

## Hijacking of the Christian faith: In 1934 Southern Baptists approved of Hitler.



As a pastor-teacher, my goal in these articles is to push back on the pernicious social, economic, and political (SEP) influences that undermine, corrupt, and hijack the truth, goodness, and beauty of the Christian faith. Authentic Christianity is transcendentally beautiful par excellence. It alone has the power through the matchless grace of God to transform a person into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. To get Christianity is to get a wholehearted love for God coupled with a sacrificial love for all others—regardless of SEP factors.

One of the best ways of grasping how pervasive SEP influences are is to look at history. In previous articles, I have noted how authentic Christianity has been hijacked by SEP influences throughout history: by Constantine/Rome (313), the crusades (1100-1300), the inquisitions (1231-1834), colonialism (1400-1800), antebellum America (1650-1850), Jim Crow South (1870-1960), Nazi Germany (1930-1940), consumer/prosperity Gospel (1950-2018), and by modern political Christianity (1950-2018). In each case, Christians have used the norms of the time in which they live to interpret the Bible. The only way out of this Dasein is an orientation to the first principles of thought and being as reflected in natural law (which contains objective and unchanging first principles for all people for all times).

One objection to my claim that even the most devoted and faithful Bible believer can be hijacked by culture goes something like ‘this would not happen to a Christian who really believed and lived by the Bible.’ In other words, one response is that if a Christian really believed in the fundamentals of the Bible, he would always be on the right side of history regarding SEP issues.

I have pointed out in previous articles that Jim Crow South was saturated with Bible believers who regularly preached and listened to messages promoting segregation—with plenty of biblical passages to support their racists and segregational sentiments (e.g., from the curse on Ham to God’s activity in the Tower of Babel separating the races).

To illustrate how one could be wholly devoted to the Bible and still be totally wrong on SEP issues, I would like to note a bit of Baptist history. Before I do, I want to make clear that I have nothing against Baptists. I am not a Baptist-basher. I pick this group for at least two reasons: (1) they are committed to the divine inspiration of Bible—many are Jesus-only and Bible-only believers, and (2) they tend to marry their Christianity with SEP powers on the Right and conservative movements.

In 1934 the Southern Baptists supported Hitler's activities, even after he had begun to crack down on the Jews and took firm control over Germany. Why were Southern Baptists visiting Germany in 1934 responding favorably to Adolf Hitler? Did they not have discernment? Couldn't they see the monster that he was to become?

The reason the Southern Baptists did not see the evil of Hitler is due to the marriage of their faith with SEP forces. They saw Hitler pulling his people out of the morass of economic depression that occurred after WWI. They liked how Hitler was improving the economy with rebuilding the military. They loved how he filled the German people with patriotism. They approved of Hitler's stance against the use of alcohol and tobacco. They loved Hitler's opposition to women smoking cigarettes and wearing red lipstick in public. They praised Hitler for cracking down on sex literature and risqué and violent movies that he was burning. They loved the fact that he was burning Jewish literature, especially that he was burning communistic books. As an aside, it is worthy to note that the first prisoners of the concentration camp of Dachau were communists and socialists.

Like the Pharisees, these Southern Baptists had become hypocrites who thought that the spiritual life was all about personal morality (vertical relationship with God) rather than more universal ideas of justice and mercy for all—those horizontal relationships (see Matt 23:23). The Hitler-approving Southern Baptists visiting Germany in 1934 were doing the same thing as they were doing back home in Jim Crow South as they focused on individual self-righteousness to the exclusion of holistic view of justice for all as per the divine mission for them to be salt and light in a nation. The Baptists had amassed great power and wealth at home and approved of the same in Hitler—all without understanding the full dignity of other human beings—social-economic-political forces (Dasein) hijacked their Christian faith.

The most chilling factor these Southern Baptists had in common with Hitler was “racial pride.” Just as Christianity in Germany was “Germanized,” so Christianity in Jim Crow South was “Southernized, Jim Crow Americanized.” Although circumstances (accidences) have changed, much of Christianity continues to “Rightized,” Republicanized,” “Leftized,” or “Democratized.”

One might think that after the lessons of Hitler and WWII one would abhor any type of racism. Such was not the case as I will point out in the story of the prominent Baptist leader W. A. Criswell, in the next article. To his credit, like George Wallace, he did repent of his racist ways, saying “never had I been so blind.”

My aim in these articles is to show what happens when social, economic, and political forces hijack Christianity. When these forces become more important than the teachings of Jesus Christ, they hijack our view of Christianity. In such cases, we become divisive “harlots” of SEP forces

of the world—a world which is inherently comprised of godless social, economic, and political forces.

Let us make every effort to follow the Lord instead of these corrupting influences. Let us show the world the love, beauty, and grace of Jesus Christ. Let's do our part in making Christianity beautiful--for the world is watching.