

from
**REQUIEM
FOR A TOWN**

Karl C. Sandberg



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The truth, they said anciently,
Is hidden in the bottom of a well,
But the truth is, Brigham,
You were as great as God Almighty
And filled the valleys of the mountains
east, west, north, and south,
And you moved a hundred thousand hands.
I don't know the truth about you
that is hidden in the bottom of the well,
But I know you lived and moved in the sage brush people:

*"The first thing I want to tell this congregation
is to move that privy about fifty yards
closer to this meeting house. If someone
got taken short he'd never make it."*

(These words Wilda Andersen retained for over sixty years
out of the two hour sermon)

or

to the sister who had been administered to
by a wine-drinking elder and who wanted
to know if that were proper:

"Did you get well?"

"Yes."

"Then I'd rather be administered to
by that elder dead drunk
than half the elders in this
church cold sober."

This was not your valley, Brigham,
and not your town,
colonized for the kingdom
or laid out on the plumb
line of Zion,

But they were a race of story tellers,
you lived in these words
which they touched and hefted
in the telling of their tales.

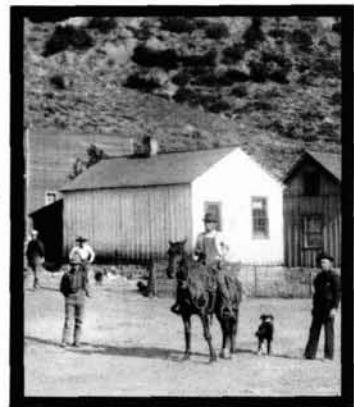
and more,
yes, there were old ones here
had seen you strike your cane in the ground
or raise your arm to the square
in Meadow or Fillmore or St. George
and could recall the taste of the words
you sowed broadcast into the wind,
the language of the blood,
the language of the spirit,
the salt taste of kingdom.



and your words,
forgotten or never understood
or even heard
caused you to brood like a presence
among the sagebrush people,
Though when the valley was settled,
the veil had dropped on

*"The Kingdom of God must stand
free and independent
of all other kingdoms,
And I wish to live in such a way
that the wicked
and the haters of good
Will not like me very well,
For the day of threshing will come,
the day of separation of this kingdom
from all other kingdoms.
Are you prepared to have
the thread cut
today?"*

*For we have no other business at hand
Than to subdue the earth
And deliver up the kingdom
To Him whose right it is to reign.
I wish to announce
we have forsaken the
kingdom of darkness
And come out in open rebellion
to the power of the devil
on this earth
And I for one will fight him
so long as there is breath
in my body,
and do all in my power
To overthrow his government and rule.
And if he complains
I shall very politely ask him
to go to his place
where he belongs
And if any in this community
wish to sustain
the government of the devil
in preference to the Kingdom of God
I wish them to go to their place
where they belong.*



("I want to be like Brigham and Heber,
they can handle the Devil without kid gloves"—
these words recorded in the journal of one of
the Dixie settlers in 1857)

*"And now, ye elders of Israel,
I want you to learn the mysteries of the Kingdom:
Learn how to yoke together two oxen,
how to manage them across the plains,
how to get timber from the canyons,
how to make brick and how to hew stones,
and bring them into shape and position
to please the eye
and bring comfort and happiness to the Saints.
These are some of the mysteries of the Kingdom.
Learn how to reconcile the people to one another.
Learn how to mind your own business,
this incorporates the whole duty of man.*

*(Let all Israel say Amen,
the grand Amen of the blood and the spirit,
for flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God,
but flesh and blood must build it,
and when God redeems the earth
He shall use the weak and humble of the earth to do it.
He will make of them the vessels of the kingdom,
drawing them from the common clay
and fashioning them on the potter's wheel
not vases and graceful urns,
but mostly
jugs, milkpans, cups, churns, and mushbowls,
to adorn the kitchen and the palace
and to make the Church and Kingdom of God interesting.)*

*"There is no life more precious than the present life
We are in eternity
and need only take the road
that leads to eternal increase
which is eternal lives.
I would not walk across this bowery for polygamy
if it pertained only to this earth.
For polygamy is for the resurrection
for the creation and peopling of worlds
and without it there is no kingdom.*

*It is the word of the Lord,
that the only ones who become Gods
even Sons of God
Are those who enter into polygamy.*

*It is written in the Bible,
"In that day shall seven women
take hold of one man saying,
'We will eat our own bread
and wear our own apparel;
only let us be called by thy name
to take away our reproach.' "*

*The government of the United States do not intend
that that prophecy shall be fulfilled,
But the Lord Almighty means that it shall.
Do you not think the Lord will conquer?
I think He will."*

Oh, praise to the man!
Praise to the alchemist Brigham,
Who undertook the task
of transmuting words into
cotton, silk, flocks, tanneries,
sawmills, sugar,
And taking the rawhide objects
and transmuting them into a kingdom.
Praise to the man
who, feet planted among the
fields, tanneries, and flocks,
of the kingdom
Laid hold on eternity
And defied the kingdoms of this world,
scorning the smallness of their grasp.
Praise to the hold on eternity!

But Brigham, you did not prevail,
for the people who came first to this valley
were the people of the kingdom-on-the-run,
polygamists who had
followed the diamond-like revelation
to the point or winner-take-all showdown
with the government and lost,
and then sought remoteness
beyond the caring of the Feds.

"Transients from Orderville"
(these words on the county
tax records in the 1890's)
who after twenty years of living
the United Order and the law of
the Celestial Kingdom,
drifted into neighboring valleys,
each man for himself as the
Order broke up.



The valley was peopled by these,
and the flux of the churched, the unchurched,
the barely churched and the never churched,
who had never known the kingdom,
who were following the scent of what D. W. Woodard
confided to his journal:
"hungry once more for the taste of the soil,"
The down and outers,
and the ever-hopeful.
Their story told by these words
of a freighter-prospecter-gold miner
whose lode had run out and his
money and brick house with it.

Brigham, you did not prevail.
You filled the valleys and the mountains,
But there was a wind in the land,
it swept away the Order
it swept away the Principle,
and the splendid cry of kingdom.
And the people came here
a kingdomless people
moving between the all gone
and the not yet born
measuring themselves against
the soil, the blizzards, the drouth,
the wind and the loneliness,
laboring unknowingly
at the human task
with a slender grasp on eternity.
Then the people left,
and the people died
And the valley is filled
only with the wind
so spare and clean
which blows through the pines
and across the land.

KARL C. SANDBERG's poetry has been published in *Dialogue*, and in various Eastern poetry journals. What appears in *Sunstone* at this time is a fragment of a larger work which will be published as a single volume at a later date.