

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with George Henry Walser and the city of Liberal, Mo. As we reflect on him, let us remember the words of Jesus about false teachers: **“By their fruit you will recognize them” (Matt. 7:16)**. There are many deceivers in the world (2 Jn. 7), and the easiest way to recognize them is by their fruit. For example, take a look around you and you will probably see some wood. It may be in furniture, cabinets, or doors, or perhaps in may a tree outside. The easiest way to identify what kind of wood it is is not by it's color, grain, or bark, but by it's fruit. You cannot pick grapes from a thorn bush! Similarly, in this way you can easily identify false teachers. You may be confused by what false teachers say or write, but you should not be confused by what they produce.

Walser was an atheist whose brag and bluster created some bad fruit. In 1880 he founded a city about 25 miles north of Joplin and named it “Liberal”. He was confident that it would be a utopia leading the way for other cities to follow. Since he didn't believe in God he forbade any church to be within the city limits and named streets after men like Ingersoll, Darwin, and Paine. He bragged *“It is the only town in the United States set apart for liberalism alone, and the only town of its size in the world without a priest, preacher, church, saloon, God or hello, and, they are the happiest and purest people on earth.”* Sadly the fruit produced by Liberal was not what Walser had hoped for or promised.

Some years ago I wrote a book about George H. Walser and Liberal, Missouri. You can link to this book via: http://boycemouton.com/englishbooks/files/george_walser_liberal_mo.pdf

As you might guess, immorality abounded in Liberal. Foeticide (abortion) was common. Mrs. Rosenkrantz, wife of the hotel keeper, died during her 16th abortion. The ground around the hotel was said to be full of murdered babies. The Sunday evening entertainment involved dancing, and for a dollar you could go back stage and commit fornication with a woman who was there for that purpose. An expose printed by the St. Louis Post Dispatch resulted in a \$25,000 law suit. When Walser was aware that the defense was thoroughly prepared to prove that *“Liberal was a den of infamy, and its hotels brothels, the prosecution asked that the suit be dismissed their own costs”*.

In the mean while Walser was having other troubles. Liberal was in financial distress. The bonds of the town were offered at 15 cents on the dollar without purchasers. His second wife, Hannah, divorced him and was awarded \$3,600 cash and \$25 per month alimony. His third wife, Alice, was a spiritualist medium and lecturer and 37 years his junior. She was neurotic, addicted to drugs, and died by suicide July 14, 1902. Walser was 68 years old at the time and in failing health. Three months later, Oct. 12, 1902, Walser married Esther J. Jamieson at Galena, Kansas. After George died she married and divorced two more men, Robert W. Bock, and James Edsall. On January 10, 1924, the circuit court of Jasper County allowed Esther to reclaim the name of Walser. I am assuming she did this to collect his military pension. Sadly, George had lied about his military service. He claimed to be a Lieutenant Colonel in the Union Army, but was only a Captain. More damaging, however, is that George was *“dishonorably dismissed the service of the United States, for malfeasance in office while Provost Marshall at St. Joseph, Mo.”* Consequently George was not entitled to any military pension at all.

The good news is that in 1909 George wrote a book titled “The Life and Teachings of Jesus” and described himself as a converted infidel. He wrote: *“In my early life I rejected much of orthodox Christianity, and parts of the Old Testament as being merely history and crude reasonings of primitive*

men in their first awakening to the belief and dependence on a power above and beyond themselves. As a free thinker, I wandered into the field of Materialism, Atheism, Agnosticism, and finally Spiritualism, and I am ever thankful for my schooling along these lines, for my mind has been broadened, my conception brightened, and my nature brought more in harmony with my duty towards my fellow men. I write from the standpoint of a converted infidel. I have patiently investigated without bias all sides of mental and spiritual philosophies. All I desire is the truth whose footprints I will follow where it leadeth; for what is truth for me is truth for all, whether that truth is divine or secular. The life and teaching of the Master can only be fully appreciated through the aid of the imagination, guided and stimulated by all the facts and of the world at his time . . . I have wandered in the desert of disbelief, waded in the river of doubt, and in the sands of desolation. I have looked for hope and found none . . . I felt there was something more, there must be something more, or nature is a fraud and life the gall of a bitter cheat”.

Fortunately, we can learn from Walser’s example and do not have to “wander in the desert of disbelief” as he did.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce