 January 1981, 16.

concerned that things had not gone very well, and thought the news coverage of the Perlmutter-Smith press conference reflected the poor handling of the situation by the New York office. Here was potential being squandered, and he wondered if he could do something to rescue it before it was gone.

Though Briskman grew up on Long Island, New York, he had found Dallas a more pleasant place to call home. He had worked for the ADL office in New Jersey prior to becoming the director for the North Texas-Oklahoma region, but felt the northeast was overcrowded, expensive, and aggressive, and was happy to leave it behind. In some sense, he had not ever fully meshed with the culture of his origins, not having the competitive drive to attend an Ivy League university most of his peers had, or their thirst for urban life. Drawn to the southwest's lower cost of living and more sparsely populated landscape, Briskman had only lived in the region for four years before meeting Smith, but had already begun the work of developing ties within the religious culture of Dallas. There was one obvious group one had to know, and know well, if one wanted to establish oneself as a leader in religious Dallas, regardless of one's own theological commitments: Southern Baptists.[7]

At the top of Briskman's list of important relationships to cultivate was W. A. Criswell, the long-term pastor of downtown Dallas's First Baptist Church (FBC). "Criswell would roll over in his grave if he heard me say this," Briskman said later. "If there was an analogy to the Vatican, First Baptist Church is it. I mean, it was like holy ground for the Southern Baptist Convention." Criswell was its "pope." FBC had tremendous authority and influence in the broader region. As Briskman saw it, FBC was the most important institution in town. "So if you

[7]Briskman, interview by author, telephone.

would take St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan, and expand that to four additional blocks, you can imagine what that would look like. Controlling five blocks of downtown prime real estate? That's pretty powerful stuff." It was not easy to get to know Criswell, however. Like many influential people, Criswell was relatively unapproachable. As a matter of strategy, Briskman had found a way to Criswell through the young president of FBC's Bible college, the Criswell Institute for Biblical Studies, Paige Patterson. Patterson knew the world beyond FBC. He was well travelled and well connected. Briskman and Patterson had become friends, through which Briskman had gotten an introduction to Criswell.[8]

Briskman would not have ended up at that meeting in New York without Patterson, either. As the world at large, and especially Southern Baptists, exploded in response to Smith, Patterson grew increasingly concerned. One day in October, Briskman had gotten a call from him. "Mark, we've got to do something about this," Patterson had said. The implications were ever-increasing. The two discussed Israel's fledgling alliances with American evangelicals and the American Jewish community's reactions to Smith. Smith, being from Oklahoma, was in Briskman's region. Patterson wanted Briskman to call Smith. He felt that Smith had made a mistake, that he was too young and inexperienced to know what he was doing, and that someone needed to help him before the ripple effect of the controversy had snowballed into unknown negative consequences.[9]

Briskman was hesitant. He did not want to be the ADL official jumping on the bandwagon, and he did not know Smith, or what kind of reception he would get. "You know

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[8]Briskman, interview by author, telephone.

[9]Ibid.; and Paige Patterson, interview by author, Fort Worth, 3 August 2011.

what, Paige, I think it would probably be more appropriate for him to make the initial outreach, rather than me calling him."

Patterson agreed. "That's fine," he said. "He'll call you within half an hour."

The two hung up. Less than twenty minutes passed, and Briskman's phone rang again. Smith was on the other end of the line, inviting Briskman to First Southern Baptist Church in Del City that Sunday to speak in the pulpit. Again, Briskman was hesitant about overstepping the boundaries of what he thought was appropriate. Besides, it was already the middle of the week, and coming up that Sunday would probably be too hasty anyway. "I'm a regional director," he said. "This story is now an international story. So for me to go and do this and try and resolve this on my own, you know what? It would not be appropriate. … Let me give this some thought, and can I get back to you?"[10]

Smith agreed, but Briskman thought he seemed very anxious. He made sure Briskman had a way to reach him at any time of day, and waited for the ADL's decision. Later that day, he had it when Briskman returned his call. "You know, really, Rev. Smith, this really needs to be handled at a much higher level. … I've spoken to my national director and they would very much like to extend an invitation for you to come out and meet with them at the national headquarters in New York."[11]

To Briskman, Smith still sounded nervous. He indicated that it was very important to him that Briskman be there as well. Briskman got the impression that the mutual connection to Patterson was reassuring—perhaps this time Smith could be heard, if someone were listening

[10]Briskman, interview by author, telephone.

[11]Ibid.

who spoke his language—but Perlmutter and the New York ADL officials were unknown variables. Briskman lived in Smith's hometown, after all, and he knew what Perlmutter may not have known: that despite the name of the denomination Smith led, Smith was not culturally a Southerner. Dallas had elements of Southern culture, to be sure, but the North Texas-Oklahoma region of the ADL, as Briskman knew from experience and Darren Dochuk has demonstrated in recent scholarship, was a part of another world. The Southwest, largely ignored and misunderstood by the American mainstream for decades, had its own societal expectations. Compared with the American South, the Southwest was less formal and more fiercely independent, but equally self-consciously marginalized. It did not matter much to the rest of America, and knew it—while Judeo-Christianity ignored the South, it was oblivious to the Southwest. The Southwest fused the South and the West and formed its own hybrid culture that ran from the woods of Arkansas, through the plains of Oklahoma, down across the sun-drenched farms and cities of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona and into the Southern California desert.[12] A good deal of them were Southern Baptists, but true *Southern* Baptists were uncomfortable with their Southwestern counterparts; to them, there was a foreignness about their westward brothers and sisters, with their defiant individualism and their egalitarian ideals (whether or not their ideals were ever fully realized).[13] Briskman knew this, and Smith wanted Briskman in New York with him. Briskman also knew he could not simply tell his superiors in New York that he should

[12]Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 9-13.

[13]These regional distinctions are discussed in greater detail below.

come, so he told Smith that he would ask them to call Smith to set something up, and Smith should be the one to say he wanted Briskman there.[14]

Well, Smith must have done it, because here Briskman was sitting next to him on a flight from New York to Dallas after the meeting and unsuccessful press conference. He could already tell that Smith and Patterson were not very much alike. Patterson seemed to know a lot more about Jewish life and practices than Smith did, but how much Smith knew was unclear. Briskman began to probe Smith's understanding of modern American Judaism, starting with a discussion of the upcoming holidays. "You know, Hanukkah, in terms of the Jewish year, is not a major holiday. … Where like Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur, and Passover, the first two days, are holy days, and if you're observant, you're not supposed to work, you're not supposed to go to school. Like, Rosh Hashanah, our offices are closed, the first two days of Passover. … Hanukkah, we're not closed. Really on the Jewish calendar, it's a minor holiday. It's not a holy day." Briskman explained why Hanukkah seemed like such a big deal. "But in the United States, because of the Christmas phenomena, you know, many Jewish families have built up Hanukkah in terms of being a much bigger holiday than it really is. But really in terms of the Jewish calendar it's a minor holiday."[15]

Smith said he had never been to a seder, though he had always wanted to go to one. Briskman was still hoping to shore up the fragile relationship between the ADL and the SBC, though he knew that as a regional director, dealing one-to-one with denominational heads was not the sort of thing people in his position typically did. Smith was a national figure, but he was

[14]Briskman, interview by author, telephone. As noted in the previous chapter, there are many versions of the story of how Smith and the ADL initially made contact, but Briskman's version matches the archival record.

[15]Briskman, interview by author, telephone.

in his region, and at that moment, he was something of a captive audience, so Briskman plunged ahead. "Would you and your family like to join my family and I at our home for Passover seder?"

This was months away, and Smith was obviously a very busy person. Briskman expected Smith to hedge, to say he needed to check his schedule and get back to him or something similar. He later said that he sincerely wanted Smith to come over for Passover, but he did not expect Smith to respond the way he did. He was surprised at Smith's total lack of hesitation. "Yes, we'd love to!" Apparently there was no need to check to be sure he was free. Briskman was taken aback by Smith's emphatic tone. "*Yes! We're coming!*"[16] The two then discussed the possibility of taking a trip to Israel together. Smith had never gone to Israel, and was interested in seeing the nation that captivated so much of his imagination.[17]

Briskman did not discover just how eager Smith was to come to seder until the two had parted ways. Smith went on to catch a connecting flight to Oklahoma City, and Briskman drove to his suburban home in Plano, just north of Dallas. Less than an hour later, the phone rang.

"Is this Mark Briskman of the Anti-Defamation League?"

"Yes, who is this?"

"Associated Press."

Briskman expected the reporter to ask about the meeting in New York, but the question caught him off guard. "Is it true that you invited Bailey Smith to your house for Passover Seder?"

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[16]Ibid. See also Newton, "Smith Expresses Regret."

[17]Newton, "Smith Expresses Regret."

He could not answer right away, shocked that the reporter knew about a conversation that had happened such a short time ago, at 30,000 feet in the air.[18] Smith had called the SBC's news agency, the Baptist Press, whose stories went out on the wire, from the airport to report on his activities in New York. He told them about his plans to observe Passover with the Briskmans. When the story went out on the wire, a single sentence about the upcoming seder in the Baptist Press article about Smith's New York trip set off a new firestorm of media attention. Those who had seen the meeting as a failure thought that perhaps the ADL was going for another round, and Smith might yet recant.[19] Judeo-Christianity might win another convert after all.

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Briskman wanted to keep the seder a family affair, but he did invite Larry and Celia Schoenbrun to join in. Larry was the Dallas Regional Board Chairman of the ADL, and Briskman felt their presence would be helpful. Otherwise, he hoped for a quiet evening. Briskman's choice of activities suggests that he hoped to make the Smiths comfortable and to emphasize solidarity between Jews and Southern Baptists, without blurring divisions as Judeo-Christian interfaith dialogue would tend to do. Before beginning to read the Haggadah, the assembled participants took some time to reflect on the persecution of Jews and Baptists in the Soviet Union.[20] Knowing that the Smiths, as Southern Baptists, would likely abstain from alcohol, Briskman served grape juice rather than the more traditional wine.[21] Briskman's

[18]Briskman, interview by author, telephone.

[19]Newton, "Smith Expresses Regret."

[20]Mark Briskman, Dallas, Texas, memo to Nathan Perlmutter, 24 April 1981, Oscar Cohen Papers, Box 23, Folio 2, James Marcus Rader Center of the American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio.

[21]"Baptist Joins Seder," *Kingman (Arizona) Daily Miner*, 1 May 1981, B-2; and "Seder is Shared with Outspoken Baptist Leader," *Toledo (Ohio) Blade*, 1 May 1981, 8. Grape juice is considered appropriate for Passover

previous experiences with Dallas's Baptist elite also probably helped him to know how the various elements of the meal would resonate with Southern Baptist doctrines, and at many points, referred to Christian interpretations of the symbolism involved before explaining how Jews viewed the same symbols differently. Steven remembers sitting dumbfounded as Briskman took out three pieces of matzah bread and said that Christians understood them to represent the Trinity, then broke one and told his guests that Christians saw the broken matzah as reflecting the crucifixion.[22] The Smiths took the message as an affirmation of their own faith, and were moved by what they saw through the lens of re-enacting the Last Supper. They felt disappointed that the Briskmans and Shoenbruns did not see things their way, but they also felt understood for who they were rather than as a stereotypical caricature.[23] "They were so very thoughtful of us," Smith told reporters afterward.[24] Smith still gave Briskman the impression that Smith had not recovered from the toll of the previous months' events. That week, Briskman wrote to Nathan Perlmutter, informing him that Smith seemed quite emotional.[25]

The children provided some comic relief. Briskman's older daughter, Tali, and Smith's two younger sons, Joshua and Steven, joined in the playful search for the Afikomen.[26] Briskman

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and other ceremonial situations where wine is traditionally used, as the blessing recited for wine and grape juice is the same, referring only to the "fruit of the vine."

[22]Steven Smith, interview by author. See also Briskman, memo to Perlmuttter, 24 April 1981.

[23]Bailey Smith and Sandy Smith, interview by author, Atlanta, Georgia, 30 October 2010.

[24]Bailey Smith, quoted in "Seder is Shared with Outspoken Baptist Leader," *Toledo (Ohio) Blade*.

[25]Briskman, memo to Perlmutter, 24 April 1981.

[26]The Afikomen is half of one of the pieces of matzah used in the seder meal, which is saved for dessert. In some Jewish households, the father will hide the Afikomen and reward the children for finding it. Evangelical interpretation of this practice holds that this piece of matzah represents Jesus, "buried" in a white cloth after being broken, and found by the children who represent the women who discovered the empty tomb following his resurrection. It is possible that Briskman would have told the Smiths this. In any case, it is one of many symbols that the Smiths viewed through an evangelical lens.

wrote in an amused tone about the face Joshua made upon his first taste of horseradish. "The encounter…will not be long forgotten by him!"[27] Everyone seemed relaxed, and discussion had turned to Israel. Nothing specific had been planned, but Smith and Briskman both thought a joint mission to Israel with representatives from the ADL and SBC was a good idea, and that the autumn might be a good time to make the trip. The group began clearing the table to prepare for dessert when a knock came at the door, shattering the calmness of the setting. Briskman opened it to discover dozens of journalists swarming his suburban front lawn, which he later estimated numbered 30-35 people, representing newspaper, radio, and television media outlets. Voices cried out in the darkness, asking if the meal was over. "Yes, we just finished up," Briskman said, bewildered. They responded, "Would you guys come out and talk to us?" Briskman felt he needed time to think. He had never generated anything close to this kind of attention in his entire career. In the moment, he wondered whether his neighbors would think he was doing something illicit and was going to be arrested. "Hang on," he said, and shut the door on the blinding lights. He turned to his notorious dinner guest. "Bailey, you can't believe what's on my front lawn. I think we've got to go out and say something."[28]

Smith, despite his time in the spotlight, was startled as well when he saw the assembly on Briskman's lawn, and thought the media attention was misplaced. He was no celebrity, he thought. "When we opened the door, you would have thought Marilyn Monroe and Elvis were inside, because cars were lined up, trucks were lined up, and they turned on those huge lights, you know—almost blinded us."[29] But he assented to the impromptu press conference, and

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[27]Briskman, memo to Perlmutter, 24 April 1981.

[28]Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011.

[29]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

Briskman turned back to face the reporters again, asking them to give them ten minutes before they would join them outside.[30]

Briskman, Larry Schoenbrun, and Smith sat on Briskman's couch to discuss what they might say to the media. At some point that evening, both Briskman and Smith later recalled, they had discussed what Smith's beliefs about prayer actually entailed. Briskman had asked Smith about Tali. Suppose she had gotten sick, and Briskman prayed for her to get well. Would God hear Briskman's Jewish prayer to heal his daughter? Smith had responded that God did what God wanted, and that Smith had no control over God's choices. "If God chooses to hear your prayer, that'll be fine. And I would be glad for him to do that. But the Bible says that there's only one way to God, and that's through Jesus." True to his evangelical Biblicism, Smith had quoted the New Testament. "'He who believeth on the Son hath life. He who believeth not on the Son hath not life. The wrath of God abides on him.' John 3:36," Smith had said. "So I cannot tell you whether God will heal your daughter or not. That's up to God."[31] In their discussion of how to respond to the media that night, Briskman and Schoenbrun asked Smith if he would be willing to tell the reporters something along the lines of this prior conversation. As Briskman later remembered Smith's reaction, Smith balked at the idea of relaying the details of this private conversation to a group of journalists.

> And I immediately said to him, "Would you say that outside?" Because it's one thing to say, "God doesn't hear the prayer of Jews." It's another thing to say, "You know, my view, and my theology says that unless you pray through Jesus, God doesn't hear your prayers and that's what I believe, but ultimately, God is the decider"—that's a whole different ball game. And I said, "Would you be willing to say that outside?" And he said, "No, if I said that, I'd be crucified." Literally,

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[30]Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011.

[31]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

> he said, "I'd be *crucified.*" I said, "Okay. *Fine.*" … But ultimately what he basically said was, "This is what I believe. Ultimately God is the decider."[32]

Though Smith—for whatever reason, whether it was that he thought saying this would make people think he *had* changed his mind, or that he would be misunderstood again—was not willing to talk about Jewish prayer anymore, he was willing to affirm religious liberty as a principle he held deeply and that he would extend that liberty to everyone if he had anything to do with it, including (perhaps especially) Jews. Rejecting Judeo-Christianity did not mean rejecting universal religious freedom. Briskman wrote to Perlmutter about Smith's remarks on religious freedom two days later, "He looked Larry and I directly in the eyes and forcefully stated that he supported our rights to live as Jews without coercion and that he would die for that right. Both Larry and I were speechless. It was a very special moment."[33] Having established a plan of action, Briskman and Smith left Schoenbrun inside and went to talk to their audience.

Again, then, as he had that December, Smith faced a group of local reporters with an ADL official by his side. This time, however, Smith would not read a prepared statement and refuse to answer questions, and Briskman did everything he could to make it clear that the seder was not just another in a series of events geared toward making Smith change his mind. The ADL was not a missionary organization for Judeo-Christianity. He later remembered the line of questioning beginning just as it had at ADL headquarters: did Smith now believe that God hears Jewish prayers? "I basically said to the press, that's the wrong question. That's not the issue."[34] The *Dallas Morning News* quoted Briskman as having said, "Our concern was never so much

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[32]Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011.

[33]Briskman, memo to Perlmutter, 24 April 1981.

[34]Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011.

about the remark itself (that God does not hear the prayer of a Jew) as it was whether the statement represented an opening program that would … strike at the concept of religious liberty, pluralism, and diversity in this country."[35]

Briskman later said that Smith seemed to take that as his cue. "At which point Bailey jumps in and says, 'I would die to defend Mark and the Jewish community's rights to live a full Jewish life as American Jews in the United States.'"[36] Contemporary reports of the impromptu press conference took a much different tone than those that reported on Smith's visit to New York. They noted that Smith wished to publicly distance himself from anti-Semitic groups, and his professed willingness to die for Jewish religious freedom.[37] Missouri's *St. Joseph Gazette* concluded its report on the seder with this quote from Smith: "I think Jewish people and Christians both want to eliminate human hurt, we want to rid this world of bigotry and bitterness and hatred and work together to do everything we can to foster human love."[38] Briskman emphasized that the problem was not really theology or even political viewpoints, so much as it

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[35]Briskman, quoted in Karen Malkowski, "Smith, Jews Seek Peace as National Furor Fades," *Dallas Morning News* 22 April 1981, 21A.

[36]Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011.

[37]For mainstream press, see "ADL Aide Praises Baptist Cleric," *Youngstown (Ohio) Vindicator*, 22 April 1981, 6; "Baptist Joins Seder," *Kingman (Arizona) Daily Miner*; "Baptist Who Criticized Jews Attends Seder," *Miami News*, 22 April 1981, 4A; "Baptists and Jews," *Rock Hill (South Carolina) Herald*, 21 April 1981, 11; Malkowski, "Smith, Jews Seek Peace," *Dallas Morning News*; "Minister Praised," *Waycross (South Carolina) Journal-Herald*, 30 April 1981, P34; "National News Briefs," *Madison (Indiana) Courier*, 22 April 1981, B-5; "Passover Seder Celebrated by Baptist Bailey," *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 21 April 1981, 13B; "Pastor Who Insulted Jews Joins Passover Seder," (St. Petersburg, Florida) *Evening Independent* 22 April 1981, 12-A; "Pastor Who Insulted Jews Joins Them to Fight Bigotry," *Ocala (Florida) Star-Banner*, 23 April 1981, 4C; "The Rev. Smith Participates in a Seder," *Argus Press* (Owosso, Michigan), 22 April 1981, 8; and "Seder is Shared with Outspoken Baptist Leader," *Toledo (Ohio) Blade*.

For Southern Baptist coverage, see "Smith, Family Observe Passover," *(Dallas) Baptist Standard* 29 April 1981, 5; "Smith Celebrates Passover," *(Nashville) Baptist and Reflector*, 29 April 1981, 2; and "Smith Observes Passover," *(Oklahoma City) Baptist Messenger* 30 April 1981, 5.

[38]Bailey Smith, quoted in "Baptist Leader Plays Passover Role," *St. Joseph (Missouri) Gazette*, 22 April 1981, 7D.

was that "Many Jews and Baptists don't really know each other." Smith had revealed how important it was to know one another. Briskman told the reporters Smith had not intended to insult Jews; he simply did not know enough about Jews. Now, the ADL and the SBC were involved in a "movement" to get to know one another, and for that, they had Smith to thank. "Clearly," he said, Smith was helping "to change an initially negative situation to a positive one."[39] Smith said his experience at the seder was "joyous" and "inspirational."[40] So far as the ADL was concerned, Briskman said, it did not matter how long it took to achieve the level of familiarity necessary for good relations. "We talked with the Catholics for 2,000 years—we can talk with the Baptists for 2,000 years."[41] Judeo-Christianity was one way of relating. Smith and Briskman had another.

According to Briskman, at that point Smith made a comment on a topic that they had not planned to discuss, and announced that the ADL and SBC would be taking a joint trip to Israel. Briskman was frustrated because the plans had not been formally made yet, and now Smith had publicly committed them both to international travel together, but there was no turning back, and there was no way Briskman was going to publicly dispute this. This was not an iron-clad contract, of course. Briskman and the ADL could have backed out if the idea truly was an unwise one in their estimation. But at least as Briskman remembered it, that was the moment when it

[39]Briskman, quoted in Malkowski, "Smith, Jews Seek Peace."

[40]Bailey Smith, quoted in "Seder Is Shared with Outspoken Baptist Leader," *Toledo Blade*, 1 May 1981.

[41]Mark Briskman, quoted in "Southern Baptist Acts to Put End to Dispute about Prayers of Jews," *New York Times* 22 April 1981, A19.

was decided, once and for all, that he and his new friend, the president of the SBC, would be going to Israel together, where both would end up in uncharted territory.[42]

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In the meantime, there was another threat to the possible Briskman-Smith led ADL-SBC "study mission" to Israel, one that again involved politics. These politics, however, were of a religious, rather than civil, nature. As indicated previously, Briskman's contacts were among the conservative wing of the SBC then seeking power. Though Briskman knew some Southern Baptists among the moderates, they held less power in his region, as he saw it. Smith was a part of the early efforts to take the reins of the SBC's governing structures, the second of the presidential candidates the SBC's conservatives had managed to get elected as part of their overall strategic plan to seize control of the denomination's agencies, boards, and seminaries. During Smith's presidency, perhaps more so than that of his predecessor, Adrian Rogers, many of the moderates had expressed resentment of the politics of the conservatives. Rogers had not sought re-election to a second one-year term. Smith did. In so doing, he provoked an unprecedented challenge to an incumbent SBC president, an office usually given to any such officeholder who indicated willingness to continue for another year. Overt campaigns for the office of SBC president were also against the unwritten rules of the SBC. The incumbent simply made his intentions known, and the messengers approved his re-election without further discussion or challenge.[43]

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[42]Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011. I am uncertain whether this actually took place as Briskman remembered; few articles mention the upcoming trip to Israel. "Southern Baptist Acts to Put End to Dispute about Prayers of Jews," *New York Times* is a notable exception to this rule.

[43]See "Smith Credits Beliefs for Forging New Peace," *(Birmingham) Alabama Baptist*, 27 May 1982, 1; and Dan Martin, "Bailey Smith Announces Plans for Second Term," *(Nashville) Baptist and Reflector*, 20 January 1981, 3.

No bylaw or other document instituted term limits for SBC presidents; only tradition has consistently held them to two, one-year terms. There had (and has) never been any effort to overturn that tradition. Yet no bylaw or other document required the messengers of the SBC to accept a second term of an incumbent president, either, and it is worth noting that plenty of other SBC traditions for convention week were being discarded by both sides of this conflict. The unprecedented techniques the conservatives used for securing victory looked a lot more like secular politics than the usual Southern Baptist variety. Rumors abounded for months preceding the convention meeting about what the conservatives were planning.[44] In June of 1981, moderates also left tradition behind in favor of a major campaign to unseat Smith. It marked the first time in the 136-year history of the denomination that an incumbent was ever challenged. The *New Orleans Times-Picayune* predicted "a real 'shoot-out'" at the SBC's Los Angeles meeting.[45]

Moderates rallied behind former Baylor University president Abner McCall, arguing for a change in leadership to a style that was more diplomatic. Ralph H. Langley, who formally nominated McCall, said that the unprecedented challenge came because of the call of conscience. "I have only my own conscience to answer in this regard, irregular or incumbency or not," he said. "My conscience was silent until April and then my conscience would not be stilled." It was

[44]See "Smith Says Inerrancy Issue Will Influence Appointments," *(Nashville) Baptist and Reflector*, 1 October 1980, 1.

[45]Wesley Jackson, "Southern Baptists Are Preparing for Shootout at Annual Convention," *New Orleans Times-Picayune* 6 June 1981, 11. See also Helen Parmley, "Smith Re-Elected to Lead Baptists," *Dallas Morning News* 10 June 1981, 1A. This could reflect the changing loyalties American religion as much as anything else. Many commitments to one's own denominational context, regardless of a diversity of views within it, began to crumble a bit in the 1980s. The SBC is just one of many denominations that experienced this sort of conflict. See Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), esp. 9-10.

not about Smith, the person. "I love Bailey Smith," Langley insisted. "He's one of the best preachers among us. … but that's not what we're voting on here today. We're voting on leadership and statesmanship at a new level and a new dimension." Smith just did not seem to know how to keep peace with people, both within and outside the denomination.[46] Despite the general public reputation of Smith, moderate concern was less about Smith's relationship with American Jews as it was with his role in the overall conservative plot. They disputed his appointments to convention posts, saying Smith "stuck with his fundamentalist friends and representatives of a handful of churches who live on the right wing of the convention," while Smith insisted his appointments represented the mainstream.[47] Still, Smith had acknowledged that what he meant by "mainstream" would include strategic removal of certain ideological strains from Southern Baptist boards and schools. He was not in favor of allowing those who were "too liberal" to teach in Southern Baptist seminaries.[48]

Others noted (and some protested) that Smith's appointments diverted from other traditions in that not a single one of his Resolutions Committee nominations came from the SBC's traditional power bloc east of the Mississippi River. Instead, Smith had drawn on his own region, which the Tennessee *Baptist and Reflector* referred to as having "a distinct western

[46]Ralph H. Langley, nomination speech for Abner McCall, video recording of the Southern Baptist Convention, Tuesday afternoon session, 9 June 1981, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archive, Nashville, Tennessee.

[47]"Critical moderates" and Bailey Smith, quoted in Jackson, "Southern Baptists Are Preparing," *New Orleans Times-Picayune.*

[48]Smith, quoted in "Smith Says Inerrancy Issue Will Influence Appointments," *(Nashville) Baptist and Reflector* 1 October 1980.

characteristic."[49] McCall said he was running for president because he thought allowing conservatives to continue carrying out their plan would "destroy our Baptist work," saying that it was the conservatives, not the moderates, who were responsible for politicizing the SBC.[50] McCall was no true liberal, regardless of what the conservatives have said about him since then; at the time he was probably best known in other circles for having drawn national attention by threatening Baylor's students with disciplinary action if they posed for *Playboy*'s "Girls of the Southwest Conference" pictorial feature.[51] As the *Boston Globe* noted, much of this was a question of the power of the Old South versus its perceived upstart usurpers of traditional authority, people who may well have been Southern Baptists, yet "they considered strangers."[52] As indicated above, they were "strangers" because they came from the hybrid culture of the American Southwest, one with different values and expectations than the *Southern* Southern Baptists had in their culture. Political scientist Oran P. Smith has analyzed this regional shift in-depth. As he noted in 1997, Atlanta's Charles Stanley, who held the office of SBC president 1985-1986, was the only SBC president during the Controversy who came from the Deep South, an exception to a general rule: the SBC's power center shifted from the Old South to the Southwest during the 1980s.[53]

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[49]"Smith Reveals Appointments to Resolutions Committee," *(Nashville) Baptist and Reflector*, 22 April 1981, 2. Smith's ten Resolutions Committee appointees included a Californian, a Kansan, a Hawaiian, a Louisianan, a Nevadan, a New Mexican, three Texans, and an Oklahoman as the chair.

[50]Abner McCall, quoted in "Baptists Divided over Officer's Term," *Augusta (Georgia) Chronicle*, 2 May 1981, 9C.

[51]See Bruce Buursma, "Baptist Wings Join to Seek Leadership," *Chicago Tribune*, 9 May 1981, 7.

[52]James L. Franklin, "Southern Baptist Convention and the Quest for Power," 14 June 1981, 1.

[53] Oran P. Smith, *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 83.

Smith's ultimate victory came with a mere 60% of the vote, 6,934 to 4,524.[54] The vote represented, in the words of the moderates, a "moral victory," if not a numeric one.[55] In spite of the unprecedented political tone of the convention proceedings, or maybe because of them, before SBC secretary Lee Porter announced the vote, he asked for a moment of silent prayer. No cheering and no clapping, he ordered. "This is not a political convention…"[56] The messengers obeyed, until Smith returned to the podium and they applauded him. One messenger, W. Wayne Dehoney, moved that they vote to make it a unanimous decision. The motion carried.[57] Mainstream journalism attempted to explain how Smith continued to hold office when he was so controversial, with the *Boston Globe* surmising, "The pastor re-elected last week is a good example of the often unsophisticated yet attractive men who usually lead the convention,"[58] and a Dallas broadcaster remarking, "Maybe God doesn't hear the prayers of Jews."[59] At the press conference following his re-election, Smith evaded questions about Jewish prayer and focused

[54]See James L. Franklin, "Southern Baptist Convention and the Quest for Power," *Boston Globe* 14 June 1981, 1; and Frank P. L. Somerville, "Conservative Baptists Hold Control Narrowly," *Baltimore Sun* 11 June 1981, A10.

[55]Helen Parmley, "'Brothers' Resume Mission," *Dallas Morning News* 14 June 1981, 29A.

[56]Video recording of the Southern Baptist Convention, Tuesday afternoon session, 9 June 1981, SBHLA. Observers have seen things somewhat differently. Noting that the SBC presidents are elected at huge conventions by popular vote, "on a scale larger than any other than Christendom" (nearly 41,000 messengers in 1986), and pointing to the preconvention caucuses, dueling factions, computerized ballots, slates of officers, campaign speeches, the resolutions the messengers pass as a kind of "platform," and the Convention Sermon as a "keynote address," Oran P. Smith argues that the SBC is, indeed, political. See Smith, *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism,* 1-6, quotes from 1-2, 6.

[57]Video recording of the Southern Baptist Convention, Tuesday afternoon session, 9 June 1981, SBHLA.

[58]Ibid.

[59]"Baptists Skip Speaker to Get Down to Business," *Dallas Morning News* 13 June 1981, 45A.

on the importance of denominational unity.[60] In general, Southern Baptist concern, on both sides of the conflict, was about the denomination's future, rather than its reputation among outsiders.

The messengers themselves passed resolutions condemning gender discrimination in the workplace, the Moral Majority, any political means of attempting to impose religion on the populace, the Equal Rights Amendment, and anti-Semitism—while a mixture of causes along the spectrum of American politics, one not necessarily an unusual blend for Southern Baptists of that era. They chose not to revise their confessional statement, the Baptist Faith and Message, last modified in 1963.[61]

The ADL was watching closely. They knew that Smith's victory or defeat had a lot to do with their own, in many ways. Moderate Southern Baptists, whatever their relationship with American Jews, were inclined to emphasize neutrality when it came to Israel. In any event, their support, if they did offer it, was not unconditional. Israel was like any other nation in their estimation, rather than a special place deserving of particular protection. God had not conferred some sort of permanent chosenness on the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Israel did not belong to modern Jews by virtue of their being born into Judaism. For an organization that saw mainline Protestants as their new enemies, the moderates in the SBC were included among a branch of Protestantism with whom the ADL found it difficult to work.[62] Going to Israel with Southern Baptist moderates would have been a totally different experience. Hearing

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[60]See Bruce Buursma, "Smith Defeats Southern Baptist Moderates," *Chicago Tribune* 13 June 1981, A17.

[61]Parmley, "'Brothers' Resume Mission," *Dallas Morning News.* The SBC's confessional statement was not revised again until 2000, following the shift to complete conservative control.

[62]It was more than perception to say that the moderates were less supportive of Israel than the conservatives. James Dunn, interview by author, telephone, 15 August 2011.

that Smith had won reelection, the ADL's national chairman, Maxwell Greenberg, sent a note of congratulations. "Dear Bailey," he began, "Dare I say our prayers have been answered?"[63]

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1981 was a good year for Southern Baptists to visit Israel. While Stephen Spector has shown that it was not necessarily Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin's election in 1977 that began the strong alliance between American evangelicals and the government of Israel, the legends surrounding Begin do tell an important story about why his administration, perhaps more than others previously, solidified this strange-bedfellows coalition across national and religious boundaries. Usually, those who study this alliance do trace its origins to Begin. As was the United States in this period, Israel was experiencing a shift in governance spearheaded by religious conservatives, which Begin's election reflects. In some sense, this was the zeitgeist of the late 1970s and early 1980s: Jimmy Carter, "born-again" Southern Baptist, was inaugurated president of the United States in 1977. Mohammad Zia al-Haq's rise to power in Pakistan that year brought with it a revival of Islam. In 1979, Iran's Islamic revolution took place, the same year that Jerry Falwell founded the Moral Majority. Roman Catholic Pope John Paul II helped undo communism in Poland with direct political activism on behalf of the *Solidarnosc* (Solidarity) trade union movement. In India, Hindu nationalism took the stage. As Spector writes, during this period "virtually every serious political conflict in the world involved resurgent fundamentalism, liberation theology, or some other religious influence."[64]

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[63]Maxwell Greenberg, quoted in Ken Demaret, "Top Baptist Bailey Smith Wins Souls—and Raises Hackles," *People Weekly* 8 March 1982, 88.

[64]Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 143.

Begin's overtures to American evangelicals made existing efforts to create the partnership the ADL was assisting the Israeli government to form in the late 1970s and early 1980s visible. In the 1950s, Israel's Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion had met with prominent evangelical pastors W. A. Criswell and Oral Roberts. In 1961, the World Conference of Pentecostals met in Jerusalem in part thanks to Ben-Gurion's encouragement. During the 1960s, Israel's Ministry of Religious Affairs opened a Department of Christian Affairs to deal specifically with Christians, and to study the potential for evangelical support of Jewish control of Israel. Shortly after the Six Day War in 1967, this department sent Yona Malachy, a scholar of Polish origins, to the United States to research Christian attitudes toward Israel. Malachy was an expert in Christian eschatology. He prepared a study detailing which Christian denominations in America were supportive, and which were critical, of the Israeli government, while also pushing American evangelicals he met to go public with their support of Israel as a Jewish state. After Malachy died in 1972, the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at Hebrew University edited his work. It was finally published in 1977, around the time Begin took office, as *American Fundamentalism and Israel: The Relation of Fundamentalist Churches to Zionism and the State of Israel*.[65]

Begin was a Bible scholar who has been reported to have said that, as Spector summarized it, "anyone who reads and believes the Bible cannot be a bad person."[66] He felt he had a lot in common with evangelicals, and was genuinely fond of them. One of his early American allies was Jerry Falwell, who had become, over the course of his career, a staunch,

[65]Ibid., 145.

[66]Ibid., 147.

almost unconditional, supporter of Israel's existence as a Jewish state. Falwell's own rise to prominence made him all the more important to Begin.[67] Yet Begin opened his arms to lesser-known evangelicals as well, often helping to organize package tours for evangelical groups. In 1981, the same year the ADL-SBC working group made its first trip to Israel, Begin convinced David Lewis, an Assemblies of God evangelist based in Springfield, Missouri, to establish his own travel agency to promote evangelical tourism in Israel (Lewis Tours). The early 1980s marked a particularly aggressive wooing of American evangelicals on the part of the Israeli government, bringing hundreds of evangelical pastors over for their own tours of the country at no personal cost to the ministers.[68] It is thus not surprising that, like many of these other tour groups, the ADL-SBC delegation seemed to have an easy time securing meetings with officials high in the Israeli government. Yet their tour, unlike those sponsored by the state, accounted for more than just strengthening ties between American evangelicals and Israel. It hoped to strengthen ties between Southern Baptists and American Jews, and that meant going places neither had gone before. It also made for a somewhat more difficult task than uniting Israeli Jews and American Christians.

Zev Chavets, director of the Government Press Office, was the only American working in the Begin administration. Sometimes, he recalled later, others would look to him for an explanation of Christian Zionists. Chavets was suspicious at first, but warmed up to them slowly, "even if their hypersincerity was a bit off-putting."[69] Eventually he concluded that the

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[67]Ibid., 147-148; and Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon* 218-220.

[68]Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 214, 221-222.

[69]Zev Chavets, *A Match Made in Heaven: American Jews, Christian Zionists, and One Man's Exploration of the Weird and Wonderful Judeo-Evangelical Alliance* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 10.

partnership was good for Israel and good for Jews in general. Yet he noted that other American Jews were not inclined to warm up to evangelicals, "scandalized and outraged" as they were "by the company Begin was keeping":

> Most of the Jewish grandees were liberals who had never met an evangelical Christian and didn't want to. They disagreed with Begin's settlement policy and saw (correctly) that it would lead to a clash with the Carter administration. They were also put off by Begin's European looks and Jewish mannerisms. The Jews of New York and Los Angeles wanted Sabra heroes like the dashing, one-eyed warrior Moshe Dayan. Begin reminded them of their uncle Louie in dry goods.
>
> This didn't bother the evangelicals a bit. Begin suited their notion of what a Jewish prime minister ought to be. He called them "Reverend" and swapped Old Testament quotes with them. The prime minister was a man who divided the world into three parts: Us (the Jews), Them (the gentiles), and Me. He didn't judge Christians by where they went to college, their rural accents, or, for that matter, what political party they belonged to … The Christian Zionists supported Begin's policies, and that was enough.[70]

Chavets noted a distinction between American and Israeli Jews that manifested itself in how Israelis responded to evangelicals, a distinction that Briskman would hit head-on in a subsequent trip to Israel. "The dislike and contempt for evangelical Christians that is so integral to American Jewish cultural and political thinking is almost wholly absent in Israel."[71] But many American Jews did not care if evangelicals offered support of Israel, especially Jews from major population centers that were largely devoid of evangelical influence, viewing them as "Holy Rollers, snake oil salesmen, or KKK night riders, the sort of backward goyim portrayed in films like *Elmer Gantry* and *Inherit the Wind*."

Chavets saw American Jews as tending toward hypocrisy. "Postwar Jewry was big on 'interfaith': marching with Martin Luther King Jr., working with ethnic Catholics in big-city

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[70]Ibid., 11.

[71]Ibid., 17.

Democratic clubhouses, or attending brotherhood hootenannies in the basement of the local Episcopal church. It most certainly didn't approve of cooperating with people who thought that Satan was real, Jesus was coming any day, and angels watched over the world."[72] In other words, most Cold War Judeo-Christian Jews could not make room for people beyond the rubric Judeo-Christianity established. Indeed, the contemporary American press reported on the alliances Israel's government was making with evangelicals in a somewhat bewildered tone, with the *New York Times* reporting on Falwell's receipt of the Vladimir Jabotinsky medal under the headline, "Israel Is Cultivating Some Unlikely New Friends," and the *Washington Post* referring to the relationship as "a bit of summitry that confounds even some of the truest believers."[73]

As he was meeting with a number of prominent evangelicals, Begin agreed to meet with Smith, though fate—or Providence—intervened, and when the group was in Israel, Begin was hospitalized after breaking his leg in a fall. But the ADL-SBC delegation did meet with Israel's president, Yitzhak Navon, as well was Yosef Burg, the Religious Affairs and Interior Minister; former prime minister Yitzhak Rabin; Moshe Arens, Ambassador-designate to the United States, and various other government officials. None ever asked Smith about Jewish prayer, with one official explaining to the *New York Times* that "the matter didn't come up." Israelis were not Judeo-Christians, after all, and had other things on their minds. Instead, the ADL-SBC officials and Navon talked about Israeli society and values. The official also noted that "The Bible was mentioned a lot."[74] Smith later told the *Los Angeles Times* that the media seemed to be the only

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[72]Ibid., 26.

[73]Martin Schram, "Jerry Falwell Vows Amity with Israel," *Washington Post* 12 September 1981, A1; David K. Shipler, "Israel Is Cultivating Some Unlikely New Friends," *New York Times* 1 December 1981, A2.

[74]David K. Shipler, "U.S. Baptist Group Ends Israeli Visit," *New York Times* 10 December 1981, A11.

ones with a continued interest in how his activities might shape his theology of Jewish prayer, noting that during his trip to Israel, only one person who was not a journalist had ever mentioned it.[75]

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The ADL-SBC "study tour" of Israel in December 1981 brought new people into the developing dialogue between the two organizations, a total of 12 Southern Baptists and 8 ADL officials.[76] Among them was Yechiel Eckstein, an Orthodox rabbi originally from Canada who was then employed by the ADL and who has since then frequently (and erroneously) taken credit for starting the entire ADL-SBC interfaith dialogue project. He later founded the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews (now the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews) to encourage and channel American evangelical support of Israel. In 1984, Eckstein wrote that the 1981 trip to Israel was eye-opening, saying "many of my … preconceptions were totally unfounded." Smith, still firm in his theological framework, privately and publicly emphasized his willingness to "go to the death for the right of Jews to pray as they wish." Eckstein's takeaway lesson: "Jews need not create false enemies by lumping all Evangelicals together in one mass stereotype of evil intent."[77] Reflecting on it later, Eckstein told a reporter with the *Chicago Tribune* that the things he learned during this trip to Israel was an example of one of the

[75]Bailey Smith, quoted in Norman Kempster, "U.S. Baptist Learns '10,000% More' about Jews," *Los Angeles Times* 8 December 1981, B4.

[76]Southern Baptist participants included Bailey Smith and his wife, Sandy Smith; Jerry Don Abernathy; Bill Atkinson; Johnny Baker; Harold Bennett; Jimmy Draper; Jerry Hagee; Barry Landrum; Wayne Smith; David Taylor; and Ed Young. See "Week-Long Visit in Israel Doesn't Sway Smith's Theology," *(Oklahoma City) Baptist Messenger* 17 December 1981, 4.

[77]Yechiel Eckstein, *Understanding Evangelicals: A Guide for the Jewish Community* (New York: National Jewish Resource Center, 1984), 28.

main lessons he had learned in his career—that actual, face-to-face conversations change how people think about one another, even if they do not change their religious beliefs. "Change is possible. … We don't want to homogenize faiths. We want Christians to be better Christians and Jews to be better Jews, because if they are, we can perhaps respect and even love each other…"[78] Americans could get along without Judeo-Christianity, he was saying; they just needed a new model for relating.

It may have been Eckstein to whom Smith referred in an interview about his experiences in Israel, when he said, "I sat on a bus last night shoulder to shoulder with an Orthodox rabbi. … He didn't know what we thought a Christian was, and he was just shocked at the answers that I grew up with since I was a kid."[79] Smith said he had learned a few lessons of his own.

