

Born OK the First Time?

Jim Elliff

While walking through my neighborhood, I happened upon a car and a truck belonging to a family that lived a few blocks away. On one of the vehicles was a bumper sticker that boasted, “Born OK the first time.”

Hmm . . . What does that mean? I ruminated on this while walking along. I arrived at the conclusion that it must have been intended to say that whoever is talking to the car’s owner about being born *again* had better cease and desist. “I am perfectly OK without a second birth, thank you,” would be another way of saying it.



But on the other vehicle yet another bumper sticker declared, “I believe in myths, like dragons, fairies, and good men.” I’ll assume this is the wife’s car. She might be saying something about the man she married, the one who was “born OK the first time.” It might be a subtle way to say to her husband, “No you weren’t!”

But then again, she is more likely saying that males in general are just no good.

I couldn’t help but laugh at the theological conflict this family is expressing. If men are OK the first time, yet, at the very same time, it is a myth that there are any good men at all, then one or both of these people needs to change his/her spiritual glasses. You can’t have it both ways.

There is a reason for Jesus saying, “You must be born again.”

You *must* because, contrary to what the bumper sticker says, you were not born OK the first time. If there is one message that should be obvious it is that we are sinful creatures. Sin finds its origin in

our nature, even as newborns. We do not just learn to sin, we are sinners by nature and therefore sinners in practice. We are born spiritually dead. Being “born again” is another way of saying that a dead person is now made alive spiritually. Jesus believed that this new birth must take place or the consequences are dour. In fact, those who are not born again will remain condemned before God, with hell to face.

There really are no good men—or women, for that matter. That is no myth. And all are in need of the new birth because the first birth was definitely *not* OK.

You may be able to get a smile or two, or perhaps a honk, or even an angry look, by presenting such theological errors on bumper stickers. But at the end of the day you have to rise above bumper sticker theology and believe what Jesus said: “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again (John 3:7).’”

You might be surprised to find that the Bible speaks of the new birth as entirely God’s act toward the dead soul. In the same way that a baby is given life without exerting himself or deciding for it, God gives new birth to the dead, passive soul of people like you or me who cannot produce it on our own. But we still must have it. (See John 3:8)

If you are born again, you will know it. Life inside of you shows itself in true trust in Christ, and a future that is uniquely His.

If this man experiences the new birth, he will likely change his bumper sticker to read “BORN OK THE SECOND TIME—ASK MY WIFE.”

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