

Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels had a song called, "Devil With a Blue Dress On".

The idea behind the title is that sometimes that which is wicked can be very attractive. That reality was behind something I looked at on YouTube earlier this week. Some new friends had told me about a certain fellow's YouTube channel, and it sounded a bit odd to me that they might be recommending it, so I checked it out.

The experience put me in mind of a passage of Scripture found in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossian church in which he writes,

*"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;"* (Col 2:8, 9).

I'd like to tell you why the experience made me think of this passage.

The YouTube channel is run by a fellow named Dhar Mann. I watched one of his videos, and it was just as my friend had described. She'd told me that his videos were sort of encouraging in a way, and that they spoke of a fairness in life's situations, a fairness that would win out, the good guy coming out on top and the bad guy getting his "just desserts" so to speak... so I watched one. Take just a moment and "see" the story I watched...

*In the video, a young teen couple, he with a dream of being an NBA star, were discussing their "future". The boy told the girl that he'd be with her forever. She was afraid that if he actually achieved his dream of becoming an NBA star, that he'd change and she would no longer be able to trust him. The boy assured the girl that he'd never change, and then they did a "pinky swear" on it.*

*Some years later, as the NBA draft was underway, they watched it on TV to see if he would be picked for an NBA team, and maybe even if he would even be picked first! Sadly for them, someone else was picked first, But... he was picked second!*

*His fame was sealed. He was going to the NBA player and would be a player for the team he'd always dreamed about. The girl, still afraid that "he might change", had a wondering look on her face, which he noticed, causing him to pinky swear again, that he would never change. But wouldn't you know it? He changed.*

*After they got married and she caught him with another woman, he told her, "All famous people cheat." She responded, "I was faithful to you when you were nobody! How could you do this to Me?", he replied, "Sometimes things don't turn out the way you want them to".*

*She left him and his world fell apart... drinking, drugs, illicit relationship, the loss of his NBA contract... all of it. Gone. Then, after jail time he got his life straightened out! He was clean, sober, respectable again, and quite by accident he ran into the girl! Naturally, realizing he'd been the one in the wrong, he asked her if they could try again and pick up where they'd left off. Sadly for him, she said, "I've moved on". His response was to repeat her statement as a question, "Moved on... with who?!?". Just at that moment, guess who steps up and puts his arm around the girl to walk away with her! Right, the fellow that was picked as the first round draft pick, while our fellow had been second. With a satisfied smile, the girl says, at him, "Sometimes things don't turn out the way you want them to". She walked off, happy with*

*the first rounder, while the second rounder was left alone, dejected... but hey, he'd done it to himself, and only got what he deserved. She, having upheld her part of the pinky swear, wound up with first round pick after all.* The video ended there.

After seeing that horrible message, I looked around at Dhar Mann's YouTube page, and discovered that nearly all the videos were similar to that, some more so and some less so. Dhar is of far-Eastern decent, probably Indian, and it appears as though his message is that of the Eastern Mystics. The message of his videos was basically the message of Karma. Over-simplified, it's the idea is that the Universe will “even the score”, and that we ought to trust in the Universe, Its ability/bent to do that, and rejoice in It when It does... of course the Universe evening the score is dependent upon us as, we must do what we ought to do in order for things to “go right”; we do our part, and the Universe does Its.

Having seen the flavor of Mann's channel, and with that in my mind, I was surprised to find one particular advertiser on Mann's heavily monetized YouTube channel, who was advertising his Bible website on Mann's YouTube channel! Curious as to who with a Bible site would advertise on Mann's Karmic YouTube channel which was advocating an overtly non-Christian message, I went to the advertiser's site. Sure enough it was a site advocating a “christian philosophy” which I personally consider the most dangerous false teaching in Christendom today, what I call the “kingdom principle philosophy”. It's the idea that if you live according to certain Biblical principles – of course those principles being articulated and described by those who advocate this philosophy and not by Biblical scholars nor theologians – then you will experience the blessing of God (or the Universe) as a result. In other words, just try these Biblical principles and see if they don't work for what you're trying to accomplish/be/do/gain, etc. It's basically the same message only using the Bible's principles instead of the Eastern religions' Universal principles of Karma.

Both of these philosophies are more of a cosmology than a theology. Cosmology speaks of how things work in this existence, in the Cosmos, the Greek word for “world”. Theology on the other hand, speaks of the understanding of the Theos, the Greek word for God. We understand that this God, can be and wants to be known, and our theology is based on that. Karma and the kingdom principles philosophies are cosmologies based on the idea that the Universe operates according to certain principles which, if we just *get them*, we'll be OK, looked after, we'll win in the end, etc.

Both of these things are devils with blue dresses on. Both are “...according to the tradition of man and according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col 2:8). Karma and kingdom principles philosophies are mechanical, impersonal and *retributive*. Christianity on the other hand is relational, personal, *and, restorative and redemptive*. What do I mean by that?

You see, the stuff that was happening in Mann's YouTube videos was “retributive justice”. It's a sort of “justice” that actually kinda feels good, except it's wrong. Scripture tells us that God Himself and God alone will take vengeance on the offender, “*Vengeance is mine. I will repay.*” (Deut 32:35, Rom 12:19), says God. And the God who says this, is not the mechanical, impersonal Universe, but a personal, relational Theos/God who in truth, is not really looking for vengeance, nor retribution, but for restoration and redemption, for “*He is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to*

*repentance*" (2Pet 3:9).

God does not want to take vengeance, and does not want retribution, but wants rather for all to turn to Him for *restoration, forgiveness and redemption* to a *relationship* with Him and in Him!

In Mann's case, restoration and redemption are not being championed, but retributive justice. In the advertiser's case, what's being championed is the idea of being rewarded for one's "good decisions according to kingdom principles". Both mechanical, both impersonal, both attractive in their own way, both giving individuals some "control" over life's outcomes if they just follow the rules of *niceness*, both philosophies according to the traditions of men and the principles of the world, both wrong.

In point of fact, it might not even be in God's plan for one to be rewarded for good decisions, as counter-intuitive to human thinking as that sounds and is. *Indeed, "who has known the mind of the Lord?"* (1Cor 2:16), and we believers are told explicitly in Scripture that, *"what credit is it if we suffer for wrong doing, and take it patiently, but if we suffer for doing what is right and take it patiently, this is commendable before God"* (1Pet 2:20). Things not going "our own way" is frequently (always, really...) merciful! The relational aspects of Christianity are more significant than getting our way and winning out in the end. Besides, how many humans do you know who actually know how things ought to go?

Mann, *and* the advertiser don't know what we know; that *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death"*.

Hmm... where have I heard that before? Oh yeah... Prov 14:12, 16:25

Pastor