> My mistake was that I did not say what I was trying to say then very well. What I was trying to say was that our relationship to God must be through Jesus Christ, and I was wrong in singling out the Jewish people. I do believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. That's my life, and that's what I preach. But I think my statement was not well said. It's a matter of keeping our distinctiveness theologically, but being able to put our arms around a brother in creation.[80]

To do that required personal relationships. "I know 10,000% more about the Jewish community than I did two years ago," Smith said. "I believe the more we know each other, the more we will like each other, and that includes Jews, blacks, Arabs, and others."[81] Overall, Smith looked back on his time in Israel as "a joyful experience in learning."[82] Later, he said that the

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[78]Yechiel Eckstein, quoted in Bruce Buursma, "Chicagoan a Jewish Apostle to Gentiles," *Chicago Tribune* 4 August 1984, 10. This article is one of many in which Eckstein is quoted as having initiated the ADL's contact with Smith.

[79]Shipler, "U.S. Baptist Group," *New York Times*.

[80]Ibid.

[81] Smith, quoted in Kempster, "U.S. Baptist Learns," *Los Angeles Times*.

[82]Bailey Smith, quoted in Kempster, "U.S. Baptist Learns," *Los Angeles Times.*

experiences he had with the ADL had taught him about the diversity of modern Judaism, and of the ways in which Jewish practice had evolved since biblical times. Jewishness was not what he had originally thought.[83]

The ADL, the *New York Times* observed, seemed to be coming to terms with the idea that unfamiliarity with Jews was possible in America on a level they had not previously considered. Southern Baptist isolation from modern Jewish life, as much as anything else, had caused friction. The Judeo-Christian world with which the ADL was so well acquainted was completely foreign to Southern Baptists of the American Southwest. It was not necessary to sound a public alarm when unfortunate comments were made, if one understood the underlying intentions, and that it was entirely possible for a Baptist from the Southwest to have had no understanding of why some comments might upset Jews. Reporters who gathered at a breakfast meeting in Jerusalem took note when Smith unceremoniously put his foot in his mouth yet again during a discussion of a police program in Israel that engraved identification numbers on items likely to be stolen, such as stereos and televisions. One reporter had said there was a policeman who wanted to engrave numbers on everything he owned. Smith joked that one could also engrave numbers on one's arms, so one would not forget who one was. Nobody protested that such a comment could be taken disparagingly among survivors of the Holocaust, which came as a surprise to the reporters there. Later, an ADL official defended Smith to journalists asking for the reason behind the ADL's silence in response, insisting that Smith had not meant to insult anyone and pointing out that after their visit to Yad Vashem (a museum devoted to the Holocaust), Smith had publicly broke down in tears.[84] Theodore Freedman, the ADL's national program

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[83]Bailey Smith, interview by author, Atlanta.

[84]Shipler, "U.S. Baptist Group," *New York Times*.

director, told reporters, "I think Bailey deserves credit for what he has done" in supporting Israel.[85]

Though he was based in New York, where he had been born, Freedman had spent some time in the Southwest as well, both doing a stint as director of the Houston Regional Office for the ADL in the 1960s[86] and getting to know what it meant to be a Southern Baptist in Smith's world in 1981. The week after Passover, he had accepted Smith's invitation to speak from the pulpit of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Oklahoma, during a regular Wednesday evening prayer meeting. Freedman admitted he went to Oklahoma with some nervousness, noting that it was outside his usual Judeo-Christian comfort zone. "Although I have appeared before many Christian church groups and all types of audiences, nothing really prepared me for this address," he wrote. "Even the very pulpit was daunting—in the form of a cross. … There was an air of unreality that made me ask myself: What was a Jew doing on this platform, in the heart of the Bible Belt before a fundamentalist Christian audience?" Freedman had no experience with this world.

Smith had told Freedman he could say whatever he wanted and could talk as long as he liked. Freedman began by talking about "our common scriptures," remarks that elicited unfamiliar "amens" for someone accustomed to "hushed, puritanical religious services in so many other houses of worship." Freedman said Southern Baptists and American Jews were like

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[85]Ibid.

[86]See "Key B'nai B'rith Official Dies Here," *Houston Chronicle* 22 October 1988, A27; and Burnett Roth, in *"Not the Work of a Day: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs"* (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1987), 4:88-89.

Jacob and Esau, divided by time, but could embrace now as they had.[87] Writing about it that summer, Freedman compared First Southern to a small synagogue in Eastern Europe, making sense of the emotionality of the worship service by comparing it to that found in Hasidic congregations. Babies cried, but nobody batted an eye. This was not so unfamiliar after all—nor did it have ominous implications for American Jews. The congregation applauded Freedman's introduction, and then again when he finished speaking. The Smiths took Freedman out for ice cream afterward. Smith waited in line with everyone else, which was notable to Freedman, who seems to have expected Smith to behave more like a powerful figure than an average patron. "It was in keeping with the atmosphere between friends."[88] After their trip to Israel, Freedman told the *Los Angeles Times* that he thought the burden of knowledge was not a one-sided one. Jews, too, had much to learn. "We have an equal responsibility of getting the Jewish community to accept religious diversity without seeing it as a threat."[89] This partnership could be a new ideal for American pluralism to embrace, post-Judeo-Christianity.

Freedman had written down his reflections on the Israel trip for the ADL. He detailed their activities—meetings with religious and political leaders, visits to various historic and other significant sites, and religious services at the Wailing Wall, the West Jerusalem Baptist Church, and a private *havdalah* led by Rabbi David Hartman, a philosophy professor at Hebrew University. He explained how these mutual activities had been enlightening. "There was little

[87]Theodore Freedman, quoted in Marjorie Hyer, "Jewish Leader Addresses Baptists to Diffuse Controversy," *Washington Post* 27 June 1981, C10.

[88]Theodore Freedman, "Bailey Smith's Pulpit Daunts Jewish Speaker," *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, 23 July 1981, 16.

[89]Theodore Freedman, quoted in Kempster, "U.S. Baptist Learns," *Los Angeles Times.*

'dialogue' as we ordinarily think of the word," Freedman wrote. "But dialogue did, in fact, take place—while walking in pairs, in small informal settings when the official meetings were officially over, on the never-ending bus rides, and when we took our meals together." This kind of dialogue—not a formal conference meeting, but one-on-one, face-to-face contact—"was informative, friendly, and revealing, including whether God really does hear the prayers of Jews … even several in this somewhat select group of Baptists privately disagreed [with Smith]." Southern Baptists, it seemed, were a somewhat unpredictable and diverse lot. Even Smith himself did not prove to be as hard-nosed as some participants had envisioned, telling Freedman and others, "there are times that God doesn't hear the prayers of practicing Christians and there are times when God doesn't hear the prayers of Bailey Smith when my heart isn't right." Smith maintained his theological position, but that position appeared less of a threat when better understood—or perhaps when one actually knew the man holding it.[90] To an extent, Freedman was living evidence of Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell's "Aunt Susan Principle," that in general the religious diversity of someone's social contacts tends to lead toward more positive opinions of certain religious groups, especially those most perceived negatively. "When birds of different feathers flock together, they come to trust one another."[91]

The ADL's contingent from Dallas does not seem to have had as much of a learning curve as their New York counterparts. There were things they already knew about Southern Baptists, particularly of the Southwestern variety. They tended to express less surprise about

[90]ADL press release by Theodore Freedman, "Not Just another Pilgrimage," 13 January 1982, Oscar Cohen Papers, Box 23, Folio 2, James Marcus Rader Center of the American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio.

[91]Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 527.

what Southern Baptists were like, as to have confirmed what they already thought. Rabbi Saul Besser of Dallas's Temple Shalom, a Reform congregation, reflected on the trip as a part of an overall experience he had had living among Southern Baptists. "There's an enormous affinity between the Jewish people and the Southern Baptists," he told Michael Precker with the *Dallas Morning News*. "I've learned a lot about faith from them and I think they can learn from us. Our emphasis has always been on works and theirs on faith. Together we can establish what I think God wants from his people—faith and works together."[92] James Draper, a Southern Baptist on the trip, was from the Dallas area and already knew Besser. Draper reported experiencing fewer surprises in that regard as well; his later remembrance of his experiences with the ADL had more to do with observing the internal conflicts among Baptists at the time. He noted that the arguments tended to break out either among Southern Baptists or among Jews, but not between the two. Orthodox and Reform rabbis, he said, had the same kinds of conflicts as conservative and moderate Southern Baptists. Personal relationships made the biggest difference in how people related with one another, whether one took issue with one's co-religionists or with those of another religion.[93]

That is not to suggest that there were not moments of awkwardness or conflict during this trip among those who had forged new friendships. Briskman later remembered Smith's annoyance with him when they visited Beit Hatfutsot (the Museum of the Diaspora; now referred to in English as the Museum of the Jewish People), an activity chosen specifically because of Smith's "funny noses" comment. The museum included photographs of Jews from all over the

[92]Michael Precker, "Baptist Leader Expresses Love for Israel During Tour," *Dallas Morning News* 9 December 1981, 4A.

[93]James Draper, interview by author, Colleyville, Texas.

world, and standing in front of them with Smith, Briskman could not resist taking the opportunity to tell him that he should not joke about Jewish noses. "That basically feeds into the real Jew haters. You know, the stereotype of Jews and noses. And looking through this museum, you see the diversity of shapes of the way Jews look." Smith seemed irritated and embarrassed to Briskman, but the conversation did not cause further tensions. Briskman also recalled how some of the Southern Baptists asked the ADL delegation about the third temple—were they planning to rebuild? When? And would they be sacrificing there? Most of the ADL were unprepared for these questions and had not encountered them before, though it would be a common assumption of many evangelicals. "And Jews just looked at them like they had third heads, like, 'What are you talking about?'"[94] Jews and Judaism were not what the Southern Baptists took them to be, and this realization—that the misconceptions they had were not based so much on a perception of Jews as some sort of threat in the present, but as a relic of the Bible who had remained static—significantly altered the ADL's approach to the Baptists.

Yet even Briskman, with his extensive experience with the Southern Baptists of his regional jurisdiction and the one both sides relied upon as a liaison between them, had a few surprises waiting for him in Israel. Many of the ADL group had never gone to "Christian Israel," and did not expect the Southern Baptists to react as they did to the shrines Catholics had built on various sites. Having seen that there were Catholic churches everywhere, they expressed ever-increasing exasperation. Briskman later remembered their reaction to the Mount of Beatitudes, where Roman Catholics maintain that Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount and have built a chapel: "Oh, the Catholics! They just ruin everything!"[95] Not impressed with the Church of the

[94]Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011.

[95]Ibid.

Holy Sepulture, so much as intensely annoyed that the Catholics had not left things as they were, the group went to an alternate site for the crucifixion, Gordon's Calvary. This was an Israel Briskman had not yet encountered. He began to see how evangelical exclusion from Judeo-Christianity shaped more than just their impressions of Jews, but also of other Christians.

The Southern Baptists on the trip liked things to look old and authentic. Those in the conservative wing of the SBC were especially inclined to value things they viewed as closer to the New Testament era. Tied to their expectation of Jews remaining forever in biblical times, they wanted Christians to preserve their own sites and practices as they had been in the apostolic era. This misperception they had of American Jews as being like their ancient Middle Eastern counterparts may have been indicative of honor and esteem. Briskman was accustomed to the way some Christians showed that they believed a place to be sacred ground by building an elaborate house of worship on it. He was not accustomed to this cherishing of the visibly untouched, unaltered landscape. The Southern Baptists who lamented Catholic shrines were deeply moved by the plain, rocky cliff with tombs below it at Gordon's Calvary. It certainly did not hurt that one can picture a skull in the side of the cliff. This was the evangelical's Golgotha ("place of the skull"), their empty tomb. Theirs was yet another Israel—not the Jewish Israel, and not the Christian Israel Briskman had previously known—a Baptist Israel.[96]

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The ADL showed significant generosity of spirit to the SBC in 1981. Partly tied to their own strategic plans for securing evangelical support of Israel, and deeply intertwined with their new rejection of the Judeo-Christian model, they were willing to accept Southern Baptist

[96]Ibid.

religious exclusivism as a non-threatening theological orientation. They relied upon their existing leadership in the Southwest to forge personal relationships. Face to face contact, rather than institutional structures and policies, was the most helpful in promoting genial feelings. Southern Baptist participants learned that American Jews were a diverse lot who had not simply stepped from the pages of their Bibles, but had developed theologically and sociologically to adapt to their American context. The ADL's New Yorkers learned just as much about Southern Baptists. Their primary lesson was that in areas where one might never have encountered a Jew other than within the pages of the Bible, many concluded that Southern Baptists acted chiefly out of well-meaning ignorance when they made potentially offensive comments. As such, in this particular historical moment, ADL officials tended to choose not to take offense or alert the media, but to quietly offer their own perspective. Meanwhile, Southern Baptists, intent on promoting good relations from a sense of religious duty, were responsive to the ADL's concerns. Smith, for example, has never again made the news for a joke trading on ethnic stereotype. Well-meaning and earnest people on both sides strove to prove to America that getting along did not mean homogenizing differences—that there was a way other than Judeo-Christianity to unify a diverse religious populace.

In the records the ADL has maintained of these dialogue efforts, however, there was little to no reflection on the distinctiveness of Southern Baptist conservatives as residents of the American Southwest; indeed, Southern Baptist conservatives themselves do not tend to view their conflicts with moderates as reflective of regional cultural differences. If anything, Southern Baptists were taken as evangelicals writ large, interchangeable with their counterparts in the New Right. Briskman knew, as perhaps Besser, the Dallas rabbi who joined the ADL-SBC trip to

Israel, also knew, that they were dealing with a diverse group with particularly Southwestern ideals and concerns, but this nuance was lost on the national office.

Perhaps, too, opportunities for true knowing were lost in concentrating their energies in Oklahoma, Texas, and Israel, places where Jews tended to behave somewhat differently and to hold somewhat different attitudes toward conservative evangelicals than their counterparts in the American northeast. Friendships do develop most easily among people with geographic proximity to one another, but the kind of Jewishness that Smith came to know best was a non-Judeo-Christian Jewishness already quite comfortable among evangelicalism, whether in Texas or in Israel. Had the ADL focused more, as Briskman had hoped, on generating better relationships among American Jews and Southern Baptists on a larger scale, and not so unilaterally on securing political support for the modern state of Israel, they might have worked harder to introduce Southern Baptists to the centers of American Jewish life, and vice versa. One cannot know what might have happened had Texans taken extended trips to New York, or if the New Yorkers those hypothetical Texans came to meet had spent a few weeks in the Southwest. In the end, those involved did generate warmer feelings and better understanding on an individual level, but those feelings did not translate to broad organizational policy shifts, nor did they change dominate attitudes and perceptions among those who did not participate in the dialogue. If one tells a story about this handful of people, one can tell a generally happy one, but this handful of people had connections to much larger groups. Briskman and Smith became friends, as did Besser and Draper, but the ultimate impact of these friendships seems to have been negligible.

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Meanwhile, Israeli Baptists had their own hopes of educating Smith. They argued that visits to places like Gordon's Calvary did not actually reveal Baptist Israel—for there was a modern Baptist Israel, after all. These Baptists were worried that Smith was too quick to side with Israel's government or with Jews. Near Tel Aviv, Smith met with 32 Southern Baptist representatives who lived in Israel. They urged him to be cautious in siding with any particular group, citing their efforts among both Jews and Arabs. Arabs, too, were important to God, they said. The president of the SBC and the rest of the SBC delegation touring Israel should not appear to make political alliances "which be considered as turning their backs on the Arabs in favor of the Jews."[97] Baptists in Israel reported experiencing their own struggles in dealing with discrimination on the part of the government, which did not guarantee them religious freedom.[98] Yet for the most part, there was little discussion among the ADL-SBC travel group of what it meant to be a religious minority in Israel, and what responsibility, if any, the United States in general and American Jews in particular might have toward Israeli Baptists. The focus was on how relationships among Americans could generate support for Israel. Thus, in addition to a lack of attention to the distinctiveness of regional cultures, there was a sense in which the "other" Israel Briskman had found (Christian Israel) was problematic for many in the ADL. Efforts to promote the support of Israel were not, in most of its members' minds, an effort to support all who lived there. Certainly, one does not find in the ADL's literature of this period a championing of the religious liberty of all within Israel's borders—the focus is on the need to maintain a Jewish state. Their own Texas delegation may have viewed demonstrating solidarity with Christian concerns in the country as the best means of securing Jewish safety, but as later events

[97]"Israelis Propose Baptist Center in Jerusalem," *(Dallas) Baptist Standard* 23 December 1981, 5.

[98]"Baptists Struggle for Freedom in Israel," *(Dallas) Baptist Standard* 8 September 1982, 24.

revealed, most had not considered the possibility of their evangelical allies seeking their help to protect their Israeli counterparts. Though this did not hinder relationships at the time, it perhaps foreshadowed the later crumbling of their ability to work together.

CHAPTER FIVE:

TOO MUCH HIP HIP HOORAY FOR POLITICAL ISRAEL

> *Though I am appreciative of B'nai B'rith and the Israeli government for their willingness to host a group of Southern Baptists, I am uncomfortable with that arrangement.* [1]
>
> --*C. Welton Gaddy*

In June of 1982, as Bailey Smith finished his second and final term, fellow 1981 ADL-SBC traveler to Israel James ("Jimmy") Draper ran for president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) against the retired president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), Duke McCall (no relation to Baylor University president Abner McCall who had run against Smith in the previous year). SBTS, located in Louisville, Kentucky, was one major focus of conservative concern. Its students appeared heretical to the conservatives, evidence of the dangers of allowing those who did not affirm biblical inerrancy to teach in Southern Baptist schools. One conservative publication accused Duke McCall's seminary of teaching atheism. McCall was seen as the "epitome of liberalism," as a reporter for Birmingham's *Alabama Baptist* explained it.[2] The *Chicago Tribune* referred to McCall as someone who "scandalized the

[1]C. Welton Gaddy, quoted in "'Moderate' Pastor Withdraws from Trip," *(Louisville, Kentucky) Western Recorder* 27 October 1982, 7.

[2]Jack Brymer, "Messengers Flex Muscles, Show Who Controls SBC," *(Birmingham) Alabama Baptist* 24 June 1982, 1. SBTS had become a special focus with the publication of a Th.M. thesis that revealed a correlation between the length of time a student spent at SBTS and a decline in said student's orthodoxy. Gregory A. Willis discusses this issue in *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 434. See also Noel Wesley Hollyfield, Jr., "A Sociological Analysis of the Degrees of 'Christian Orthodoxy' among Selected Students in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," Th.M. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 1976. Willis also provides detail on the McCall presidency of SBTS and the controversies surrounding him.

denomination's biblical inerrancy advocates," quoting him as saying, "If God had thought I needed an inerrant, infallible, verbally inspired copy of the Bible, He would have preserved the original text on a golden tablet."[3]

Again, it is worth emphasizing that the "liberalism" of which conservatives accused their moderate opponents would have looked pretty theologically orthodox to those outside Southern Baptist culture. As James Hefley, a conservative who tried to give a more journalistic than hagiographical account of the so-called "Battle of New Orleans," wrote in 1986, the charge of "liberalism" related only to questions of the inerrancy of the Bible. "No SBC conservative of respect accuses denominational moderates in general of classic liberalism: denying the divine authority of Scripture; the sinfulness and the lostness of man; the deity, virgin birth, atonement, and bodily resurrection of Christ; salvation by grace through faith; Heaven and Hell; and eternal security in Christ."[4] Still, in those uncertain times, rumors circulated about McCall within conservative circles, spread primarily through a conservative tabloid, the *Southern Baptist Journal*, with completely unfounded claims that teetotaler McCall drank heavily.[5] It was a close race, the first one in four years that required a runoff election. In the end, Draper won with about

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[3]Bruce Buursma, "Fight Seen at Baptist Talks," *Chicago Tribune* 12 June 1982, B6. This was almost undoubtedly a reference to Mormonism, which SBC literature characterized as a cult. See Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 193.

[4]James Carl Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Dallas: Criterion Publications, 1986), 32.

[5]The *Southern Baptist Journal* accused McCall of alcoholism and of having become intoxicated while on a mission trip to China. McCall responded to the rumors, saying he was a lifelong teetotaler, and pointed out that he had once served as the president of a temperance society. He had gotten dehydrated on a river boat in China with only two choices of liquid: tea or beer. His cardiologist had instructed him to abstain from caffeine, so, facing this choice, he tried to drink the beer. Unaccustomed to its bitter taste, McCall had only managed to swallow one mouthful, but the incident had served as a humorous anecdote about his "drinking problem" among him and his friends. See Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis*, 89.

57 percent of the vote going head to head with McCall's 43 percent.[6] Paige Patterson, present as a messenger, asked to be recognized on a "point of personal privilege" at the conclusion of the meeting, and publicly apologized to McCall for the rumors.[7]

Draper's family had deep roots in Arkansas, where four generations of Baptist Drapers had left their mark. His parents had lived in Texas for most of his childhood, with only a brief sojourn in Arkansas during Draper's primary school days. In a revival service in East Texas in his early teens, Draper professed a calling to the ministry. He began travelling as an itinerant preacher in high school and had his first church to pastor at the age of 20.[8] His subsequent pastorates had included churches in Texas and Missouri before he became Smith's predecessor at First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Oklahoma, in 1970. A few years later, he attracted the attention of First Baptist Church, Dallas, after leading a retreat for adults. The church's pastor, W. A. Criswell, was thinking ahead to his retirement and said he wanted to bring in an associate pastor who would potentially take over for him when the time came for him to step down. Draper accepted a job offer from Dallas's First Baptist in 1974. Although popular among the congregation, Draper faced continual conflicts with factions of First Baptist in Dallas. In particular, Draper's biographer contends, Criswell's wife resented Draper's presence and spread rumors that Draper was trying to steal her husband's job by attempting to get the congregation to oust the senior pastor in favor of the popular associate. Draper sought a more peaceful place to work, and became the pastor of nearby First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, in 1975.

