

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 5

In our last letter Grandpa quoted a challenge from James Russell Lowell for skeptics to stop living like parasites in Christian communities and create their own “utopia”. Just such an experiment took place in 1880 about 25 miles north of Joplin, Missouri. The man who initiated the experiment was an unbeliever named George Henry Walser. He named his dream town “Liberal” and invited liberal people from all over the world to join in his experiment. He named streets after his heroes like Ingersoll, Darwin, and Payne. He forbade churches within the city limits and instead invited people to “The University of Mental Liberty.. He invested his fortune in this great experiment because he believed his philosophy would produce the happiest and purest people on earth.

He was wrong!

Grandpa wrote a book about Liberal, Missouri which you can be access through [www.boycemouton.com](http://www.boycemouton.com) Click on “English Books” and scroll down to *George Walser and Liberal, Missouri*. Much of the book is documentation that I don’t believe is available anywhere else.

Walser, like all of us, was a sinner. The Bible teaches that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). In this regard “God fearing” people have a strong incentive to tell the truth. In a court of law, for example, witnesses place their hand on the Bible and swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If you do not believe in God, and do not believe in the Bible, all bets are off.

Since Walser did not believe in God or the Bible, he had little or no reason to tell the truth. For example, he lied about his military service claiming to be a Lieutenant Colonel, when he was only a Captain. He also conveniently hid from his followers the embarrassing fact that he was dishonorably dismissed from the Union Army May 4, 1865. The official reason was “malfeasance in office while Provost Marshall at St. Joseph, Missouri”. He was apparently involved in a scam extorting money from wealthy farmers. Other evidence is given in the above mentioned book to show that Walser made money in other dishonest ways. When his fourth wife, Esther, tried to collect his military pension she found out too late that he did not always tell the truth. Based on what he told her she buried him in the Lake Cemetery in Lamar, Missouri as a “Lieutenant. Colonel”. Only to find out later that he was only a Captain. Even more discouraging to her was the fact that he was not eligible for a pension because he was dishonorably dismissed from the military. (See Document # 33 in the above mentioned book).

I still admire Walser, however, for his willingness to test his liberal theories in the laboratory of life. He had a dream and spared no expense to make his dream come true. Within a year he published a newspaper called the Liberalite”. He founded the first hotel in Liberal. He designed and developed a thirteen acre park at the cost of \$40,000. For indoor events he constructed a large octagonal building, called the “Celestial Dome”, complete with a stage and moveable seating. He built summer cottages, a boarding house, and also an ice cream and lemonade stand. He planted

flower beds with ornamental fountains, twenty latticed vine covered pergolas, and an artificial lake. The lake was used for bathing in the summer and ice skating in the winter. He also erected the above mentioned University of Mental Liberty. He even founded a “Free thought University” and vowed to provide an education free from the Bible, creed, or ism.

In 1885 the St. Louis Globe Democrat published the following critique of Liberal, Missouri: *“Now, at the end of five years, and at a time when one should be able to determine pretty accurately the value of such an experiment, the great religious daily sends a missionary into Barton County to ascertain how grows a town under a liberal influence and the best of natural advantages. The missionary remains in Liberal for a day and a half; mixes thoroughly with the people, and, after a due consideration of everything heard and observed, is compelled to say that the experiment is a failure; that the town, instead of keeping pace with other towns of the same age, has fallen far behind them, and instead of being the happy, prosperous, community it promised to be, is shriveled, contracted, torn into by dissensions, and is in a condition where only prompt actions in behalf of its friends toward a complete reorganization will save it from disintegrations ... nearly one third of the inhabitants of Liberal have moved off of Walser's land and established a town of their own, called Denison ...”*

Clark Braden wrote in *“The Fulfillment of a Dream”*: *“The bonds of the town and its warrants are offered at fifteen cents on the dollar and without purchasers. The marshal, in November 1886, sued the town for the eighty-five cents he lost on each dollar of its warrants issued to pay him. The coal mines, of which so much was said in the paper of Liberal, have not averaged a car of coal a day during the time they worked. The miners were idle three fourths of the time, and Walser is preparing to close them. The paper has suspended and the office material is for sale. The public school has no building to meet in, the partly finished school house is locked up, and loaded with debt, business men are moving their goods, people are leaving, and those that are left, look like mourners awaiting a funeral or criminals awaiting the penalty. So stands Liberal, December 1886”.*

We should not be surprised that dishonest and immoral people would gravitate to a community without a Bible or a church. We see this same thing happening in the crime ridden inner city in our own generation. My good friend Gilbert Wesley founded a church in a godless neighborhood in Kingston, Jamaica. The church meets in a bank building which was abandoned because there was too much crime in the area. Gilbert’s brother, a police officer, told me that within only one year the influence of the church reduced crime in the area by 33 %. Sadly, this godly policeman has since been murdered in that very neighborhood. His murder is only one of many unsolved crimes that take place in that neighborhood.

To me, the happiest part of the story of Liberal, Missouri is that Walser was man enough to admit his mistake and even described himself as a “converted infidel”.

In 1909, the year before his death, he wrote a 442 page hard back book titled “The Life and Teachings of Jesus”. In this book he said he had patiently investigated without bias all sides of mental and spiritual philosophies and described himself as a converted infidel. On page 265 he makes reference to such famous leaders as Huxley, Hume, Guizot, Macaulay, and Voltaire. Then,

on the following two pages he pens this remarkable tribute to Jesus:

*But there is one conqueror who stands alone, above them all; who has conquered riches with poverty, pride with humility, ostentation with meekness, hate with love. He succored the weak and suppressed the strong, reprovved the tyrant and sympathized with the oppressed. The wails of woe found pity in his heart. He was the personification of goodness, kindness. He was by nature as tender of heart as a pure woman. He was a hero in fortitude and a great warrior in the battles of right against wrong. He was a conqueror of the passions of the body and a director of the intellect to the highest stand of men's duties one to another. The sick of body, soul, and mind were of his charge. He had a deep concern for the afflictions of the world, and in ministering to them forgot himself. And finally he transformed the dreaded king of death into a white-winged angel of peace which kisses the eyelids down upon this world that they may open again on a better and brighter one, and made the soul sing the immortal song of joy, "Oh, Death, where is thy sting? Oh Grave, where is thy victory?" This was the conqueror Jesus whose words of truth pierced the hearts of men with the barbs of love and led them from the trammels of sin to the glories of righteousness, in mercy, charity, and good will toward men.*

*Jesus, with boundless love and forgiving spirit, carried his own cross to the place of crucifixion and with calmness he met the frowns of scorn, with love he answered the shafts of hate, and as the cruel spear entered his blessed side and they could do no more, he uttered the grandest prayer that ever ascended to the throne of God: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do": What a triumph! What a victory! What a conqueror!"*

After a life time of experimentation, Walser came to the same wise conclusion as King Solomon. To fear God and keep His commandments is the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13). I pray that you, my own beloved grandchildren, will learn this important lesson from men like Solomon and Walser. I'm sure you have heard the old cliché that those who do not learn from history are destined to repeat it. Please pay attention and learn from history!

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to read this letter. I pray for every one of you every day. I want you to always follow the truth wherever it may lead. George Henry Walser patiently investigated all sides and concluded that Jesus Christ is Lord. Many other skeptics have gone through the same lengthy process and come to the same conclusion. I have also concluded that Jesus Christ is Lord. I believe that service to Him brings happiness and fulfillment both here and hereafter. I pray that you will come to the same conclusion and that we will spend eternity together in heaven.

Today is a gift from God. May you use it wisely!

Love,

Grandpa Boyce