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## Are You A Misfit?

By David Sielaff, Director, May 2002, Revised August 2023

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Are you a misfit? Probably. The fact that you are reading this article makes it likely you are a spiritual misfit. If you are like me you sometimes feel that you do not “fit” into the world, your culture, even your village or town. Like me, many of you have rejected religious traditions you received from fathers and mothers, family and friends, teachers, or clergy. This probably caused some drastic changes — even severe conflicts — with those same people. Some of you have gone from organization to organization searching for spiritual understanding and truth. This is a sign of *misfit-ism*.<sup>1</sup>

One of the formative authors of my college years was the immigrant blue-collar philosopher by the name of Eric Hoffer. Of several books composed over decades of working as a manual laborer, migrant farmworker and longshoreman, one of his important books was *The Ordeal of Change*, about the impact “drastic change” has on individuals and societies. (See an interview with Eric Hoffer: “[Conversations with Eric Hoffer; 1: The Ordeal of Change.](#)”)

### *The Role of Drastic Change in Life*

Hoffer points out a distinctive characteristic about America and other immigrant societies (which would include countries such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, and even Israel and the Palestinians after World War II) was that the uprooting of the immigrants from their culture, society, and families, being torn from their attachments that give them identity of their place in life, causes these people to be misfits. Regarding America, Hoffer writes,

**“The millions of immigrants dumped on our shores after the Civil War underwent a tremendous**

<sup>1</sup> Yes, I am coining a new word, *misfitism*. If the churches of the world can create new but unbiblical doctrines out of nothing, then I have the right to create a theological term.

**change, and it was a highly irritating and painful experience. Not only were they transferred, almost overnight, to a wholly foreign world, but they were, for the most part, torn from the warm communal existence of a small town or village somewhere in Europe and exposed to the cold and dismal isolation of an individual existence.”**

• **Eric Hoffer, *Between the Devil and the Dragon*, p. 148<sup>2</sup>**

Change brings stress. Even change in everyday events and routine can affect how we approach new situations. Hoffer relates that for months in the summer of 1936 he was in California picking peas, going from field to field until all the peas of the season were picked. He observed the hesitation he had when he switched to picking string beans. He wondered if he would be able to do it.<sup>3</sup>

So too, a young lady of my acquaintance had a terrible fear of each new school year, from kindergarten up through her first two years of college. Every year she had such a dread of the new situations that she experienced severe stress, tears, and even mild illness. Fear of the new, fear of change.

Hoffer’s experience and the young lady’s stress of each new school year are mild compared to the effects of drastic change. It is now well known that major life changes, whether good or bad, marriage or divorce, a new job, or the loss of an old one, losing a house or moving to a new one, a birth or a death in the family — all major life changes can cause considerable stress. Several such changes occurring within a short period of time can cause so much stress as to be life-threatening. Hoffer explains:

**“In the case of drastic change, the uneasiness is of course deeper and more lasting. We can never be really prepared for that which is wholly new. We have to adjust ourselves, and every radical adjustment is a crisis in self-esteem: we undergo a test, we have to prove ourselves. It needs inordinate self-confidence to face drastic change without inner trembling.”**

• **Hoffer, p. 147**

### ***The Role of Traditions***

Sometimes change is voluntary and sometimes change is forced upon us. Traditions help us cope with such changes. Traditions of culture, ritual and religion were created by societies to assist in dealing with major events that life hands out to each of us. These events are cataloged in the book of Ecclesiastes:

**“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.  
 A time to *be born* and a time to *die*;  
 A time to *plant* and a time to *pluck up* that which is planted;  
 A time to *kill* and a time to *heal*;  
 A time to *break down* and a time to *build up*;  
 A time to *weep* and a time to *laugh*;  
 A time to *mourn* and a time to *dance*;  
 A time to *cast away stones* and a time to *gather stones together*;  
 A time to *embrace* and a time to *refrain from embracing*;  
 A time to *get* and a time to *lose*;  
 A time to *keep* and a time to *cast away*;  
 A time to *rend* and a time to *sew*;**

<sup>2</sup> All references to Eric Hoffer’s work are taken from [Between the Devil and the Dragon: The Best Essays and Aphorisms of Eric Hoffer](#) (New York: Harper & Row, 1982). Passages selected are from his work *The Ordeal of Change*.

<sup>3</sup> Hoffer, p. 147. Hoffer goes on at p. 148. Consider his statement with regard to immigration around the world:

**“A population subjected to drastic change is a population of misfits—unbalanced, explosive and hungry for action. Action is the most obvious way by which to gain confidence and prove our worth, and it is also a reaction against loss of balance ... Thus drastic change is one of the agencies which release man’s energies.”**

**A time to keep silence and a time to speak;  
A time to love and a time to hate;  
A time of war and a time of peace.”**

• **Ecclesiastes 3:1–8**

This biblical passage catalogues significant life events. These events are common to the human condition, but they are not routine to the individuals experiencing them.

Every society in history develops traditions and rituals that attempt to ease the impact of these life changes. Community is built upon the shared experiences of drastic changes. The Law of Moses, which came from God, has comments and rules on most every aspect of the “times” listed in Ecclesiastes. Wide drastic change to a community can threaten the established order and traditions. Read the story of Stephen and especially Acts 6:13–14 where the people of Jerusalem murdered Stephen for preaching things that threatened to drastically “**change the customs which Moses delivered to us.**”

So too the *ekklesia*, the Body of Christ, has been built through common endurance of drastic change. Does this idea seem absurd? It should not. You are changed drastically because you have learned, you know, and you understand that **you** have been saved — and God was the one who caused you to realize it.<sup>4</sup>

### **So, How Have You Been Changed?**

As a believer, you are a misfit in the world because you have already been changed. You have been taken by God, step by step, from your religious roots, rituals, and traditions; and you have been put into a different condition, a different situation relating to this world and relating to God. You have been placed in the category of being a “**new creation.**”

**“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is A NEW CREATURE [a new creation in Greek], old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new[!]. All things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ ...”**

• **2 Corinthians 5:17–18**

**“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision, but [you are] A NEW CREATURE [a new creation].”**

• **Galatians 6:15**

That is a substantial change from those who have not yet been given that gift. You are now different than those around you who do not know God. It is not a change that is experienced or felt, yet it is real.

### **As A Misfit, We Are In Good Company**

I consider many of the major actors (good and evil) of the Old and New Testaments who were moved by God to various places and had drastic changes occur in their lives, so they would act and fulfill God’s purposes in history and in the story of salvation. Most of them were misfits! Here are just a few examples.

**ADAM was a misfit.** He started living in the midst of the peaceful Garden, but was cast from the Garden into Eden (Genesis 3:23). He was a misfit and was forced to accept a major change by leaving the Garden.

**NOAH was a misfit.** Noah was 600 years old when the flood came (Genesis 7:6). A misfit in his original society, he trusted God, and lived in an entirely different world, dying 350 years after the flood (Genesis 9:29).

**ABRAHAM was a misfit.** God uprooted him from his home, family, traditions, and society, and told him to move, first from Mesopotamia to Haran with Terah, then with Lot to Canaan (Genesis 12:1–5, where

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<sup>4</sup> See the articles on the ASK website: “[The Way to Salvation in the Christian Gospel](#)” and “[By Grace Are You Saved.](#)” To understand the process God uses to “open your mind” to receive the Gospel. Hopefully your experience was less dramatic than that of the apostle Paul.

YHWH made a covenant with Abram at age 99, Genesis chapter 17), for him to have sons. Abraham moved later to Egypt, to Bethel with Lot, to Gerar (Genesis 20:1). Although he was a nomad, he grew up in the city of Haran far away in Mesopotamia. Abraham “**obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went**” (Hebrews 11:8). Nor did he receive God’s promise.

**JACOB was certainly a misfit.** He uprooted himself to go to Haran to escape Esau (Genesis 27:43), stopped in Bethel where he saw the Gate of Heaven (Genesis 28:17), lived with Laban in Haran, moved back to Canaan, and later went to Egypt during a famine, being rescued by God through Joseph.

**ESAU was a misfit.** Jacob’s twin brother, he moved from Canaan to Mount Seir after Jacob stole his blessing. The progenitor of the Edomite people (Genesis 36:5–8), he lived an active and dangerous life.

**JOSEPH was a misfit.** Uprooted from his family and home through treachery by his brothers, sold into slavery, and taken to Egypt in a horrible situation. God turned circumstances to benefit Joseph, his brothers, and families that became the people and nation of Israel.

**MOSES was a misfit.** Several times everything in life changed for Moses: fleeing Egypt at age 40, returning to Egypt at age 80, fled **with** the people of Israel, crossed the Red Sea, led Israel for 40 years in the Wilderness, and dying at the edges of the land God promised to Israel.

**The PEOPLE OF ISRAEL were misfits.** Uprooted from slavery in Egypt, under Moses they wandered 40 years in the Wilderness, then were led by Joshua into land God promised for them. The people repeatedly disobeyed, God’s punishment came by foreign invasion, followed by God raising up Judges to save them.

**DAVID was a misfit.** After an eventful childhood with elder brothers, David rose to fame by killing Goliath, then he was hunted in the wilderness by King Saul. After Saul’s death, David was anointed as King, eventually to rule the twelve tribes of Israel. As king, he was threatened by rebellions, wars, and an exile.

**The PROPHETS were misfits.** Each prophet of YHWH was uprooted from normal life; a burden they all seemed to bear. Some were drafted by God to serve Him, and some complained to God about their ministry.

**The APOSTLES were misfits.** Each personally chosen, the apostles were uprooted from their lives to travel during the ministry of Jesus. They were commissioned to travel, preach the Gospel and be “**fishers of men.**”

**The EARLY ekklesias were small groups of misfits.** Many Jews were persecuted to leave Judea. Gentile Christians were persecuted by local and province officials.

**YOU are a misfit!** Your direction in life was likely changed by Christ opening your mind to receive the information about His death and resurrection, and to act upon it. Your sins have been imputed to Him (2 Corinthians 5:19–21). His righteousness has been imputed to you (Philippians 3:8–9 and Ephesians 2:8–9). You may be rejected, criticized, or hated by family or friends. This is **THE** most drastic change of your life.

In this you have something in common with many major figures of Scripture. They too were misfits. They, like you, were given truth, faith, and grace from God through Christ. They, like you, will not receive their reward until our resurrection from the dead to glory. As the apostle Paul instructs us:

“**And be you renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the NEW MAN** [a new humanity], **which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.**”

• **Ephesians 4:23–24**

### **What Signifies a “Spiritual Misfit”**

A spiritual misfit is easily understood by what you hold to be true and how far it deviates from religious traditions you have been taught. Here are several examples,

- If you accept what the apostle Paul writes, simply and clearly, to the Corinthians that,

**“There is none other God but one ... There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by him, howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge ...”**

• **1 Corinthians 8:4, 6 (cf. 1 Timothy 2:5)**

If you experience what Paul talks about — ***then you are a spiritual misfit***. Here are more indicators:

- If you believe that verse and the context it was given, and to *whom* it was given,<sup>5</sup> and you understand that God is *not* an unbiblical (and incomprehensible) Trinity — ***then you are a spiritual misfit***.
- If you believe that Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law of Moses in every possible way, and that you are no longer bound to act out that law as infants — ***then you are a spiritual misfit***.<sup>6</sup>
- If you understand the imputation of sins to Christ and imputation of Christ’s righteousness to you (Ephesians 2:5–6) — ***then you are a spiritual misfit***.<sup>7</sup>
- If you comprehend that you *died* on the tree of crucifixion when Christ died (in our place) on that tree (Colossians 2:11–13; Galatians 2:20) — ***then you are a spiritual misfit***.
- If you understand that the phrase “immortal soul” is not in the Bible, that the concept is in fact a pagan doctrine, that at death the soul ceases to exist until the resurrection, and that Christ **“only has immortality”** (1 Timothy 6:16) — ***then you are a spiritual misfit***.
- If you grasp the concept that God’s revelation to man in the Bible was progressive and ever enlarged in scope, up to and including the capstone teaching of the Mystery — ***then you are a spiritual misfit***.
- If you can prove there is no “Hell” and that it too has a pagan origin — ***then you are a spiritual misfit***.
- If you know the concept of “eternity” does not exist in the Bible, that time has a beginning and an end, and that the Hebrew word *olam* and the Greek word *aion* do not mean “forever” or “eternity” — ***then you are likely a spiritual misfit***.
- If you believe, like the apostle Paul that your human will is weaker than God’s will, that His will is supreme, and that,

**“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who WILL have all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth, ... who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”<sup>8</sup>**

• **1 Timothy 2:3–4, 6**

— ***then you are likely a spiritual misfit***.

- If you believe that all people, regardless of time or situation, will come to a *full knowledge* of the truth (see above, 1 Timothy 2:4) — ***then you are a spiritual misfit***.
- If it is your understanding that your beliefs should be guided by the statements of Scripture and not by the traditions of men or organizations — ***then you are a spiritual misfit***.
- If you feel that “creeds” of belief are unnecessary (and if such statements of belief are desired they

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<sup>5</sup> Remember, the Corinthian people Paul wrote to were “babes” in Christ. If the Trinity was a *basic* Christian doctrine, would Paul have addressed it at this time? Of course he would. Remember also, the context of this passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 8 was about false gods. What Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 8:4–6 was what Paul wanted them to **know** as basic doctrine. By the way, I was specifically taught in seminary that the Trinity is not provable, not comprehensible, that it is “alluded to” in the Bible, and that it was permissible for Church councils to expand, elucidate and enforce the doctrine that was not taught in the Bible. This was taught in a Protestant seminary.

<sup>6</sup> See the chapter 1, “[The Law of God](#)” in Ernest Martin’s book [Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#), pp. 1–24.

<sup>7</sup> See chapters 6, 7 and 8 of *Essentials*.

<sup>8</sup> God does everything according to **“the pleasure of His will.”** See Ephesians 1:5, 9, Philippians 2:13 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11.

should simply list relevant biblical verses) — *then you are a spiritual misfit.*

- If you are uncomfortable with religious people and clergy who choose to wear clothes different from non-clergy to set themselves apart from “ordinary” people — *then you are a spiritual misfit.*<sup>9</sup>
- If you are able to recognize the stupidity of occult and sexual symbols on religious buildings of worship and wonder why they are there, and whether the worshippers or clergy know what they mean — *then you are a spiritual misfit.*
- If you recognize that most traditions of modern Christian denominations are pale copies of the ordained Old Testament Law of Moses that was for a specific people under specific circumstances — *then you are a spiritual misfit.*

If you understand that tithes,

- can **only** be received when a Temple is functioning;
  - can **only** be given from agriculture or animal production;
  - can **only** be received by Levites and not by Gentile ministers);
  - **only** pertain to Israelites;
  - not given according to the Law is a sin to the giver;
  - is a sin if received by any ministers, priests, imams, or rabbis today;<sup>10</sup>
- **then you are a spiritual misfit.**

Look back over your life. Each one of you could tell me about the hurdles you overcame, the errors you corrected, the persecutions you suffered, the hatreds you endured, or even physical events you have endured, all because you believed differently than the traditions you were raised with and made decisions to believe the Word of God.

### **Education — It's What You Are Experiencing NOW**

Let me return once more to Eric Hoffer regarding the goal of education. It can help you cope with change:

**“The central task of education is to implant a will and facility for learning; it should produce not LEARNED but LEARNING people. The truly human society is a learning society, where grandparents, parents and children are students together.”**

• *Hoffer, p. 146*

To put it another way, the purpose of education is to teach you *how* to learn. The purpose of ASK (through the books, pamphlets, articles, and the website) is to teach you the basics, so you can learn for yourself what God is communicating to you through the Bible. The Bible *is* the written Word of God. God willing, ASK’s teaching will be available when God brings new students.

Many ask, “Why doesn’t God communicate with me directly?” Well, He has, and He is doing so now, through the Holy Scriptures.

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<sup>9</sup> I like the hats they wear. In my old age I may start a collection of religious hats and wear them around the house — or I might even parade around in public wearing the religious hats. (You can buy them on the “interweb”! (“[Bishop Hats & Headgear](#)” on *ebay*) After all, that is what “Church Leaders” do! They literally parade around in their religious headgear, whatever they call them: caps, hats, bonnets, chapeaux (plural), crowns, a bishop’s mitre, or a papal tiara — whatever! — all show their religious status and superiority above other people. I think God laughs at them. See Dr. Martin’s article, “[The Folly of Tradition](#)” and “[The Coming Collapse of Traditional Religious Foundations.](#)”

<sup>10</sup> See Dr. Martin’s book, [The Tithing Dilemma](#) (Third edition. ASK, 1994). You can read it, or listen to it for free. Better yet, read along while the text is read to you.

If you ignore Scripture, avoid it,<sup>11</sup> or use it merely as a salve for your emotions, then you are disregarding an important tool that can increase your understanding of God and the place for you in His plan of creation. Using Scripture for comfort is not wrong, but too many people use the Bible only for that purpose — to feel that God loves them.

If you truly love someone, as I presume you love God, then you should want to learn everything you can about God our Father and His first-born Son. Such knowledge and understanding can lead to wisdom. It is a life-long process without an end until death. Wisdom can help you deal with the changes that occur in your life, the lives of others, and the frightening changes to come in the world (see Proverbs 4:6, and 4:11–12).

**“In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.”**

• *Hoffer, p. 146 (emphasis mine)*

Drastic change is coming on the world scene in events that will shatter the minds and emotions of many. These changes will come sooner rather than later. The “misfits,” especially spiritual misfits like you and me, will cope with that change better than anyone. Then we can help others cope with drastic changes in their lives and surroundings.

### **Radical “Drastic Change” Will Occur In Your Future**

As a new creation, God is equipping you now to inherit the future, whether at the moment of your resurrection from the dead or at the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ. You will be properly equipped because God is doing a work for you, with you and through you:

**“For it is God which works in YOU both to will and to do His good pleasure. [Therefore] Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that YOU may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom YOU shine as lights in the world.”**

• *Philippians 2:13–15*

If you are already being a light to the world, then you are performing God’s will in your life.

Your coming change from mortal to immortal, from a fleshly nature to a spiritual nature, from a physical body to a spiritual body at the moment of the resurrection (1 Corinthians chapter 15); for you to inherit your place with Christ (that you possess legally at this moment) as a member of the body of Christ at the right hand of God the Father — all these drastic changes will occur at the same moment. But you will cope with them well. As Paul wrote, quoting from Isaiah 64:4:<sup>12</sup>

**“As it is written, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.”**

• *1 Corinthians 2:9–10*

That change will be drastic, but not stressful, then:

**“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed ...”**

• *1 Corinthians 15:52*

Then ... finally ... you will no longer be a misfit. You will be home.

David Sielaff, 2002, 2023

<sup>11</sup> It seems that most churches avoid the Bible like the plague. In the past some denominations discouraged members to read the Bible (even under penalty of death!) and prefer that the sheep of their flock obey traditions of men.

<sup>12</sup> Quotes from the Old Testament within the New Testament should both be read. New Testament authors quote the Old Testament for good reasons.