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[6]See George W. Cornell, "Conservative to Head Southern Baptists," 16 June 1982, A16.

[7]Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis*, 92.

[8]John Perry, *Walking God's Path: The Life & Ministry of Jimmy Draper* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 33-44.

Draper was an avowed conservative, but most saw him as a diplomat who could and would ease tensions between conservatives and moderates. It appeared that Draper was a collegial sort who would work with the moderate faction to ensure their concerns were heard and addressed. In retrospect, some say that Draper was the most moderate of the conservative presidents elected during the Controversy. Draper attempted to bridge divides. Having experienced his fill of what he saw as unnecessary bickering as the associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas,[9] Draper was inclined to seek cordial relations where possible. Scholar Barry Hankins has written that Draper's SBC presidency was the least contentious of all administrations during the Controversy.[10] Both moderates and conservatives tend to agree that Draper made significant strides toward bridging divides.[11] Contrasting Smith's outgoing comments with Draper's responses to reporter's questions as the new president is evidence of this fact. Smith asserted that the SBC had no room for anyone who was not a biblical inerrantist. Several secular newspapers, including the *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, quoted Smith: "No one in hell is glad that he went to a liberal church."[12] Meanwhile, Draper urged the battling

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[9]Dallas's First Baptist Church and its Pastor Criswell made for a combination formidable to any other minister seeking to find room to work. See Joel Gregory, *Too Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America's Super Church* (Fort Worth: Summit Group, 1994); and Perry, *Walking God's Path*, 120-133.

[10]Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 110. See also Timothy Owings, "A Church-State Marriage which Tempts Some," (Lousiville, Kentucky) *Western Recorder* 23 March 1983, 4.

[11]For a conservative account, see Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 125-140. For a moderate account, see Cecil Sherman, "An Overview of the Moderate Movement," in *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement*, ed. Walter Shurden (Macon, Georgia: Mercer Univeristy Press, 1993), 24-25. Here, Sherman says that he thinks Draper was just putting on a front to ease moderates into complacency, but nonetheless does note a significant difference in tone between most conservatives and Draper.

[12]Charles Austin, "Southern Baptists' Leader Assails Moderates," *New York Times* 15 June 1982; and Buursma, "Fight Seen," *Chicago Tribune* 12 June 1982. See also George W. Cornell, "Conservative to Head Southern Baptists," *Washington Post* 16 June 1982, A16.

factions of the SBC to communicate better. "We've been shooting at each other," he said. "The most critical issue is to learn to communicate with each other, to talk and listen to each other. … I hope … we can relax and trust each other again." In contrast to Smith, Draper said he believed that those who did not hold the inerrantist view of the Bible or who did not interpret the Bible literally had a place in the denomination. "I just don't want them ridiculing those who do," he said,[13] perhaps a reference to McCall's sarcastic rhetoric.

For the ADL as well as SBC conservatives, Draper's election was probably a cause for relief, whether or not they recognized it as such at the time. Had McCall taken office, he would have been likely to have nurtured friendly relationships with American Jews, but according to the more Judeo-Christian way of the American Jewish Committee (AJC). During McCall's presidency, the AJC had come to Southern Seminary for a groundbreaking interfaith dialogue conference, the first of its kind on a national level, in 1969.[14] As has been discussed earlier, the AJC's methods inclined toward intellectual pursuits and scholarly reflection that might bring about slow theological change,[15] while the ADL favored more pragmatic, and in some ways more aggressive, alliance-building for Israel without attempting to alter theology. If anything, the ADL found the conservative theological position useful for its goals. Their approach tended to praise conservative evangelical support of Israel as deriving from a commitment to certain interpretations of the Bible that gave Jews the ownership of the land there forever. They had the expectation that the SBC's membership tended to interpret the Bible in the same way as

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[13]James Daper, quoted in Frank P. L. Somerville, *Baltimore Sun*, 19 June 1982, A14.

[14]See "2 Religions Join in First Meeting," *New York Times* 24 August 1969, 48.

[15]For example, see John Dart, "Jews, Evangelical Protestants Hold Dialog for Understanding," *Los Angeles Times* 10 January 1971, C1.

prominent evangelicals like John Hagee.[16] Yet SBC moderates, especially those of the SBTS variety, were far less likely to support Israel in this way; indeed, with respect to Israel, they looked a lot more like the mainline Protestants Perlmutter had felt had betrayed him.[17] None of this should suggest that SBC conservatives gave unconditional support to Israel; indeed, they did not (the nuances of which seem to have been somewhat lost for the ADL). Yet they were more inclined to be outspoken in their support of Israel so long as doing so would not compromise SBC missions among Arabs in the Middle East, and as long as Israel extended religious liberty to Christians and others living within its borders. The key difference between SBC moderates and conservatives was whether or not they believed they were *religiously* bound to support Israel, as opposed to supporting Israel as they would any other nation under similar circumstances. SBC conservatives felt that God's dictates were clear, and that they should support Israel, on that basis. One tends not to find them criticizing Israeli occupation of the West Bank or the Gaza strip, for example, because they see those areas as places Israel must possess by divine right and in fulfillment of prophecy. They might, however, criticize Israel's policies if Palestinians living in the occupied areas were not granted religious freedom.

SBC moderates saw things differently. "We who love the Book and dare to proclaim its gospel," one Kentucky pastor warned, "must be very careful in how we relate to the state of Israel. Nowhere in God's word does it teach, admonish or advise anyone to support the state of Israel. We would do well in our Bible study and theological reflections to remember that God

[16]Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 4 April 2011. See more on Hagee below.

[17]See chapter three.

would have us pray for 'all persons everywhere.'"[18] Another moderate pastor turned down an invitation to visit Israel with the ADL, on the grounds that doing so would make it appear he supported Israel and its government, when he was in reality quite disturbed by Israel's policies. "Though I am appreciative of B'nai B'rith and the Israeli government for their willingness to host a group of Southern Baptists, I am uncomfortable with that arrangement," the pastor, C. Welton Gaddy, wrote in his church newsletter.

> Many of Israel's military actions and policy decisions within the immediate past are simply indefensible (and reprehensible) in my opinion. I do not feel good about any identification with Israel, overt or implied, which could be misinterpreted as support for such strategies. That is simply a matter of conscience.[19]

The SBC's election of a conservative from Texas was probably the best thing that could have happened in furthering the ADL's goal of more closely connecting the SBC with support of the modern state of Israel, considering tepidness of some of the more moderate messengers toward the idea. In addition to their differing opinions about Israel, the moderates had made other connections with American Jews, but not within the ADL. The relationships the AJC had fostered in the Old South were the main contacts that moderates had among American Jews, in a region culturally separate from the SBC's conservative power bloc in the Southwest. They had particularly close contact with the faculty and administration of SBTS. The ADL, on the other hand, had cultivated its relationships within Mark Briskman's territory, in north Texas and Oklahoma. It so happened that Draper lived in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex not far from

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[18]Timothy Owings, "A Church-State Marriage which Tempts Some," *(Louisville, Kentucky) Western Recorder* 23 March 1983, 4.

[19]C. Welton Gaddy, quoted in "'Moderate' Pastor Withdraws from Trip," *(Louisville, Kentucky) Western Recorder* 27 October 1982, 7.

Briskman. Draper was pastor of the First Baptist Church in Euless, a Fort Worth suburb. Euless is one of the "Mid-Cities," a clump of suburban towns running the thirty-mile span between Dallas and Fort Worth, a reasonable driving distance from Briskman's home in the Dallas suburb of Plano. Thus, Briskman could continue to hold the reigns of the interfaith dialogue between the ADL and SBC conservatives, though he later said he did not want to be the one to do it. He was aware that the president of the SBC would not always be in his region, and wanted to use this time to shift the responsibility to the national office.[20]

Region mattered more than perhaps either organization could have realized, as has already been discussed in the previous chapter. Geography became a major factor in the dialogue following Smith's SBC presidency. Theological differences remained as before, and were an expected point of divergence, but events during Draper's presidency would bring strain to the relationship over the presumed points of mutual agreement about religious liberty and American ideals. Indeed, the ADL had taken advantage of the SBC conservatives' belief in biblical inerrancy to push them to give unequivocal support for Israel; having an understanding that without their theology they would not be as useful allies meant that in general the ADL was inclined to favor Protestant conservatism over the mainline denominations, so the theological divide was not the primary source of conflict. Yet the ADL tended to see the SBC conservatives as interchangeable with Protestant Fundamentalists writ large, and did not give too much thought to their nuanced views on church and state and how that might relate to Israel.[21]

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[20]Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 11 April 2011.

[21]See, for example, the reflections of Mayer U. Newfield, an ADL official from Birmingham, who had attended Howard College (now Stamford University), a Southern Baptist institution, and consistently reported experiencing no discrimination among Southern Baptists: "In general, I would say that there is a very strong pro-Israel feeling among the entire white population in Alabama, and a much more positive one than I apprehend exists in general in other parts of the country. I think it is stronger in the South. I think perhaps this is a natural carry-

Meanwhile, as the membership of the SBC fought amongst themselves about what it meant to support religious liberty and the merits of an alliance with Israel, the ADL itself faced an identity crisis for some of the same reasons. Many within the ADL leadership began speaking out against the new strategy of the organization to focus exclusively on the rights of Jews and to seek unqualified support for the Jewish government of Israel under the banner of fighting the "new anti-Semitism," a sign that the ADL was as uncertain as the SBC about its proper relationship with Israel. A look at the internal conflicts the SBC and ADL had over the core ideals that supposedly united the two groups reveals that such a partnership was inherently a tenuous one, since many within each organization were not so sure that the multicultural pluralism the ADL-SBC dialogue offered as a replacement for the Cold War's Judeo-Christianity was really sustainable. In fighting over what it really meant to be Baptist or Jewish, they were also indirectly fighting over whether the ADL-SBC alliance in support of Israel and religious freedom could truly make sense in terms of each side's religious identity. In rejecting Judeo-Christianity as a religious system, the dialogue participants still hoped to unite as Americans who held common ideals, yet religious identity shapes understanding of national values as well in ways they did not consider. Americans ought to be pro-democracy, anti-communist, and supportive of minority rights (as the two groups understood it). But what is democracy, and how is "minority" defined? Is the American ideal of religious liberty universal, or does it only make

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through of the kind of feeling which has existed in the South toward Jews by the basically Anglo-Saxon white population. … Part of this may be attributable to the very strong fundamentalist group which exists in the South and which is very strong. The Jews are regarded as God's chosen people, and there is a covenant which makes clear that if you harm the Jewish people, God will look upon you with disfavor. I think it is particularly evident in the South among the more fundamentalist groupings, of which, of course, in Alabama, the Baptist is the largest denomination." Mayer U. Newfield, *"Not the Work of a Day": The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs*, (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1987), 4:46. See also Burnett Roth, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 4:139.

sense in America? Disagreement over Israel, in ways perhaps neither the ADL nor the SBC appreciated, proved to highlight profound internal conflicts within both organizations about their respective missions and futures.

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Although it was not the main focus of the SBC's messengers (or really an official topic of discussion at all), journalists at the press conference Draper gave following his victory did want to know what the new leader thought about Jewish prayer. It had been on their minds for the whole Convention, according to reporter Sylvia Hart. The president of the Religious News Service, Ben Kaufman, joked with other writers covering the SBC meeting, responding to their teasing by assuring them that God did, indeed, hear his Jewish prayers.[22] Draper's answer to the question, that "God is aware of all prayers of all people" while granting salvation only to born-again Christians,[23] was not the stuff of international controversy, and Draper would ultimately end up generating less media attention than his predecessor. Although he was involved in interfaith dialogue activities with the ADL at least as much as Smith, there are far fewer records of this in both religious and secular media. For most of those who focused their attention on Draper during his tenure as SBC president, the concern was about the denomination's internal conflicts, not its relationship to outsiders. Nonetheless, Draper's presidency was probably at least as significant as Smith's for the ADL's dialogue with Southern Baptists, if not for Draper himself so much as the events that took place under his watch.

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[22]Sylvia Hart, "Who Were Reporters of Baptist Convention," *Mobile (Alabama) Register* 29 June 1982, 10-A.

[23]Bruce Buursma, "New Southern Baptist Leader Calls for Unity," *Chicago Tribune* 17 June 1982, 12.

While the change of administrations was smooth and generally matter-of-course, a few unprecedented incidents did occur at the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans that year. The first was that Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin made a direct plea to SBC through its newly-elected president. Begin called Draper to urge him not to forget Israel, "the land the Jews have rebuilt," and invited Draper to visit. This was, as many noted, a new move. The Israeli government had never reached out directly to the SBC's annual meeting.[24] In response or simply spontaneously, James DeLoach of Texas presented a proposed resolution for the messengers to discuss, in support of Israel.[25]

Debate over proposed "Resolution No. 4: On Support of Israel" revealed the lack of consensus among Southern Baptists on the issue. As originally proposed, the resolution would have expressed "strong and prayerful support of Israel in this hour of their great need," urged the U.S. president and Congress to take action to publicly declare American commitment to ensuring that Israel would "dwell secure in her own land," and asserted that the modern state of Israel was a fulfillment of prophecy ("a part of God's completion of all things"). It also would have attributed increases in American and European anti-Semitism to a decline in support for Israel,[26] a correlation the ADL had been publicizing for a few decades. Norris Snydor, a messenger from Maryland, moved its adoption after DeLoach's introduction. Georgia messenger Thomas H. Conley proposed a revision to the resolution warning, "that this resolution in no way condones

[24]"Don't Forget Israel, Begin Tells Baptists," *Los Angeles Times* 17 June 1982, A2. See also Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* (1982), 52.

[25]Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* (1982), 31.

[26]"Baptists Ignore Begin, Deny Support to Israel," *Chicago Tribune* 18 June 1982, 16.

Israel's recent invasion of Lebanon …"[27] Timothy Owings, a North Carolina minister, urged the messengers not to pass any resolution favoring Israel at all, even with disclaimers. W. W. Finlator, also of North Carolina, presented an alternative amendment, saying that the messengers "in full support of the concept of Israel as a people and a land, call upon the United States and all international bodies to recognize[,] support and preserve the right to existence of Israel as a nation." G. Allen West of Kentucky spoke out against Finlator's amendment, and moved that Resolution No. 4 be referred to the Committee on Resolutions. The Committee returned after its deliberations and tabled all discussion for the following year. Perhaps exhausted of the prolonged discussion Kentucky's Southern Baptist newspaper would later call "spirited debate" of a "volatile statement," the messengers approved West's suggestion.[28] Begin and the ADL would have to wait until 1983 to find out what the SBC might officially say about Israel.

Another change of course occurred with the messengers' vote on a resolution dealing with prayer in public schools.[29] Some saw the vote, declaring support for Ronald Reagan's proposal to amend the United States Constitution to allow "voluntary prayer" in the nation's classrooms, as a departure "from traditional Baptist stands on the separation of church and state," as the *Los Angeles Times* referred to it.[30] Yet the media gave little attention to another resolution the same messengers approved, condemning the use of tax credits to fund religious education. Among their reasons were the fact that "most private elementary and secondary schools are

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[27]Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* (1982), 55.

[28]"Pro-Israel Resolution to be Reintroduced at SBC," *(Louisville) Western Recorder* 9 February 1982, 3. See also Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* (1982), 55, 64.

[29]"The Conventions," *Washington Post* 19 June 1982, B6.

[30]Russell Chandler, "New Leader of Baptists Seeks to end Factional War," *Los Angeles Times* 19 June 1982, B6. See also "Baptists Ignore Begin," *Chicago Tribune* 18 June 1982, 16.

related to churches and exist to serve the religious mission of sponsoring churches" and that it posed a potential "threat to the principle of separation of church and state."[31] "Resolution No. 9: On Prayer in Schools" gestured to the principle as well, asserting "the proposed [U.S. Constitutional] amendment does not constitute a call for government-written or government-mandated prayer," and that the amendment contained "no violation of either of those ideals [of disestablishment or free exercise] inherent in the separation of church and state" partly on the basis that it "neither requires nor restricts the vocal expression of individual or group prayer."[32] Those who advocated Reagan's school prayer amendment tended to assert that it was necessary to do so to preserve the Baptist principle of separation of church and state. Resolution No. 9 was a departure from the SBC's previous resolutions on the issue and does reflect a shift in the way the denomination approached church and state, but rather than a reversal of principle, was instead a change in emphasis.

While school prayer did not show up in the records of the discussions between the ADL and SBC consulted for this study (a possible reason why later church-state conflicts were a bit of a surprise to dialogue participants), the issue is one that is revealing of the way the ADL and the SBC approached the issue of separation of church and state in the late twentieth century, and is worth discussing here, because it relates to how Southern Baptists viewed both Israel and America. The United States Supreme Court's 6-1 decision in the 1962 case *Engel v. Vitale* ruled a non-denominational prayer unconstitutional as a violation of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. In 1963, in *Abington v. Schempp*, the Court ruled that voluntary recitation

[31]Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* (1982), 62.

[32]Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* (1982), 58.

of the Lord's Prayer and Bible reading were also unconstitutional on the same grounds. Congress spent the next few decades attempting to circumvent these rulings by constitutional amendment. Regan, as noted earlier, made it part of his campaign platform that he would push for a constitutional amendment allowing voluntary school prayer. As a candidate, he had told reporters, "I don't think this particular court decision is actually a proper law of the land."[33] Yet by then, as Lawrence J. McAndrews has noted, popularity for proposed constitutional amendment was waning somewhat, and it was ultimately an unsuccessful effort. The SBC's messengers probably had school prayer on their minds that summer because Senator Strom Thurmond, a Republican from South Carolina, had introduced Reagan's proposed amendment to the Senate about a month before, on May 18. Both editorial pages in the nation's newspapers and debate in Congress and the Senate identified the issue as conflict over what was truly the *American* way of doing things.[34]

Southern Baptists discussed the relationship of the amendment to American values only as an aside. For them, this was a question of what the *Baptist* way was. Just as they had when labeling their opponents as "fundamentalists" or "liberals", both sides of the conservative-moderate conflict misrepresented the other when they asserted that they were upholding the true Baptist way. Conservative Southern Baptists, in their secular politics, tended to go the way of the Republicans, while their moderate counterparts went the way of the Democrats, but this is not because they had a fundamental disagreement about the proper relationship between church and

[33]Carl P. Leubsdorf, "Cornerstone of Reagan Election Appeal is Promised Return to 'Good Old Days,'" *Baltimore Sun* 30 April 1980, A1.

[34]Lawrence J. McAndrews, "'Moral' Victories: Ronald Reagan and the Debate over School Prayer," *Religion & Education* 30, no. 1 (January-April 2003): 92-107.

state or about Christian morality, but because they saw threats to the Southern Baptist value of "soul freedom"[35] in different areas. As Barry Hankins notes, with respect to Southern Baptists and church and state, "Nuance, once again, is the first casualty of culture war."[36]

In his study of Southern Baptist views of church, state, and culture, Hankins found that both Republicans and Democrats within the denomination held similar ideas about the role of religion in government. For the conservatives, this meant that their alliance with the Christian Right in the 1980s was something of a strange-bedfellows coalition, because, analogous to the analysis of Smith's views in the first chapter, they have a different conception of the ideal relationship between religion and government than do others who were involved in the New Right.[37] Southern Baptist conservatives stopped using the term "separation of church and state" to describe their opinions because of the ways moderate Southern Baptists used it, preferring to refer to this value as "religious liberty." Moderates accuse conservatives of being Christian Reconstructionists, while conservatives levy the charge of intent to advance secularism against the moderates. Neither paints an accurate picture.

Paige Patterson, a major figure in the denomination's conservative movement, told Hankins that the mistake they had made was in failing to clarify that they were not rejecting separation of church and state—a principle that, as Baptists, they held as paramount—but instead a particular view of what separation of church and state should look like.[38] Southern Baptist

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[35]For an explanation of the meaning of this term, see chapter two.

[36]Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon*, 115.

[37]Ibid., 108.

[38]Ibid., 116.

conservatives remain vehemently opposed to the establishment of a state religion, but believe there is no danger of one developing in the United States. Rather, they see the danger as hostility toward religion being nurtured by the government.[39] In a later interview, Draper said he thought the ideal relationship between church and state is one in which there is "mutual respect, and basically [they should] stay out of each other's business." The government's role with respect to religion is not to "dictate it, or require it, nor interfere with it." Individuals should have an influence on public policy, but churches themselves should not. "I don't think our church ought to be a political entity."[40] Richard Land, recent head of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, the SBC agency most directly engaged with political issues, has said that he actually did support the Supreme Court in ending state-sponsored prayer in public schools, citing his concerns about his Jewish classmates being asked to recite the Lord's Prayer. "Christ was not their Lord," he said he had thought, and his childhood pastor agreed that children should not be coerced in this way.[41] Land was definitely not on board with the Cold War's Judeo-Christianity. But later Land said that he had developed concern about the way Americans thought about separation of church and state, beginning, in his opinion, with John F. Kennedy's campaign for president. Kennedy should not have been forced to say that he would not be influenced by his personal religious beliefs in order to be elected. As Hankins summarized Land's position, "It had become illegitimate for a public figure to admit that his or her views were shaped or even influenced by religion." This was the main issue—suddenly religion was something one had to

[39]Ibid., 120.

[40]Jimmy Draper, interview by author, Colleyville, Texas.

[41]Richard Land, quoted in Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon*, 122.

keep entirely to oneself if one wanted to hold public office, or if one attended a public school, a move Land saw as a violation of the principle of individual religious liberty.[42]

Yet James Dunn, whose name later became shorthand for Southern Baptist "liberalism" among conservative circles,[43] saw things differently—not because at heart he viewed church and state itself in a radically different way than the conservatives, but because of the areas he chose to emphasize. Dunn was no fan of Judeo-Christianity, either. Dunn spent his career focused on church-state issues, first as the director of the Southern Baptists' Texas Christian Life Commission in Dallas, and then as executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (BJC), a Washington-based lobbying group the SBC then funded along with other Baptist groups in the United States. In Texas, Dunn's causes showed his commitment to the kind of morality taken for granted among Southern Baptists, lobbying against legalized gambling and liquor-by-the-drink. These were issues that seemed to have compelling secular rationales for government intervention, as Dunn saw it. Meanwhile, although opposed to abortion on moral grounds, Dunn was against placing too many legal restrictions on the procedure, citing the importance of the state remaining disentangled from matters of individual conscience. Dunn professed similar views about homosexuality and gay rights.[44]

Dunn was passionately opposed to SBC Resolution No. 9. One of his main concerns was that having school prayer would give legitimacy, in the eyes of schoolchildren, to non-Christian prayers. During the SBC meeting, Dunn rose to give his report for the BJC, and warned that

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[42]Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon*, 122.

[43]Paige Patterson, interview by author, Fort Worth, 3 August 2011.

[44]Aaron Douglas Weaver, *James M. Dunn and Soul Freedom* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 1-33.

Reagan's proposed amendment would "give sanction" to non-Christian prayers, especially in areas where Christian children might be outnumbered (as such a system tended to favor the majority religion): "Buddhist prayers in Hawaii, Mormon prayers in Utah, and Muslim prayers in the Bronx."[45] Dunn was less worried about the American way than the Baptist way, and accused SBC conservatives of losing their Baptist identity. As Aaron Douglas Weaver summarizes Dunn's position, they "were Baptists but not *real* Baptists."[46] Prayer itself was at stake, as was the faith of America's children. "School 'praying' can work like a flu shot," Dunn wrote. "An inoculation of diluted deism can make some children immune, or at least resistant, to real religion."[47]

It is worth noting that, in contrast to many in the New Right, these Southern Baptist conservatives were insistent that they were in favor of genuine *religious* liberty, writ large, versus the right to *Christian* practice. They were also as completely out of step with Judeo-Christianity as their Southern Baptist moderate counterparts. Dunn seems to have understood this, or he would not have gone on and on about how their position would confuse people about the nature of true religion by allowing state-sanctioned non-Christian prayers. Land, as discussed above, worried about Jewish children being asked to recite the Lord's Prayer, which he saw as a violation of their right to religious liberty. (There could be no "Judeo-Christian" prayer.) In a later interview, Patterson said that a government that prevented people from converting to Buddhism would be violating human rights to freedom of conscience. Specifically, Israel's

[45]Dunn, quoted in Weaver, *James M. Dunn*, 97.

[46]Weaver, *James M. Dunn*, 95.

[47]Dunn quoted in Weaver, *James M. Dunn*, 97.

government, he said, deserved vehement criticism on these grounds.[48] Smith, as many in the ADL found astonishing, continually asserted his willingness to fight to the death to defend the rights of Jews to practice Judaism in the United States.[49] Not merely as a strategic way of working within American constitutional law, Southern Baptist conservatives insisted that prayer be entirely voluntary and student-led, with every student having an equal right to engage in public prayer regardless of said student's religious affiliation. Teachers, as employees of the state in a position of authority, could not lead these prayers. Hankins summarized Land: "Baptists and Buddhists, Mormons and Methodists, and even adherents of the goddess Gaea will have their day to lead the class in prayer." (Still, as others note, this would result in a sort of neoestablishment, since it would mean that for every minority prayer heard, many Christian prayers would be endured.)[50] The SBC's confessional statement, "The Baptist Faith and Message [BFM] of 1963," which the messengers voted not to amend in 1982, was amended in 2000 by a denomination in full conservative control to reflect their views on biblical inerrancy, but the BFM 2000 repeats the section on "Religious Liberty" from the BFM 1963 verbatim:

> God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church

[48]Paige Patterson, interview by author, Fort Worth.

[49]See previous chapter.

[50]Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon*, 149.

> in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.[51]

Still, it is worth noting that these shifting emphases have also brought changes in the way Southern Baptist laity and the clergy of a younger generation think about church and state and express their views. Smith's son, Steven, now the dean of a Southern Baptist college affiliated with Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, attended Jerry Falwell's Liberty University and says he has been influenced by the way Falwell viewed the role of religion in government.[52] In Susan Shaw's interviews with twenty-first-century Southern Baptist laywomen, she found that many were extremely uncomfortable with the term "separation of church and state." They also tend to claim that American government has Christian foundations, and that Christian morality should be the basis of law. Still, there were echoes of the traditional Southern Baptist ideal in much of what they said, and some still advocated separation of church and state as an important theological distinctive. "I do not want a church state, because religion ultimately gets raped in that," Nancy Moore told Shaw. "You don't want to say, 'This is Christian,' because America is composed of a lot of different religions. … [W]e can't ignore the citizens who are of other faiths."[53] For Southern Baptists in 1982, however, the principle being advocated was still separation of church and state, and religious liberty for all under a neutral government, and the principle itself was relatively uncontroversial in denominational circles. Tellingly, this principle

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[51]See Southern Baptist Convention "Comparison of 1925, 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message," http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfmcomparison.asp, access date 6 June 2012.

[52]Steven Smith, interview by author, Fort Worth, 28 July 2011.

[53]Nancy Moore, quoted in Susan Shaw, *God Speaks to Us, Too: Southern Baptist Women on Church, Home & Society* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 262.

was held as a universal one. It did not only apply to America, but should apply everywhere—even (and explicitly) to Israel. Israel was not special in this regard to Southern Baptists, conservative or moderate. Calling it religious freedom or separation of church and state, both sides of the conflict felt that all people everywhere should live under a religiously neutral government. The ADL was not so certain.

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For Jimmy Draper, these issues remained fraught. That September, he attended a Dallas event entitled, "A Night to Honor Israel," sponsored by independent fundamentalist pastor John Hagee.[54] Hagee wanted to present Draper with an award for his efforts to bring Jews and Christians together in America. Draper agreed to attend, then realized that there were political implications to the meeting that made him uneasy. Yet he did not want to cancel his appearance, because he felt "backing out at the last minute would have sent the wrong message to American Jews," as he told a denominational reporter.[55] At events like these, Hagee would assert that because of God's covenant with Abraham, Jews had the right to all of the territory of biblical Israel forever. As such, Jewish control of the land should be defended against all other claims to it, and in some sense had carte blanche to do whatever they liked with respect to it.[56] As he offered him the plaque, Hagee introduced Draper as a representative of Southern Baptists.

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[54]Hagee has been holding this event annually (and sometimes more frequently) since 1981. It was still in its early phases at the time, and it is likely Draper did not know the nature of the event. See Christians United for Israel, "John Hagee Ministries Hosts 31st Annual Night to Honor Israel" (1 November 2012), www.cufi.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=12090, access date 18 March 2014.

[55]"Caught in the Act of Being Faithful, Draper Stands Tall," *(Louisville, Kentucky) Western Recorder* 8 September 1982, 10.

[56]See Richard Bernstein, "Evangelicals Strengthening Bonds with Jews," *New York Times* 6 February 1983, 1.

Draper went and accepted the plaque, but contradicted Hagee's introduction, insisting that Draper could speak only for himself, and that he did not represent all Southern Baptists. He then gave a speech affirming God's blessings upon Arabs, while supporting Israel's right to safety. He said that he had learned a lesson and would not be attending such events in the future, since "In some quarters my presence will be seen as supporting everything that happens in Israel."[57] One report of the event described Draper as appearing very uncomfortable, and observed that he "applauded only occasionally with the fervent crowd of 500 but never enthusiastically" and that during a standing ovation given to Hagee, "Draper remained conspicuously seated on stage." Draper explained that the rally was "much too hip hip hooray for political Israel."[58] Supporting Israel did not mean supporting Israeli politics, as Draper saw it. Draper's recalcitrance was a lesson for both Hagee and those who sought the SBC's support of a Jewish Israel, though it does not look as though most took it at the time.

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Perlmutter's ADL seemed to be radically changing course, too, altering its sense of purpose to focus on Israel and to seek non-traditional allies. That is not to say that ADL officials in the Baptist South had not previously partnered with Southern Baptists, nor that they approved of Perlmutter's steering of the organization so aggressively toward Israel's unyielding, unconditional support. Indeed, while Southern Baptists were duking it out over their mission and

[57]"Caught in the Act of Being Faithful, Draper Stands Tall," *(Louisville, Kentucky) Western Recorder* 8 September 1982, 10.

[58]James Draper, quoted in "Draper Reminds Pro-Israel Rally God Promised Arabs Blessings Too," *(Birmingham) Alabama Baptist* 9 September 1982, 1.

identity and how it related to Israel and fighting discrimination, so were the ADL's Jewish leaders.

Burnett Roth, an ADL volunteer in Florida, pointed out that Southern Baptists tended to be the clearest allies in his region on the question of church and state. They were the most involved, financially and otherwise, with the Florida ADL in the late 1960s and early 1970s in their fight against public funding of parochial schools. Roth said even his own rabbi in Miami wanted to help the Catholics get the funding in hopes of securing similar funding for the Jewish school, but that Southern Baptists were consistent as a bloc in their advocacy for preventing public funding for *any* religious education. "We became very close, as a matter of fact, with the Baptist community … we became very close personal friends. We had lots of intimate conversations and dialogue concerning the threat to the church-state principle implicit in the Catholic demands."[59]

Yet it is something of an urban legend that American Jews in general or the ADL in particular were staunch advocates of the separation of church and state, or opponents of school prayer. As Naomi Cohen has noted in *Jews in Christian America*, the ADL has historically been in the position of offering compromise on church-state issues, based on its overall tendency toward pragmatism over ideological purity. Unlike its "sister agencies," the ADL had advocated religious and moral teachings in public schools in the 1940s. It had done so because it felt that being too strict on the issue was counter-productive. Rabbi Arthur Gilbert, who was involved in the ADL's interreligious work in the 1950s, preached against strict separation of church and state, saying that it harmed relationships among groups. Jews should not, he insisted, interpret

[59]Burnett Roth, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 4:137-138.

the First Amendment in ways Protestants and Catholics did not. If they felt they needed religious guidance now, as a people—as *Americans*—then the "summary dismissal of a legitimate concern of the American people … is reprehensible."[60] In 1957, the ADL conducted a poll through its National Civil Rights Committee, finding that its members showed significant disagreements in how to approach Sunday blue laws, and whether or not to oppose them.[61] The ADL had seemed fairly comfortable with its place within Judeo-Christianity. Prior to crumbling relationships with liberal Protestants and African-Americans and the advent of the New Right, seeking immediate solutions to problems was more important to the ADL than a consistent position on religion's relationship to government. This had been true prior to Nathan Perlmutter's work with the organization. Judeo-Christianity had been safe, even welcoming. But by the 1980s, nothing mattered to the ADL as much as Israel. Thus, regardless of the SBC's position on church and state, the ADL of 1982 would have been likely to maintain alliances with Southern Baptists, in the hope of aiding Israel. What is perhaps more significant is what their understanding of Southern Baptist opinions was, and whether that actually corresponded to Southern Baptist doctrine.

The ADL had some conflict over what it meant to carry out its mission as well. While the ADL promoted a unified public voice on their mission to gain support for Israel, there were those within the ADL in the early 1980s who expressed some qualms about the organization's push for support of the Jewish state, no matter what—or, as Edward Goldberger put it, to have "acted as

[60]Arthur Gilbert, quoted in Naomi Cohen, *Jews in Christian America: The Pursuit of Religious Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 180; see also 162-165.

[61]Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, 223.

the public relations arm of the state of Israel."[62] Goldberger was in favor of this approach to things, but others were not so sure of that such a stance could be maintained while acting in accordance with the principles under which the ADL was founded. In particular, a number of those who had been involved in the Civil Rights Movement felt that the ADL had lost its moral compass by the 1980s in focusing only on things that directly impacted Jews, and not working on behalf of all people who faced discrimination. Bernard Mintz of New Orleans said in 1983 that sometimes Jews were guilty of discrimination and exclusion of minorities, but the ADL was disinterested in offering a corrective voice. "In my opinion we expect more from others than we expect from ourselves," Mintz said. "And I find that indefensible."[63] On more than one occasion, Mintz felt, the ADL had advocated a double standard, "which is sometimes a 'disease' of some members of the Jewish community. They believe there should be rules for <u>them</u> (non-Jews) but different and accommodating rules for <u>us</u> (Jews)." It was especially the case that when some Jews objected to the people experiencing discrimination for some reason, they were unconcerned about their plight, "because they were no good S.O.B.'s. … In every case of that sort we have to pursue the attainment of the same constitutional rights for others that we want and need for ourselves." Mintz felt this was deeply intertwined with American identity. "The essence of the United States of America is in those ten Bill of Rights amendments and we should be the first to defend them…"[64] For Mintz, freedom from discrimination of any sort should be promoted as a universal value, not a strategically situational one.

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[62]Edward Goldberger, in *"Not the Work of a Day": Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs*, (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1987), 4:29.

[63]Bernard Mintz, in *"Not the Work of a Day": Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs* (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1987), 4:40.

[64]Mintz, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 4:44-45.

Roth, the Florida volunteer mentioned earlier, said similar things about his understanding of the mission of the ADL extending beyond that which simply affected Jews. "ADL had not just to fight anti-Semitism—it was to fight any bigotry, wherever it raised its head…because if you don't defend one, you can't defend the other. It was the ADL position and it was the moral position. We couldn't sit back and keep quiet," he had explained. This was tied to his understanding of the moral grounding of Judaism. "As Jews we had to be concerned with bigotry wherever it raised its head. Whether we did it because this should flow over to anti-Semitism or not wasn't important. The point was that as Jews we had to defend all people's rights. That was the history and the basic creed of the ADL—to fight bigotry wherever."[65]

Mintz had become quite cynical about the ADL by this time, saying that he thought that money was the main reason why it was acting as it did in focusing solely on discrimination against Jews, and holding a totally uncritical stance toward Israel. "We've got the bag for fund-raising now – Israel. That's the great thing to do and we also don't want to offend our prejudiced Jewish constituents…"[66] Mintz was especially frustrated about the way in which the ADL seemed to suggest that Israel could do no wrong—that "we have been Israel's apologists"[67]:

> Now … our primary efforts are involved in something with respect to Israel at all times. I have serious concerns about it. Let me say that I found it impossible to discuss anything which by the slightest hint was critical of Israel at any ADL meeting.
>
> If you did get up and make some comment about Israel and/or what was being done, many times you got your head handed back to you in your own hands. … I've got to say I've always felt guilty about it because I strongly believe that

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[65]Burnett Roth, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 4:94-95.

[66]Mintz, in *"Not the Work of a Day,"* 46.

[67]Ibid., 70-71.

> we've gotten away from the basics of the ADL and have gone too far as a defender of Israel. I think that the defense of Israel is fine. But I don't think that should be our main pursuit. … We've mainly just become a defender of Israel. … I think we ought to look again at ourselves …
>
> I can remember one instance when Martin Feldman … got up and made a statement which was somewhat in accordance with the things I have just said. He didn't have the time to sit down before he was almost physically attacked. From that moment on, I don't recall anybody ever getting up and making a statement that might in the slightest bit imply that we in ADL were being critical of Israel.[68]

This atmosphere worried others, too. Philip M. Klutznick, who was an honorary vice chairman of the ADL's national commission in the 1980s and who had served in a variety of United States government positions, including Jimmy Carter's Secretary of Commerce, was concerned about the way the ADL in America was often setting itself up against its own countrymen, with its passionate denunciation of anything that did not seem to favor Israel. He spoke at length about how he felt the ADL had mishandled various issues in its zeal for fighting the "new" anti-Semitism. "If you've got an issue here," he said, then there is also a duty to be fair, rather than to "attack our country until they [the ADL] know our country's case. I don't care what the issue is. A responsible agency, a voluntary agency, should resist attacking our government until at least they hear its side."[69] In its rush to defend Israel, Klutznick felt that the ADL was failing to accurately represent the United States, and that this was ultimately counterproductive. It was also, on occasion, dishonest. "There are those who claim that our great strength is our unity [in support of Israel]. I agree, if it's a real unity and not a cover-up."[70] Klutznick did not denounce the ADL, but he did think it was time for some serious reflection on

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[68]Ibid., 68-69.

[69]Philip M. Klutznick, in *Not the Work of a Day*, 3:115-116. See also 122.

[70]Ibid., 3:156.

its purpose. "It has grown too fast and its objectives have changed too rapidly not to suggest a time of self-searching."[71]

ADL officials in general almost certainly did not hold the belief that Israel could do no wrong whatsoever, but nonetheless the organization tended to remain totally silent when Israel did do wrong. The image they projected to the world was that they believed Israel was blameless, no matter what. Serious discussions about what to do if Israel was guilty of oppressing non-Jewish minorities were difficult to have when the organization, founded to combat anti-Semitism, had redefined anti-Semitism itself as being critical of Israel. The rumbles of dissent among the ADL's leadership show that they, too, worried about aligning totally with Israel, but they tended to root those discussions somewhere else than in separation of church and state. Most in the ADL identified separation of church and state as *American*, not universal. If ADL and SBC had confined their mutual efforts to the United States, that might not have proved to be a difficulty. Since they did have a focus abroad, however, this mismatch had the potential for serious conflict, especially since the SBC saw separation of church and state as intrinsic to their religious identity, and infringements on those rights, in Israel or elsewhere, as condemnable.

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Contrary to the original plan, when they met in 1983, the SBC did not take up the pro-Israel resolution Begin had suggested.[72] Norris W. Snydor, Jr., a pastor from Maryland who chaired the SBC's Resolutions Committee, initially planned to reintroduce it for discussion, but the idea met with significant backlash. Various reasons were offered for why it should not even

[71]Ibid., 3:226.

[72]See Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* (1983).

be allowed to come up for a vote, but most centered on the Baptist principle of religious liberty. Owings, who had spoken out against the resolution when it first came up in 1982, wrote that it was a matter of "biblical integrity"—that the Bible did not say that people should support the state of Israel, and further, that as Baptists, the SBC must "be careful that the position we espouse with regard to our own government is not irreverently discarded in positions taken regarding the state of Israel"; after all, the SBC had "historically challenged and vociferously questioned any move to unite church and state."[73] Houston's DeLoach, who had urged the SBC to adopt the resolution in 1982, joined in its opposition in 1983. SBC Foreign Mission Board president Keith Parks said the problem with the resolution would be its political implications—implications "that would jeopardize … safety of Baptists (not just missionaries)" in Israel and elsewhere. "Understandably," Parks said, Arabs in the Middle East "would be reluctant to welcome [Baptist] representatives whom they feel are enemies of their own government. Although this would not be true, we must never do anything that could be interpreted to imply this."[74] Not voting on the resolution was probably more than an affirmation of traditional Southern Baptist ideas about church and state, however. During the year that followed the June 1982 meeting in New Orleans, a lot had changed in ways neither the ADL nor the SBC would have predicted, and differing ideas about the Israeli government, as well as differing understandings of the principles the ADL and SBC believed they held in common, would prove a strain the tenuous relationship simply could not bear.

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[73]Timothy Owings, "A Church-State Marriage which Tempts Some," (Lousiville, Kentucky) *Western Recorder* 23 March 1983, 4.

[74]"Parks Spurns Pro-Israel Resolution as Hindrance to SBC Mission Program," *Alabama Baptist*, 17 February 1983, 16.

Despite Smith, Draper, Perlmutter, and Briskman's intentions, they could not speak for the whole of their respective constituencies. Neither the ADL nor the SBC maintained a fully consistent position on the questions of the proper relationship between church and state and whether Israel should have unqualified support, but what positions they did hold were in serious conflict with one another: the ADL tended to root separation of church and state in national identity as Americans rather than as a universal principle, while the SBC did just the opposite, linking subscription to the principle as intrinsic to their religious identity. These tensions might have ultimately led to a fracturing of the partnership Smith and Perlmutter forged regardless of what happened in the future. Yet when one considers what happened next in light of these internal conflicts and misunderstanding of the other, that the ADL and SBC parted ways is wholly unsurprising.

CHAPTER SIX:

IT IS NOT A ONE WAY STREET

The ADL would never have another conference with them.[1]

--Michael Cook

The *Jerusalem Post* ran an editorial October 10, 1982, condemning religious violence both in Rome and Jerusalem. The *Post* criticized the Vatican for encouraging anti-Semitic attitudes, and then turned its censure to religious leaders in Israel. Jews were victimized in Italy, the paper said, but in Israel, it was Jews who did the victimizing. The paper's editors were "incensed" at the conduct of the nation's two Chief Rabbis, Shlomo Goren and Ovadiya Yosef, who had remained silent in the aftermath of an act of religious terrorism in the heart of Jewish Jerusalem. "The lack of tolerance and understanding … towards the suffering of another religious community," the editorial argued, "only tends to weaken Israel's claim that all religions can live peacefully side by side in Jerusalem under Israel[i] rule."[2]

News of the fire at Narkis Street Baptist church, located in a Jewish neighborhood in the western part of Jerusalem, had made international headlines in mid-October, 1982. Arson seemed likely. As the London *Guardian* noted, the church had been a frequent target of Jewish extremists, who had previously attempted to set fire to it, as well as vandalizing it in a variety of other ways. Prominent government officials were quick to assert that religiously motivated

[1]Michael Cook, interview by author, Cincinnati, 2 November 2011.

[2]"Anti-Semitic Outrage Abroad and Religious Violence Here," *Jerusalem Post* 10 October 1982, 8.

terrorism had no place in Israel. However, the church's pastor, Robert Lindsey, who had grown up Southern Baptist in Oklahoma but had lived in Jerusalem for 43 years, said that he felt the Israeli government was to blame. "They have not worked hard enough at this problem of tolerance," he said.[3] Anti-missionary laws, seeming to target evangelicals in Israel, were only one aspect of the issue. These laws tended to perpetuate stereotypes and encourage prejudices against Christians like Lindsey who lived in Israel, but there were other factors. Strong feelings on the part of Jewish extremists were another piece of this puzzle, and Lindsey felt the government looked the other way when churches were targeted. He reported that Narkis Street Baptist had experienced multiple, smaller attacks over the years, from broken windows to unsuccessful attempts at arson, from both Israeli and American Jews. When asked about involvement in missionary activity, Lindsey used a common evangelical term to describe his relationship with Israeli Jews, and denied that the church acted in violation of Israeli law: "We believe in sharing faith," he said. "But we want to live here happily and joyfully among our Jewish friends."[4]

Lindsey had always distanced himself from the word "mission," and had removed the sign at the entrance to the property reading "Baptist Mission," replacing it with "Baptist House," upon assuming the pastorate of the church in December 1945. His later biographers summarized this as having reflected a desire to avoid the term's militaristic connotations in Hebrew as well as an intent to avoid bringing stereotypes to the minds of the locals. "A missionary was typically

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[3]Robert Lindsey quoted in "Fire Guts Baptist Church," *(London) Guardian* 9 October 1982, 6.

[4]Robert Lindsey quoted in Jonathan Broder, "Arsonists Raze Baptist Church in Jerusalem," *Chicago Tribune* 9 October 1982, S1. See also James Feron, "Baptist Chapel in Jerusalem Destroyed by Fire," *New York Times* 9 October 1982, 6; "Blaze Damages Baptist Church in Jerusalem," *Dallas Morning News* 9 October 1982, 44A; and "Fire Guts Israel Baptist Church," *Los Angeles Times* 9 October 1982, A6.

viewed, not as one who serves, but as one who attempts to manipulate others through fear or deceit to change one's religion against one's will—even going so far as to buy children in order to raise them as Christians." Lindsey's Baptist commitments would not allow him to view such conversions as authentic, as faith was only valid if it was freely chosen. Since this was generally not the way Middle Easterners viewed religion—in most areas, one's religion was given at birth and was tied to civil rights and culture—he felt it made more sense to avoid the words "mission" and "missionary" entirely. Lindsey was, as were the majority of Southern Baptists, hoping to be a part of convincing Jews and others to choose Christianity, but would leave that to their individual consciences.[5] Lindsey had once articulated his position on the soteriological merits of Judaism by comparing Jews to nominal Christians. "[T]heologically speaking, unbelieving Jewry today and unsaved nominal Christendom are in the same category. They are both 'brethren according to the flesh,'" he had said. "To these brethren the Lord continues to 'rise early and send' his preachers and evangelists in order that they may be brought to open confession and active participation in Christ's body."[6] To view Judaism otherwise, as had become popular among "ambivalent" Christians who either became anti- or philo-Semitic, he had argued, "is to turn the Cross into a lump of paper maché."[7]

An investigation by Jerusalem's police and fire departments confirmed that this was not merely an unfortunate event for the church, but was intentional. More than one paper called the

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[5]Kenneth R. Mullican, Jr. and Loren C. Turnage, *One Foot in Heaven: The Story of Bob Lindsey of Jerusalem* (Baltimore: Publish America, 2005), 74-75, quote from 74.

[6]Robert Lisle Lindsey, *An Introduction to the Theology of the Jewish Christian Relationship* (Jerusalem: Dugith Publishers, 1969), 12-13.

[7]Ibid., 8.

incident an "embarrassment" for the Begin administration, which had promised to protect the religious freedom of Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike following a severe wave of vandalism against churches in 1979.[8] The *Chicago Tribune* termed the fire "the worst case in memory of anti-Christian violence in Israel." Yosef Burg, Israel's interior minister, defended the government, but acknowledged the challenges the event presented. "The spiritual damage is far greater than the physical damage. You can't rebuild trust."[9]

A New York man asserting he represented the "left-wing, socialist, revolutionary arm" of the Jewish Defense League told the United Press International that his group was responsible for the fire, and that they had burned it because it was a "missionizing institution."[10] Two days after the attack, Jerusalem police arrested two Jewish men, one Israeli and one Colombian, in connection with the crime. Local courts banned the publication of their names.[11] The matter did not end for the Baptists with the arrest, however. Although officials within the local government assured Jerusalem's Baptists they would have the legal right to rebuild in the same location where the church had been established in 1927,[12] Orthodox Jews attempted to block this from happening.[13] They wanted the Baptists to move away from the Jewish neighborhood they called home. Ultimately, for Jerusalem's Baptists, the fight to secure legal permission to rebuild on the

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[8]See Broder, "Arsonists Raze Baptist Church," *Chicago Tribune* 9 October 1982; and "Fire Guts Baptist Church," *(London) Guardian* 9 October 1982.

[9]Yosef Burg, quoted in Broder, "Arsonists Raze Baptist Church," *Chicago Tribune* 9 October 1982.

[10]Ruth Rembaum, "Jews Help Baptists," *Dallas Morning News*, 10 October 1982.

[11]See "Two Jews Held in Israel Arson," *Chicago Tribune* 12 October 1982, 6.

[12]See Mullican and Turnage, *One Foot in Heaven*, 72; and "Jewish Leaders Remorseful over Fire at Baptist Chapel," *(Louisville) Western Recorder* 20 October 1982, 3.

[13]Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* (1983), 106.

site was a protracted one. They did eventually win, yet it was a full ten years after the blaze that their new building opened its doors for worship.[14]

Most of the church's neighbors, however, viewed the Baptists' presence as non-threatening, or even positive, and many saw parallels between the attack on the church and religious violence directed toward Jews. Lindsey had first gotten word of the flames engulfing the building from a friend and fellow clergyman, Rabbi Tovia Ben-Chorin. Ben-Chorin, Lindsey, and their wives stood and watched firefighters work unsuccessfully to save the chapel, noting the strong smell of kerosene in the air. Neighbors throughout the surrounding Jewish area came outside to join them. Some were Holocaust survivors. Lindsey remembered that night long afterward for the poignancy of his neighbors' tears, finding it profoundly moving himself that the same people who watched synagogues burn at Christian hands would empathize with a Christian watching a church burn at Jewish hands.[15] The *Jerusalem Post* quoted one rabbi, a Holocaust survivor who in childhood had watched his synagogue burn in Munich, who said that the attack on the Baptist church had brought up memories of Kristallnacht.[16] It took about half an hour for the fire to completely destroy the small wooden structure.[17]

The following Saturday, Jewish Jerusalem turned out in droves, diverging from their usual Simchat Torah activities to attend Sabbath services at Narkis Street Baptist Church. Many brought donations to help the congregation rebuild.[18] Ben-Chorin offered the use of Har El

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[14]Mullican and Turnage, *One Foot in Heaven*, 202, 205.

[15]Ibid., 201.

[16]"Response to the Fire," *Jerusalem Post* 18 October 1982, 5.

[17]Ruth Rembaum, "Jews Help Baptists with Church," *Dallas Morning News* 10 October 1982, 9-A.

[18]Haim Shapiro, "Jews and Non-Jews Rally in Support of Baptist Church," *Jerusalem Post* 10 October 1982, 2.

Synagogue for a Sunday evening prayer meeting. Arab Baptists from Nazareth came to help Jerusalem's residents scrub soot from the walls of the adjoining building (the Baptists' bookstore and library), and found Jews already working alongside the congregation's members to clean up.[19]

Moshe Felber, a Reform Jewish resident of Narkis Street not far from the church, wrote an article about the Baptists entitled "My Ecumenical Street" for a small Hebrew newspaper. Roused on Saturdays by the call for a *minyan* when he would rather be sleeping, he joked that he envied the Baptist ease of gathering a crowd, since if his congregation could do so as simply he would not be awakened in the early morning by other Reform Jews needing his presence for services. But he arose nonetheless and went with other Jews to one of the four synagogues on the street (he identified these synagogues as Ashkenazi, Orthodox, Reform, and Yemenite). Afterward, he noted, they would gather on the street at the Baptist ruins, with the exception of some Orthodox Jews who complained of noise:

> Even though they are Christians and Gentiles they meet on the Jewish Sabbath. The Baptists sing their prayers, a part of which are in Hebrew and sung to Israeli tunes, accompanied by a piano and cornet. By the volume of the singing, there must be about a thousand Baptists inside. As many Jews leave their synagogues to walk home, they stop on the sidewalk to enjoy the singing, "without fear of the missionary danger or of hobnobbing with idolaters." They stand in a kind of demonstration of solidarity with the Baptists and with revulsion at the sight of their burned chapel. They even linger and greet the Baptists as they leave, many of whom are Israelis, some of whom are foreigners or tourists. …
>
> If all these different kinds of people have lived in peace so many years and even prayed in so many different ways in my street, surely the sound of the Redeemer's steps must already be heard. Indeed can we not talk of this hill where my street ascends and descends, the rain falling some to this side and some to that, as somehow fulfilling the vision of Isaiah (2:3) when he saw the multitudes

[19]"Response to the Fire," *Jerusalem Post*, 18 October 1982, 5.

> of people from many nations coming up to Jerusalem and could prophesy, "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."[20]

Continued acts of religious terrorism against Christians, including defacing churches with swastikas, assaulting Christian clergy, and theft of liturgical objects, convinced one high school English teacher in Jerusalem to devote an hour of each of her classes to talk about her own friendship with the Baptists. "I must educate them for total living," she explained. Some weeks later, the congregation of neighboring Har-El pushed their rabbi to invite Lindsey to speak at Friday night services. They said they wanted to give the Baptist minister a present, to show their solidarity with Narkis Street Baptist Church. Although Ben-Chorin had a good relationship with Lindsey, he said he did not "have the nerve" to invite Lindsey until his congregation asked. When Lindsey came, they gave him a Bible, with an inscription in Hebrew and English: "This Hebrew Bible is presented to the Baptist congregation of West Jerusalem by your neighbor Har-El congregation of Jerusalem (Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism) as a token of friendship after the fire which destroyed your house of prayer."[21] Yet the violence went on, with Israeli press continuing to lambaste the government for the failure to sufficiently combat what they termed "Jewish terrorism."[22]

The attack on Narkis Street Baptist Church had reverberations far from Jerusalem, and ultimately became a flashpoint revealing why a partnership between the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) could not continue. Israeli Jewish

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[20]Moshe Felber, "My Ecumenical Street," in Mullican and Turnage, *One Foot in Heaven*, trans. Mullican and Turnage, 203-204. Felber overstates the number of people present; most of the time attendance was at about 400-600 people.

[21]"Jews Show Concern in Wake of Jerusalem Church Fire," *Alabama Baptist*.

[22]Norman Kempster, "Christian Missionaries in Israel Coming under Fire," *Los Angeles Times* 18 March 1984, A1.

response to the fire stood in stark contrast to American Jewish response, including that of the ADL. The ADL's alliance with Southern Baptists had been forged under the assumption of mutual concern, with an understanding and expectation of theological disagreement. On the level of certain other ideals, or so it had appeared, the two organizations could present a united front—the promotion of worldwide religious liberty and the protection of Israel. That Southern Baptists might seek both for *themselves* and in particular, that they might seek religious freedom in Israel and in so doing criticize the Israeli government, was a scenario neither the ADL nor their conservative allies in the SBC had anticipated. In the aftermath of the 1982 fire, and during Jerusalem Baptists' protracted fight for the legal permission to rebuild their church on Narkis Street, the ADL and the SBC found that they did not agree on the definition of religious liberty, nor did they agree on what it meant to support Israel. Theological matters became an indirect barrier to cooperation as it became clear that the question of religious freedom was also a theological matter, and that further, it was a non-negotiable one for both sides of the dialogue, creating an impasse that would permanently sever official organizational ties. Although there were other factors contributing to the demise of dialogue, including changes in SBC and ADL leadership, the primary conflicts between them were on the question of Baptists in Israel and the separation of church and state.

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In the fall of 1982, the turning point came with the second and last ADL-SBC joint study tour of Israel. Jimmy Draper organized the trip with Mark Briskman. Weeks before they left the United States, Jerusalem's Narkis Street Baptist Church burned down. Though the trip made

very few headlines,[23] Briskman remembered the discomfort of other ADL officials when he insisted upon attending services in Jerusalem with the Baptists. They did not see the relevance, Briskman said, as they were supposed to be getting support for Jewish Israel. Briskman remembered himself as a dissenting voice in the ADL when he advocated solidarity with Baptist suffering in Israel: "I remember talking with some of the Jewish people we had on the trip. Like, their eyes were rolling in their heads, and they were like, 'Do we really have to be here?' And I'm saying, 'Yes. We do. It's a sign of solidarity.'" Briskman said he did not enjoy attending a Baptist church service, either, but that was not the point.[24]

Draper's memories of the visit to the tent the Baptists had erected for temporary use were positive, in contrast to Briskman's. Other than exposure to the cold winter weather in a tent with plastic sides, Draper recalled no complaints and no resentful attitudes at Narkis Street that day, where he gave a guest sermon. Instead, Draper said that the American Jews with them were surprised that the church used Hebrew songs they already knew, and that they had remarked on the joy of the congregation. "Narkis Street Congregation was a very happy congregation. Services were upbeat."[25] What primary documents do exist to record Jewish impressions of the trip tend to support Briskman's interpretation of other ADL officials not feeling any responsibility toward Jerusalem's Baptists or concern over their ongoing legal battles with Orthodox Jews, however. Ray Leventhal, an ADL official from Cleveland, wrote about his

[23]As Briskman put it, "All of a sudden all of these people who thought this was the biggest thing since sliced bread [the ADL going to Israel with Southern Baptists] were like, 'yeah, that doesn't surprise me.'" Mark Briskman, interview by author, Dallas, 1 August 2011.

[24]Briskman, interview by author, Dallas, 1 August 2011.

[25]Draper, interview by author, Colleyville, Texas, 3 August 2011.

experiences on the trip for the *Cleveland Jewish News*. He did not mention the arson or Narkis Street Baptist Church at all. Noting that he had previously considered Southern Baptists anti-Semitic, he said the trip had changed his mind. He expressed discomfort over Baptist presence in Israel, however, and suggested that on this issue, "we should adapt a 'hands off, no policy position'" while embracing Southern Baptist Zionism.[26]

For the American Jews in the ADL in general it was difficult to sympathize with Southern Baptists' feelings of loss and persecution because of what was happening in Jerusalem. Outside the protective bubble Briskman had formed in the Southwest and beyond the reach of Perlmutter's *laissez-faire* multiculturalism in New York, the ADL's contact with Southern Baptists drew upon existing relationships among Jews and Southern Baptists in the South forged through AJC-SBC dialogue. Their discussions revealed that these Jews had very different expectations of the contact they might have with Southern Baptists than had Briskman or Perlmutter and many of their colleagues in the Southwest. A series of dialogue events held at the Wildacres Retreat Center in Little Switzerland, North Carolina, created more tension than Briskman's trips to Israel or Smith's visit to New York. Rabbi Leon Klenicki, who was co-director of interreligious affairs for the ADL, set the tone in his opening address for a dialogue in November 1982. Telling the Southern Baptists to go on "missionizing," but to stop evangelizing among Jews, he invited them to consider taking Jews on as partners in their mission. "We have to missionize together," he said, to bring God's truth to the world. Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman of Washington Hebrew Congregation spoke along similar lines, expressing appreciation for the way Christianity had spread the revelation of God beyond areas Jews could reach, but that Christians

[26]Ray Leventhal, "On an Israel Study Mission with 16 Southern Baptists," *Cleveland Jewish News* 17 December 1982.

and Jews had the same mission, at its core, as the *Alabama Baptist* summarized his point: "to study and declare their faith to the world and to develop a righteous community that makes faith believable." B. Elmo Scoggin, a professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary who had married a Jewish woman, said the issue was of particular concern because of the New Testament command to evangelize the world. SBTS professor of missions and world religions Luther Copeland agreed, and further said that as a witness to Christ he must include Jews, but that he was dismayed by the suggestion that there might cease to be a Jewish community.[27]

When Klenicki, a Reform rabbi, spoke of a "missionizing" partnership, he may have been thinking of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations "Outreach" initiative Alexander Schindler had begun in 1978. Although most Jews have distanced themselves from their proselytizing past in the modern era, America's Jews dabbled with reviving the tradition at various points in the twentieth century. In the 1920s, a group of Reform Rabbis had gotten together to form the "Committee on the Preparation of a Manual for the Instruction of Proselytes," while another group, the Jewish Chautauqua Society, travelled to American universities to spread the message of Judaism to non-Jews. At the 1954 meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, several in attendance discussed the merits of targeting the Japanese with a Jewish mission, saying that Judaism had a lot to offer to disillusioned people of postwar Japan.[28] With the Cold War uniting Americans as righteous Judeo-Christians against the

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[27]"Quit 'Missionizing' Jews, Rabbi Urges Christians," *(Birmingham) Alabama Baptist* 4 November 1982, 9.

[28]These early efforts are compellingly detailed in Lila Corwin Berman's *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009); see esp. 14-30, 129.

foe of godless Communism, American godlessness was a form of treason, and some rabbis again set their sights on seeking local converts.[29]

As the perceived consensus of the 1950s gave way to widespread social upheaval, Schindler had suggested that Reform Judaism had a role to play in helping America find its spiritual moorings. "It would be easy to tip-toe here, to use obfuscatory language and be satisfied to hint at my purpose," he had said, acknowledging that missionary Judaism was a radical concept for most Americans. "But I will not. Unabashedly and urgently, I propose that we resume our vocations as champions of Judaism; that we move from passive acceptance to affirmative action." Unlike many of his colleagues, Schindler emphasized that he was not simply referring to reaching out to secular Jews or to non-Jews who married into Jewish families. "I want to reach the unchurched, those reared in non-religious homes or those who have become disillusioned with their taught beliefs. I want to reach those seekers after truth." Those "seekers" could find what they sought in Judaism, he believed. "I want especially to reach the rootless and the alienated who need the warmth and comfort of a people known for its close family ties, a people of ancient and noble heritage." Christians interpreted Isaiah 49:6 as a reference to Jesus; Schindler saw it as a call to action ("I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth"). Despite its controversial nature, and never being widely accepted by the vast majority of Schindler's contemporaries (Reform or otherwise, within and beyond the ADL[30]), the UAHC was supportive of Schindler's mission and established an

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[29]See Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 57-66.

[30]For example, Michael Cook, a Reform rabbi involved in ADL-SBC interfaith dialogue discussed below, told me, "I do not believe in the importance of missionizing for Jews. … There have been some Jews who want to missionize among the unchurched. … I'm not even comfortable with that. I'm not interested in converting anybody." Michael Cook, interview by author, Cincinnati.

administrative department to begin carrying it out through Reform congregations. Thus, the idea of reaching out to bring theism to the godless masses was already present in Reform circles, and it is possible this is what Klenicki had in mind.[31] This "missionary Judaism," as Schindler referred to it, was not interested in converting existing theists. To be a Baptist was perhaps not ideal, but it was better than being an atheist and did not warrant intervention. This was a mission that fit well within the Judeo-Christian system. It would bring those outside Judeo-Christianity within the fold, but it would assume that no Judeo-Christians would need converting. Klenicki wanted Baptists to view Judaism through a similar lens, but Southern Baptists, as religious exclusivists outside Judeo-Christianity, were not inclined to do so.

The following year, at another dialogue in the series, a rabbi involved in the ADL's interreligious affairs activities made his feelings about Baptists in Israel more explicit. He told the Southern Baptists gathered at Wildacres Retreat Center to "leave Jews alone" in Israel and instead concentrate their energies on other parts of the world. "I don't think we need you … in Israel," Howard Singer said.[32] To have said "we" shows Singer's belief of Jewish ownership of Israel—even *American* Jewish ownership. The reference to what "we need" suggests that he felt the SBC's concerns about Israel would be channeled toward what American Jews thought best, and not really up for discussion. He was addressing Norman Lytle, one of the SBC's representatives who lived in Israel. Lytle answered that he and other Baptists did not seek to

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[31]Quote taken from Alexander Schindler in Lynne Goldsmith, "Bridge to the Future: Alexander Schindler and His Influence on the Development of Reform Judaism's Outreach Program," Rabbinical Thesis, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2007. See also Alexander Schindler, "Outreach: The Case for Missionary Judaism," in *Outreach and the Changing Reform Jewish Community* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1990).

[32]"'Leave Jews Alone,' Rabbi Tells Baptists," *(Birmingham) Alabama Baptist* 3 November 1983, 1. This is similar to what Abraham Foxman told me about his views on evangelism—that if Christians want to evangelize among Jews, that is fine, so long as they have evangelized the rest of the world in its entirety first. Foxman, interview by author, New York.

"proselytize" Israeli Jews, but that they did feel that having a presence worldwide was a part of their overall mission as Christians. The *Alabama Baptist* summarized Lytle's comments as expressing a sense of "responsibility to make available the gospel of Jesus Christ … to all who are interested." This did not mean knocking on doors or street preaching, but it did mean living and working among Jews in Israel.[33] An impasse had been reached.

The ADL's distrust of Southern Baptists in Israel may have stemmed from preconceptions American Jews tend to hold about conservative Protestants. Historian Yaakov Ariel wrote about his experiences with a Jewish cab driver in San Francisco when they discussed what he was studying (Christian evangelism of Jews in America). "He knew very little about missions to the Jews, their character and motivation," Ariel said, but nonetheless was sure that the missionaries "were an enemy group, out to capture Jewish souls and destroy the Jewish people." Ariel pointed out that the cabbie's attitude is not his alone, but is one shared by community leaders and scholars.[34] Zev Chafets, the only American working in the Menachim Begin administration, has written that he had similar experiences when he had contact with American Jews concerned about Israel. He noted that objections to evangelicals often tended to be a question of how evangelical theology made Jews feel, rather than a specific action carried out by evangelicals in Israel. In reference to one such American Jew, Chafets wrote, "it is unclear to me why he needs to feel 'comfortable' with beliefs he considers fanciful in the first

[33]"'Leave Jews Alone,' Rabbi Tells Baptists," *(Birmingham) Alabama Baptist* 3 November 1983, 1. This is similar to the way Thomas Hocutt, a long-term Southern Baptist missionary to Israel who lived in Nazareth at the time, described his activities—making friends and expressing his beliefs, and answering questions his neighbors asked him. Hocutt, interview by author, telephone, 18 January 2011.

[34]Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 1.

place. Either the evangelicals are right or they are wrong… If they are wrong, what difference does it make? And if it turns out they are right, Gorenberg and I and the rest of the Jews will have some 'splainin' to do to Jesus."[35] Tom Hocutt, a Southern Baptist missionary to Israel in the 1980s, said that American Jews would occasionally call the government to "warn" them about him and about his colleagues' alleged nefarious plans to pour thousands of dollars into convincing Jews to become Christians. When asked about these rumors, Hocutt said he simply reminded government officials that Southern Baptists in Israel were doing what they always had, which bore little resemblance to what American Jews seemed to imagine. The government shrugged off the warnings from America, and Hocutt continued to enjoy cordial relationships with Israeli Jews.[36]

Southern Baptist missions in Israel, like elsewhere in the Middle East, were largely institutional, rather than the sort of street preaching and door-to-door evangelism that American Jews often implied Baptists in Israel did. Southern Baptists operated a few private schools in Nazareth and Petah Tiqva and a hospital with a physical therapy center in Gaza. The orphanage/school at Petah Tiqva, similar to a kibbutz, was focused on agriculture, running a small dairy and raising cattle for beef while growing grains, vegetables, and citrus fruit.[37] In Tel Aviv, Southern Baptist missionaries ran a bookstore and an art gallery. A second bookstore was found in Acre. "Jerusalem House" in its eponymous city was a gathering place for college students with a New Testament research library and a coffee shop. "This student center we hope

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[35]Zev Chafets, *A Match Made in Heaven: American Jews, Christian Zionists, and One Man's Exploration of the Weird and Wonderful Judeo-Evangelical Alliance* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 40.

[36]Tom Hocutt, interview by author, telephone, 18 January 2011.

[37]Eunice Allison, "Modern-Day Israel," *Royal Service* November 1966, 34.

is an example of Christians living together," missionary Marjorie Hooper explained. "In such a center we would also fulfill two other aims: the first, to help our Arab Baptist students with housing while they study at the University and to train them in Baptist congregations in Israel for further service. … The second aim would be to reach foreign Christian young people studying in Israel (Africans, Americans, Europeans, Japanese, and others) … many of whom … leave religion at home when they go abroad."[38]

Beyond their hope to minister to Christians in the area, Southern Baptist institutional missions in Israel had an evangelistic outlook. As one denominational publication explained it, "Baptist work in Israel … is an exciting demonstration of soft-sell evangelism." The article quoted Lindsey's wife, Margaret Lindsey: "We do a minimum of preaching and a maximum of living."[39] Their farming, for example, was a way of drawing attention to their own existence. When Israelis came to the farm asking questions about who they were, the missionaries would answer them. They felt that this was, itself, missionary activity. One, identified in a Southern Baptist magazine as "Mrs. Bivens," said that "the center gives us good witnessing opportunities," and that "We hope in some way to help break down the tremendous wall of prejudice and fear." The Petah Tiqva farm and school was residential, and ethnically Jewish and Arab children, often orphans, "live together on the farm as brothers in Christ," which the missionaries believed was evidence that Christianity could eventually bring peace to a volatile region.[40] They were pleased

[38]Marjorie Hooper quoted in Allison, "Modern-Day Israel," 34. See also Frank K. Means, *Advance to Bold Mission Thrust: A History of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions, 1970-1980* (Richmond: Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1981), 401-403.

[39]Flossie and Cyril E. Bryant, "Peace for Jamil's Jerusalem," *Contempo* December 1970, 4.

[40]See Allison, "Modern-Day Israel," 34.

when one of their former Arab charges, now an adult nurse, made the news for volunteering at a Jewish hospital during the Six Day War, and cited her Baptist upbringing as the cause. As "an orphan raised at Baptist Village, … she had learned to 'love everybody—especially those who might not love me.'"[41]

Hocutt described his own activities while living in Ra'anana similarly. According to Hocutt, he and his family were the only Christians in the city.

> Well, what I did… we were the only Christians there in that city of 50,000 people. … Because Baptists generally had a good reputation there in Israel, because of forefathers that had been there, I would just normally say I worked with the Baptists. … And so we began to just make friends there with the Jewish people. It started with my wife just going and sitting in a coffee shop reading a newspaper, reading the *Jerusalem Post,* and there was a mother of one of our son's friends … they met at a coffee shop one day and so they began to just sit and have coffee together and talk. And they introduced us to their friends so we began to meet on a regular basis with these friends to have coffee. And we'd get invited to their—to their religious kind of celebrations or the holiday kinds of things that they'd have in their homes. And invariably, because we were kind of the, quote, "oddity," you know, we were Christian, we were Gentile, weren't Jewish but were living in Israel, were working in Israel, and working for the Baptists, I would be asked—I mean it happened every time we went to one of these functions. We'd be talking about some event or some issue and would be asked, "Well, now what do you believe about this issue?" They would ask that. So I always had a chance to be able to say, "Well, I believe this about it, and here's why. Because I believe Jesus is the Messiah and this is what God's doing, or this is the kind of issue that because of my belief that Jesus is the Messiah." It became a very natural thing for me to, quote, "share my faith," to share what I believed, that Jesus is the Messiah. Not offensive. It didn't seem to offend anybody, because they were asking me what I believed and I was able to tell them what I believed about it really was, on the basis of the fact that Jesus is the Messiah.[42]

Briskman expressed surprise in his own process of discovery of what Southern Baptists meant by "witnessing." Although much later he spoke of being opposed to "witnessing" and said

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[41]Bryant and Bryant, "Peace for Jamil's Jerusalem," 5. See also Ray G. Register, "I Bring You a Symbol of Peace," *The Window* December 1969, 1-2.

[42]Tom Hocutt, interview by author, telephone, 5 January 2011.

that he would stop any interfaith dialogue if it was taking place, he also acknowledged that his Southern Baptist conversation partners meant something somewhat different than what the word conjured in his mind. He thought their brand of "witnessing" was innocuous. Draper, for example, considered answering questions Briskman asked about his beliefs to be witnessing.[43] For Briskman, though, there was a thin line between acceptable witnessing and unacceptable witnessing, one based on how and why the conversations took place:

> From their side, technically that's witnessing, but from our point of view, that would be acceptable because we've asked them to explain it to us. But now, you've moved on and you're in a different context with us, and you're in a social setting. And they really kind of want to revisit this thing as a way of continuing that conversation because we now understand that their religion believes. If you're going to continue to do that, it's because you're wanting to continue that conversation in order to witness to us because eventually you're going to open up our hearts and change our view, and once we do that, it, then there's the possibility of Jesus coming into your heart and change you and you accept Jesus. And that's where it becomes unacceptable.[44]

Thus it would seem that the ADL, to the extent it understood Southern Baptist presence in Israel, was concerned about their underlying intent and potential future activity rather than most of their actual behavior. Briskman, after all, wanted to demonstrate "solidarity" with Jerusalem's Baptists, and was aware that they were like their Southern Baptist counterparts in Texas with respect to how they evangelized among their neighbors. Hocutt might have been in social settings where he had conversations about his religious beliefs that would have been perfectly acceptable to Briskman if he were not doing so intentionally out of the hope of persuading someone to convert. In any case, Southern Baptists persuaded very few Israeli Jews.

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[43]Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 11 April 2011, and Jimmy Draper, interview by author, Colleyville, Texas.

[44]Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 11 April 2011.

Dwight Baker, a missionary in Haifa, lamented the fact that in Israel their message "oftentimes rings hollow…" That did not deter them from continuing, however. Baker sought to find a way of demonstrating "a kindly, enduring patience."[45] Resistance to Christianity was only to be expected, after all. "They are not baffled…when they see so few responding…"[46] Their job, as they saw it, was just to be there and to spread their message; what happened next was out of their hands. "Even in the face of much discouragement, they remain faithful," another Southern Baptist publication explained. "It is the task of a Christian to sow and wait on God to give the increase."[47]

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In 1985, Orthodox Jews and Israeli Baptists came face to face as the Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem staged a protest of the Baptists' continued efforts to secure a municipal permit to rebuild their chapel. Standing on Narkis Street waving signs reading, "Get Out, Get Out," the protesters claimed that not only did the Baptists have conversionary motives, but they were too loud, attracted too many worshippers, and destroyed the atmosphere of the area. Police kept the protesters behind barricades, but tensions ran high. Secular Jews came to join the Baptists in

[45]Dwight L. Baker, "Where Love Was Lacking," *Royal Service* November 1966, 13.

[46]Dwight L. Baker, "Old Barriers in an Ancient Land," 11.

[47]Allison, "Modern Day Israel," 35. See also Chandler Lanier, "Baptists and Israeli Holidays," *The Window* April 1970, 19; and Joanne Lisk, "Sunday in a Jewish World," *The Window* March 1965, 28.

silent counterprotest.[48] This event seems to have played a role in a later conflict at an ADL-SBC interfaith dialogue meeting.

The most dramatic confrontation of the issue of Baptists in Israel and religious liberty as a universal value came at the last official meeting of the ADL and the SBC, during the first week in April, 1986. Klenicki and SBC moderates in the Department of Interfaith Witness had organized the national conference, an intellectual theological conference entitled "Symposium on the New Testament and Judaism." As Michael Cook, a Cincinnati-based professor of New Testament at Reform Judaism's Hebrew Union College, later noted, the conference brought together a different set of people than usually attended this kind of interfaith dialogue event. Cook had participated in other dialogues with Southern Baptists, but under the aegis of the AJC. This one included many of the same players on the Southern Baptist and Jewish sides of the discussion as might normally be present at such an event, but also involved a few others. It was nothing like the activities Mark Briskman planned with Smith and Draper, but it was also somewhat unlike the AJC's events. Reflecting on it 25 years later, Cook still remembered the conference as a negative experience. The Southern Baptists of the conservative wing, he said, "were living on a different planet" than the moderates with whom he was used to spending time.[49]

After four days of academic papers on the general ideas of covenant and messiah, and on themes in the gospels and Pauline epistles, the attendees gathered together for one last,

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[48]"Orthodox Jews Protest Plan to Rebuild Church in Israel," *Washington Post* 26 January 1985, B6. This was not really a new development; in 1983, the SBC's Foreign Mission Board had reported that repairing the adjacent bookstore had been among its projects for the year, but it had been made more difficult due to "harassment by extreme Orthodox Jews in that country [Israel]." See Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* (1983), 106.

[49]Michael Cook, interview by author, Cincinnati.

unstructured discussion of the conference as a whole. There, Cook complained that he thought this conference, in contrast to the others he had attended, had little potential for practical benefit, since SBC conservatives were insistent upon their need to evangelize among Jews. He said that as a whole he found the conference "very discouraging."[50] Lawrence Schiffman said he agreed with what Cook said, although he was pleased to learn that Southern Baptists generally did not hold problematic theological positions in other ways. "We had people sitting around here saying they've never taught or been taught that Jews are Christ-killers," he said, in a slightly amazed tone. Schiffman said that in spite of this he felt that Southern Baptist doctrine about salvation held dangers that perhaps unenlightened non-conference-goers would adopt anti-Semitic views. To meet people who were "so friendly and positive" and who also held exclusivist religious positions like Southern Baptists caused cognitive dissonance for Schiffman.[51]

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary New Testament professor Charles Talbert, who had presented the paper Cook and Schiffman said they found most problematic,[52] rose to respond, addressing Cook as "Brother Michael." He asserted that the paper addressed the very concerns that Cook and Schiffman expressed. "Taking the Pauline point of view there is no threat to the Jewish people," he said. "Paul has no hostility to the Jewish people as a sociological

[50]Michael Cook, in "Living Together Today Discussion," Symposium on the New Testament and Judaism, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 31 March-3 April 1986, audio cassette, James C. Boyce Centennial Library, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

[51]Lawrence Shiffman, in "Living Together Today Disscussion."

[52]All of the papers presented at this conference were later printed in the Spring 1987 issue of *Review and Expositor* (vol. 94, no. 2). A full audio recording of the proceedings is held at James C. Boyce Centennial Library, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. Talbert's paper, "Paul on the Covenant," addressed the idea of covenant as it appears in the Pauline epistles.

entity existing. I certainly do not. Christians … certainly should not." Talbert's tone became increasingly exasperated as he went on.

> Now, what happens to me in such a conference as this is I become very frustrated because my Jewish brethren say in writing and in speech and in every communication that I am anti-Judaic by virtue of affirming Christian distinctives. Now, if that is the case, then I have to be anti-Judaic, but I think that is a pejorative way of putting the whole issue. If the only way we can relate to one another is by my sacrificing Christian distinctives, then you are imposing on *me.* You must allow me to affirm my Christian distinctives. I say at the level of your religious tradition and my religious tradition, from the Pauline point of view there is a plus in one. As a people, there is no supersession of Judaism as a people. It is at the religious level.[53]

Talbert paused, seemingly unable to compose his thoughts, and sighed loudly, then continued, making reference to the principle of religious liberty and the 1985 protests in Jerusalem:

> I have concerns. You have concerns that the Jewish people are put upon. It was as painful for me last night to hear … your exposition of what would happen to a person born Jewish who had a relation to Jesus at it must surely have been to for you to hear my identification with Paul. It was equally painful. I have said that as a Baptist I did not believe in the exercise of any civil power to enforce religious positions. … It bothers me that the Baptist church in Jerusalem was burned by arson. It bothers me that a Jewish demonstration in Jerusalem is organized against the rebuilding of that church. It bothers me that the Israeli government does not give *permission* for that church to be rebuilt. It bothers me that the Foreign Mission Board has to raise protest against that use of *civil power* against religious freedom. It is not a one-way street. When the Jews are in the majority and Christians are in the minority there is persecution from Jews to Christians. It … is that way in Israel today. When Jews are a minority and Christians are a majority, human nature being what it is, you pay a price. I do not wish it to be either way, and I resent it when it is either way. But you must not demand of me as a Christian that I commit Christian suicide in order to protect *you.* I will affirm and protect you as a people. I cannot as a Christian affirm the religious component of your people any more than Paul was able to do. To the extent that he was able, I

[53]Charles Talbert in "Living Together Today Discussion."

> am able. To the extent that he was unable, I am unable. That is where we stand. God help us.[54]

Others attempted to alleviate the tensions in the room, saying that such conflicts were good in the end because they revealed what was important to religious identity. Yet the contretemps between Cook and Talbert revealed deeper conflicts at the heart of the relationship between the ADL and the SBC. Smith and Perlmutter had forged the partnership, citing issues of "mutual concern," including the safety of Israel and the promotion of religious liberty worldwide. That Baptists wanted help from the ADL in securing both for *themselves* had not been a matter of discussion in 1980. Cook later said that this demand for Jewish protection of Baptist existence in Israel was insensitive at best, as it showed, in his opinion, a disregard for the differing historical situations in America and Israel. Israel was Jewish because Christian nations had made it be so, and Jews owed nothing to Christians living in Israel. "It's the New Testament, more than any other factor, that makes the state of Israel necessary for the Jews. … They don't see that." He also said that the internal conflicts within the denomination, resulting in the SBC becoming much more conservative, made further discussions impossible. "The ADL would never have another conference with them."[55] Having differing expectations of church-state issues in America and Israel was not an uncommon thing to find among American Jews in the 1980s,

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[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

with a tendency to favor the kinds of church-state entanglements in Israel that met with disapproval in American contexts.[56]

The participants seemed to presume some sort of underlying American morality should bind them together and further, that it should be axiomatic. For the Jewish participants, the presumption seems to have been that the major principle in question was minority rights—here, the right of a minority to carve out its own space in the world, free of majority influence. For the Baptists, it was the principle of separation of church and state, more than simply a necessity in an American context, but also as a universal value that should be upheld in all nations. Just as America promoted democracy over and against the global threat of communism, it should promote its brand of church-state relations. Faced with radically different understandings of what they might reasonably expect from one another, and varying conceptions of what it *meant* to diminish violence in Israel and to promote freedom of conscience, it seemed the ADL and the SBC had learned another lesson from their dialogue: commitment to religious liberty and to Israel was not enough to hold them together. They actually did not hold a universally American value system in common, because there did not appear to be any such thing. The 1986 conference in Louisville was the last time the two organizations had any official contact.

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The significance of the divisions revealed itself in 1987, when Smith preached at the SBC's Evangelism Conference as part of their annual meeting in St. Louis. Smith had retreated quite a bit from the national spotlight, having left his position at First Southern in Del City to

[56]See Milton Himmelfarb, "Jewish Perceptions of the New Assertiveness of Religion in American Life," in *Jews in Unsecular America*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus, The Encounter Series, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 2.

become an itinerant evangelist based in Atlanta, and having held no national denominational office since his SBC presidency. He and Briskman no longer had any contact. Personal relationships between ADL officials and prominent Southern Baptists were few and far between. Briskman believes that the national office had dropped the ball with the SBC after Draper's presidency, although conflicts over religious liberty and Baptist presence in Israel appear equally significant in severing ties. SBC conservatives, it had become clear, would win the Controversy with the moderates, who were beginning to consider forming their own denomination. The conservatives in the SBC had less motivation, from a public relations perspective, to show their willingness to work with other groups. Meanwhile, the ADL felt more certain of evangelical support for Israel, and no longer needed to make overtures to specific groups, even the mammoth SBC. With or without partnering with the ADL, SBC conservatives would tend to support foreign policies that favored Israel, and the ADL knew it. Times had changed.

Smith's sermon was entitled, "An Angry Pastor, an Anointed Evangelist." The subject was those (including pastors) who criticize evangelists. In the midst of preaching, Smith began to talk about his own experiences, accusing those he saw as too concerned about not offending people and not concerned enough about the fate of their souls of being "lily-livered chicken preachers" and "weenie men." Reflecting on his experience following the 1980 Religious Affairs Briefing, Smith took his fellow clergymen to task for remaining silent when they supported his theological position. "Some men that I loved and trusted wouldn't stand with me on that and they'd come to me and they'd say, 'Bailey, it was true, but you shouldn't have said it.' Folks, if the Bible is *true*, you ought to *SAY IT!*" As Smith yelled his last line, his audience cheered and clapped for a full ten seconds. "I'm not against the Jewish people," he went on after they quieted down. "Unless they repent and get born again, they don't have a prayer. You say, 'Man, that's

going to cause you more trouble. I don't care what trouble it causes. I love the Jewish people and the greatest love you can have for the Jews or anybody else is to tell them, 'Without Jesus Christ, you don't have a hope.'"[57]

Perhaps caught up in his rhetorical moment, Smith accused Southern Baptist "chicken preachers" of failure to support his saying something he had not actually said. Smith's soteriological views were not what had gotten him into trouble, but rather his theology of prayer, the political context of his statements, and singling Jews out as particularly absent from God's attention. He also seemed to have forgotten that he, too, had concluded in 1980, given the mail he had received from white supremacist groups, that he "shouldn't have said it." Certainly he had expended a lot of effort in reassuring the world that he felt regret over the incident that he was now asserting to have been his proud moment to stand up for Jesus in isolation from his cowardly co-religionists. This misremembering caused a more severe breach in relationship than suggesting Israelis carve numbers on their arms, as it made his prior Jewish conversation partners wonder if underneath all his apparent sincerity, he was really only pretending to care about the things that had distressed them.

Reporters sought Briskman out for his response to Smith's sermon. Briskman later said that in that moment he thought back to Smith on his sofa at Passover, saying answers to prayer were all in God's hands, and Smith really could not say whether God would answer Briskman's prayers for his hypothetically ailing daughter. He thought back to Smith's repeatedly stating that he had come to understand what was problematic about what he had said. He got angry. He

[57]Bailey Smith, "An Angry Pastor, an Anointed Evangelist," sermon preached at Southern Baptist Evangelism Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, 26 June 1987, reel-to-reel audio recording, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archive, Nashville, Tennessee.

wondered whether all his efforts had been wasted; later, he would conclude that they had been. He began to wonder if Smith's overtures to the ADL had all been some kind of elaborate put on.[58] If Smith did not "care what trouble it causes," what kind of ally was he? But he had lost contact with Smith, and would never ask the questions he now had of his former friend.[59]

Briskman said none of this to the press. Instead, he simply told them Smith had disappointed him. "I genuinely thought he understood what we were trying to say to him (in 1980), so our hurt is deeper today," Briskman said. "The debate has never been what his theology is or what his beliefs are. He's a Baptist, and I respect that. The issue is the use of those remarks in an inappropriate way in an inappropriate forum, [and] that this creates the potential for real bigots and real anti-Semites to use it as a sanctioning device." Paige Patterson told the press that he did not think anyone should have a problem with Smith or the Southern Baptists who cheered him on. "If people understand Bailey to be a friend of the Jewish people, one who is an ardent supporter of Israel, and at the same time understand him to be unequivocal in his conviction that nobody comes to God other than through Jesus, there'll be no trouble," he said. [60] For Southern Baptists, in any case, there was very little trouble; unlike in 1980, the editorial pages of Southern Baptist newspapers said almost nothing about the controversy. Lacking organizational contacts that might have encouraged discussion and improved relations, the ADL

[58]Abraham Foxman expressed similar feelings. Idem, interview by author, New York, 16 September 2011.

[59]Mark Briskman, interview by author, telephone, 12 April 2011.

[60] "Minister Again Provokes Angry Jewish Reaction," *Los Angeles Times* 27 June 1987, A18.

and the SBC had clearly parted ways, speaking to each other through the press rather than face to face.

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Meanwhile, violence against Christians in Israel continued. In 1984, an Orthodox neighborhood in Jerusalem, Mea Shearim, was plastered with dozens of handbills with a chilling slogan: "Death to the Missionaries." "We … hope and pray for a speedy death to all missionaries and those that aid them," the posters explained. Jewish extremists threw rocks at Christians worshipping at the Sea of Galilee, injuring one woman severely enough that she had to be hospitalized.[61] Anglican, Greek Orthodox, and Messianic congregations joined the list with the Baptists as groups suffering multiple incidents of vandalism and arson. Following an arsonist's attack at an Episcopal church in Jerusalem in December 1987, the second fire at St. Paul's Evangelical Church in a two-week span, the ADL issued a statement condemning the attacks.[62] This is the first such statement regarding anti-Christian violence in Israel that I have been able to find. Perhaps it was all too little, too late for Southern Baptists. The grand experiment in trans-religious cooperation was over, and the relationship between the ADL and the SBC was largely nonexistent. Silence prevailed until the 1990s, when new conflicts revealed just how far apart the two groups had drifted, and how quickly the rest of America had forgotten what they had tried to teach them about the possibility of friendly relationships across religious lines in a post-Judeo-Christian culture.

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[61]Norman Kempster, "U.S. Missionaries Draw Wrath of Israelis," *Los Angeles Times* 18 March, 1984, 1.

[62]Dan Fisher, "Fanaticism Blamed for Wave of Attacks on Religious Properties," *Los Angeles Times* 26 December 1987, 22.

EPILOGUE:

OUR COMMON CONCERN FOR FREEDOM

> *We strongly denounce this religious fanaticism that does harm to the peace and spiritual welfare of the country.*[1]
>
> *--Abraham Foxman*

In 1996, an article appeared in the *New Republic* profiling Jim Johansen, a Southern Baptist missionary in Georgia. Stephen Glass wrote that Johansen was addicted to Krispy Chic fried chicken drumsticks and non-filtered Camel cigarettes. He had averaged only two packs of Camels and five Krispy Chic drumsticks per day when he was focused on converting Buddhists, but his smoking had gone up to four packs and snacking to seven drumsticks and a wing when he switched to the so-called "miscellaneous," the smaller sects new to the United States. When he moved on to Jews, he started smoking more than six packs and getting through a full bucket of ten drumsticks every day. Johansen explained that all the work made him hungry, and Jews were especially hard to convert, so they made him hungrier. Johansen was only following orders, though; the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) had passed a resolution in June 1996 urging evangelism among Jews. One Savannah rabbi countered with a missionary effort of his own, but Judaism, being more demanding than evangelicalism, just was not as popular. Glass quoted an elderly Jewish man named Jerome: "For the Baptists, you only have to say you believe in Christ

[1]Abraham Foxman, New York, to Paige Patterson, 8 September 1999, Paige Patterson Papers, Box 3, Folder 23, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

and, poof, you're in. … If we want to get the unreligious, we're going to have to drop a lot of the prerequisites."[2]

The main problem with this incredible story is that it almost assuredly has nearly no truth in it whatsoever. The chain-smoking, fried chicken-eating, overweight Southern Baptist chasing Jews around Georgia never existed. No Savannah rabbi, in all probability, ever proposed missionary countermeasures to Southern Baptist evangelism. No elderly Georgian Jew ever told Glass that Judaism was less appealing to the "heathen" than evangelicalism due to the relative difficulty of conversion. Yet no one at the New York-based *New Republic* was suspicious of Glass or his story about Southern Baptists and Jews. Glass continued to write tales of fiction claiming to be fact on a variety of subjects for the magazine for a nearly year and a half after this article appeared. Ultimately, rival *Forbes* decided to fact check another of Glass's yarns, and the *New Republic* was forced to admit they had printed not only lies, but also slander, against various groups that apparently Glass disliked. Their "editors did so," they said, "in the sincere belief that they were publishing the legitimate work of a promising journalist—a young man with a flair for keen observation and colorful anecdotes."[3] They followed up with a list of articles they said they now viewed with suspicion of being at least partially fabricated. The story of the missionary-addict and his Jewish targets still did not make the list.[4]

Although it was overwhelmingly fabricated, the fact that so many people believed the story Glass wrote, even *after* Glass was discovered to be a fabulist, reveals a great deal about

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[2]"Jerome," quoted in Stephen Glass, "Shalom, Y'all," *New Republic* 215, no. 24 (9 December 1996): 21-23.

[3]"To Our Readers," *New Republic* 218, no. 22 (1 June 1998): 8.

[4]"To Our Readers," *New Republic* 218, no. 26 (29 June 1998): 8-10.

American culture, as well as the ultimate lack of impact of the ADL-SBC dialogue on how the nation at large viewed its people. The press scrutiny of 1980 and 1981 never translated to broader understandings of what the ADL and SBC had hoped to do, nor did it help to overcome the misconceptions of mainstream society about how Southern Baptists interacted with other religious groups or how American Jews in the South approached an evangelical culture. Friendships may have been forged in New York, Texas, and Israel, but for the most part, that was all the whirlwind of effort truly accomplished. Perhaps the ADL-SBC dialogue was a bit ahead of its time, as the form of Judeo-Christianity it tried to counteract is more or less gone from the mainstream of American culture today. In any case, what we see in retrospect is that Americans do not have clear guidance on what the principle of religious freedom, held so dearly and yet so confusedly for centuries, is supposed to look like.

There are many reasons why the ADL-SBC dialogue ended. One is that the national office of the ADL, intentionally or otherwise, restricted its potential by assigning the task of leading their efforts to a regional director, rather than taking it on themselves. In so doing, they also restricted the potential for the participants to experience a broader education about the other, since both sides seem to have failed to account for the ways regional cultures shaped the participants' experiences. Another reason is that the sorts of activities they undertook were mixed with those that adhered to their own philosophies of a partnership of mutual concern and with the scholarly, AJC-style conferences that Nathan Perlmutter disdained, leaving the goals of the partnership somewhat ambiguous. The internal conflicts within both organizations also made it difficult to for either side to determine whether they could support the goals of the dialogue or not. Yet another reason is that, as the leadership of the SBC shifted, it was difficult to maintain continuity, as new leaders not only meant moving beyond Mark Briskman's region in the

American Southwest, but also a lack of personal rapport that had proven so vital to Briskman and Bailey Smith. The participants themselves have all moved on in one way or another at this point: Nathan Perlmutter died of cancer in 1987. James Draper held a variety of denominational roles, including a long-term position as the president of the SBC's publisher of devotional literature, Lifeway Christian Resources, until his retirement in 2006. Briskman retired from his position as the North Texas-Oklahoma Regional Director of the ADL in 2012. Smith is still an itinerant evangelist based in Atlanta with little connection to the SBC's internal politics. In the end, however, all of these logistical issues pale by comparison to the two groups' distinct ways of viewing the religious liberty they united to promote. The ADL and the SBC held differing visions, but both were American ones, rooted deeply in national history. Common national identity may well be the best explanation for why they did not end up having cordial relations in the long term.

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What was true in Glass's tale was that the SBC had resolved to pray for Jewish conversions, and to commit "energies and resources" toward that end, in 1996.[5] They had also appointed a missionary specifically dedicated to the effort (though his name was not Johansen; it was Jim Sibley). This was not the first time such a position had existed in the SBC, and, in fact, it had been more common than not for the SBC to employ someone devoted to North American evangelism among Jews throughout the twentieth century. The ADL's interfaith affairs director, Leon Klenicki, said he was "very sad," and "Christians have no right to talk about a mission to the Jews," but should focus on "a mission to the Christians" instead, since the Holocaust

[5]Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* (1996), 97.

happened "in Christian Europe."[6] Southern Baptists had passed the resolution, not out of a conscious rejection of the ADL, but in response to a resolution by the Alliance of Baptists (AB), a splinter denomination that left the SBC once conservatives took control. In 1995, the AB resolution had lamented the behavior of other Baptists, as well as conservative theology, and had vowed to engage in interfaith dialogue.[7] The inward focus of the SBC again had ramifications for their relationship with the ADL, but this time it seemed they were not really even paying attention to what the ADL had to say. The most important point for many Southern Baptist conservatives to make, it appears, was that they were not like the splinter groups they had driven out of the denomination. Good rapport with other groups was secondary, if it was on anyone's mind at all. Baptist infighting continued, despite the severing of denominational ties with moderates and liberals who had once been Southern Baptists.

In 1999, the SBC made headlines again, this time for publishing a series of small prayer books. The series included suggested prayers for use during various religious holidays belonging to other faiths, all generally geared toward petitioning God for their conversion to Christianity. It included a book focused on Muslims, meant to be used during Ramadan; another focused on Hindus, for use during Diwali; and yet another focused on Buddhists, tied to no particular holiday. Despite outcry from other religious groups for whom the SBC issued a prayer guide, the one about which most Americans would have heard was the one focused on Jews, *Days of Awe*,

[6]Gustav Niebuhr, "Baptists Move on Two Fronts In New Effort to Convert Jews," *New York Times* 14 June 1996, A12.

[7]Alliance of Baptists, "Statement on Baptist-Jewish Relations," March 4, 1995, online, https://www.bc.edu/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/protestant/baptist_statement.htm, access date 31 August 2014.

meant to be used during the High Holy Days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.[8] Yechiel Eckstein was perhaps the last of the participants in the ADL side of the ADL-SBC dialogue still actively engaged with Southern Baptists (although no longer working for the ADL himself). In the wake of the 1999 controversy, he publicly renounced further joint efforts with the SBC.[9] He said that Southern Baptists "have clearly crossed the line, from general evangelizing and witnessing—which I strongly affirm—and breached the trust by proselytizing and targeting the Jewish community."[10] Citing the religious duty to evangelize the world, and asserting that "Jewish people are part of that world," SBC president Paige Patterson said Eckstein's statement was a disappointment, in part because it reflected a lack of affirmation of the principle of religious liberty. "I define religious liberty as a free marketplace of ideas," he said. "The only people who have to fear a free marketplace of ideas are people who are afraid their idea might not have enough currency."[11]

Patterson also attracted criticism for helping to organize an evangelism conference in New York that year entitled, "To the Jew First in the New Millennium." The partnership reflected a growing openness among Southern Baptists toward Messianic Judaism, a movement with origins in the late nineteenth century that preserved Jewish practices and cultural norms among converts to Christianity. Philip D. Abramowitz, director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York's Task Force on Missionaries and Cults, accused Patterson and

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[8]See Gustav Niebuhr, "Baptists' Ardor for Evangelism Angers Some Jews and Hindus," *New York Times* 4 December 1999, A10.

[9]Yechiel Eckstein, "Not a Call to Battle," *Jerusalem Post* 13 December 1999, 6.

[10]Eckstein, quoted in Niebuhr, "Baptists' Ardor," *New York Times.*

[11]Patterson, quoted in Niebuhr, "Baptists' Ardor," *New York Times.*

others of engaging in deception, trying to trick Jews into believing Messianic Jews were Jewish rather than Christian. Patterson responded that such claims were "false and reckless."[12] "Show me a single case where a Southern Baptist has acted deceptively and I will do my best to see it never happens again. We are not a deceptive people."[13]

In the midst of all this, Nathan Perlmutter's successor at the ADL, Abraham Foxman, wrote to Patterson to express his disapproval of the SBC's prayer book and other activities geared toward Jewish conversion. Despite mutual involvement in the interfaith dialogue of the 1980s, Foxman and Patterson had not—and still have not—actually met, or even had a single telephone conversation.[14] Foxman had a somewhat different approach than Perlmutter did, and one that echoes with Judeo-Christianity a bit more than his former boss. Calling the SBC's recent activities "arrogant," Foxman said that the ADL would "strongly denounce this religious fanaticism that does harm to the peace and spiritual welfare of the country."[15]

Patterson responded to Foxman's anger with condescension. Citing the command of "one Jew" (Jesus) to pray for all people, and "another Jewish theologian" (the apostle Paul) who urged evangelism among Jews, Patterson said that Foxman's letter put him "in a terrible bind between Jewish groups." He suggested that "the Anti-Defamation League needs to do its homework a little more thoroughly and attempt to discern who is a friend and who is not." Baptists, he said, were clearly in the friend category. "Baptists alone through the years, among all the

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[12]Patterson, quoted in Gustav Niebuhr, "Baptists' Evangelism Concerns Jews," *New York Times* 25 September 1999, A9.

[13]Patterson, quoted in Gustav Niebhuhr, "Coalition of Jews Protests Southern Baptist Conversion Tactics," *New York Times* 9 November 1999, A19.

[14]Abraham Foxman, interview by author, New York, 16 September 2011.

[15]Abraham Foxman, New York, to Paige Patterson, 8 September 1999.

denominations of Christendom, stood against religious coercion or deception of any kind. We are still prepared, if necessary, to stand with drawn sword by your side to protect you and any others who wish to have religious liberty, free from coercion. … If persons change their minds upon hearing the evidences [sic], that happens to be okay in free world also." Patterson went further, accusing Foxman of "the refusal to honor genuine religious liberty," which was "not a particularly becoming position for Jewish people in general nor for the Anti-Defamation League in particular. Thank God most of my Jewish friends have a very different attitude." He then suggested that Foxman should, "instead of railing against the kindness of friends," get together with other Jews to pray for the Baptists on Christian holidays. "We welcome prayer in our behalf from any source. I pray that you will reach that point also."[16]

One last exchange of letters followed, as Foxman again called Patterson "arrogant," and said he refused to be drawn into a theological debate "as was done in the Middle Ages." He promised to pray for Baptists as Patterson requested. "I, like many Jews, will pray for other people of faith. We do it for their religious commitment, and the strengthening of their faith." He declined to pray evangelical prayers, however. "Our prayers are not intended to change the religious conviction of others or to convert them to our own faith. We respect the other, as I've said before, as a person of God. Any prayer that invites us to abandon our faith is an attack on our integrity and commitment."[17]

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[16]Paige Patterson, Wake Forest, North Carolina, to Abraham Foxman, 15 September 1999, Paige Patterson Papers, Box 3, Folder 23, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

[17]Abraham Foxman, New York, to Paige Patterson, 28 September 1999, Paige Patterson Papers, Box 3, Folder 23, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Patterson's response dripped with sarcasm. "There are any number of things about your letter that struck me as strange indeed, prompting me to wonder how on earth you could make so many logical mistakes in one short letter." He said that no one who wanted a good relationship would continue to accuse the other of being arrogant. "Actually 'arrogance' is an attitude of the heart that only God can see. Since you cannot know my heart anymore [sic] than I can know yours, it follows that the allegation of 'arrogance' is really more arrogant than the simple declaration of New Testament truth…" He further insisted that the ADL was attempting to repress religious freedom. "Your reckless course of intimidation and criticism of Hebrew Christians [Messianic Jews] … is becoming wearisome. … Maybe we need to initiate the ADLMJ, the Anti-Defamation League for Messianic Jews." Despite the sarcasm in Patterson's response, he still urged, "Let's be friends," saying, "We need you folks, and you need us in the uphill struggle to insure freedom from coercion in religion. Name-calling, accusation, paranoia, and innuendo will do nothing to encourage our common concern for freedom." Patterson again emphasized his desire for "an open marketplace of religious ideas."[18]

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Patterson's "open marketplace" certainly does have a lot of support in American history as what might be considered what is best for the country, but that is not because most Americans have historically held that an open market of religious opinions is an ideal society, so much as it is a necessary evil. There were exceptions to this rule in early America, but the United States Constitution reflects a strong ambivalence about religious diversity. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion" was as important as the admonishment that they

[18]Paige Patterson, Wake Forest, North Carolina, to Abraham Foxman, 1 October 1999, Paige Patterson Papers, Box 3, Folder 23, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

would not prohibit "the free exercise thereof." Early America's religious establishments, until the last gasp from Massachusetts's Congregational establishment in 1833, reflect the belief that a civilized society required an official religion. The Judeo-Christianity of the Cold War was a modification of this reflecting a similar idea: Americans *should* be religious, and they should be religious in certain prescribed *ways*. The way Patterson had of being religious did not fit, any more than atheism fit. In this way, Foxman fell easily within one long and well-established American tradition in writing that Patterson's religiosity "does harm to … the country."

Meanwhile, Patterson's version of American ideals also has a long history, and one that gained traction, ironically, during the same era when Judeo-Christianity was especially suspicious of it. The disestablishment of religion in different eras of American history has had a variety of motivations, but the one to which Patterson most appealed was both the most recent one and the most closely aligned with the particularly Baptist version. Though it draws upon, in some ways, the protracted struggle of Baptists as a tiny minority in colonial and revolutionary-era America, its major endorsement from the nation at large came from the Supreme Court in its decisions on a number of cases from *Engle v. Vitale* in 1962 through 1992's ruling in *Lee v. Weisman*. The undergirding principle has been that when the government supports religiosity of any sort, it seems to promote it; as such, it seems to denigrate those not a part of whatever religion is being supported. Hence, there can be no government support of religion, nor can there be any restrictions on religious practices without strong justification as a civil necessity. Fostering general goodwill and cordial relations among the citizens is not such a justification. Still, whether the Supreme Court intended to provide a universal value or a strictly American one is a little unclear. To have appealed to common nationality was a logical response to the kind of conflicts Foxman and Patterson had. Unfortunately for both, the nation's self-conception,

constantly in flux, provided insufficient resources to soothe the injury both sides felt, just as had been the case at the "Living Together Today" discussion in Louisville in 1986, when Southern Baptist Charles Talbert had given an impassioned plea for the Baptists of Jerusalem.

Thus, it was in some ways predictable that the ADL and the SBC would not maintain their partnership, despite a growing national interest in single-issue politics and strange-bedfellows coalitions. For large institutions to unite around a common cause, there needs to be agreement on what that common cause actually is. Even so, it would not be wise to call their efforts a failure. Both sides learned a great deal from the time they spent together, and perhaps their greatest lesson was that there is more than one way of being American, just as there is more than one way of being religious. Beyond this, however, they proved that good relationships across religious lines are possible, if both sides make a real effort to truly know the other, and if these relationships are personal rather than strictly institutional.

In the case of the cause of religious liberty in Israel, it is also worth noting that both sides acted with well-intentioned ignorance of the realities of life a world away. The Israel Bailey Smith and Leon Klenicki sought to defend was a non-existent Israel of American imagining—in all cases a Jewish Israel. Smith imagined a religiously Jewish Israel much like the time of Christ. Klenicki imagined a modern, ethnically Jewish Israel desperate to be free from outside religious influence. Neither imagined a religiously and ethnically nation that, much like their own, struggled to find a way to coexist cordially, one with its own concerns that might not line up with Americans' ideas of what was good and right. Their certainty that Americans can and do know what is best for the world was par for the course for Judeo-Christianity. In spite of attempting to reject it, both sides still held many of its basic assumptions about the world and America's place in it.

For the most part, it cannot be said that Americans have tended to uphold the ideal of religious liberty as a basic human right so much as for utilitarian purposes. Religion is subordinate to the state if the state is threatened in any way. On the other side of this coin, those who have upheld the ideal of religious liberty as a basic human right have not done so out of concern for what is good for the state, but rather for religion, and have subordinated the state's needs to the free exercise of religion. Yet although the two do often conflict, neither those who embrace Foxman's model nor those who embrace Patterson's tend to acknowledge this fact: there will be winners and losers no matter which model is chosen. One cannot be fully free without sacrificing some of the needs of diverse society. One cannot try to fulfill the needs of a government over a diverse society without at times infringing on total religious freedom. Looking at the fork in the road, the ADL and the SBC chose different paths that led away from one another. Both were true to what Will Herberg had called the "American Way"—as within a multitude of interpretations of religious identity, one also finds an array of possibilities for what counts as an American Way. Perhaps instead of referring to the "American Way," Herberg's *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* would have more accurately appealed to "American Ways." Having had no clear principle to guide America's citizens, the ADL and SBC ultimately found themselves unable to work together on the basis of a disagreement over national ideals.

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