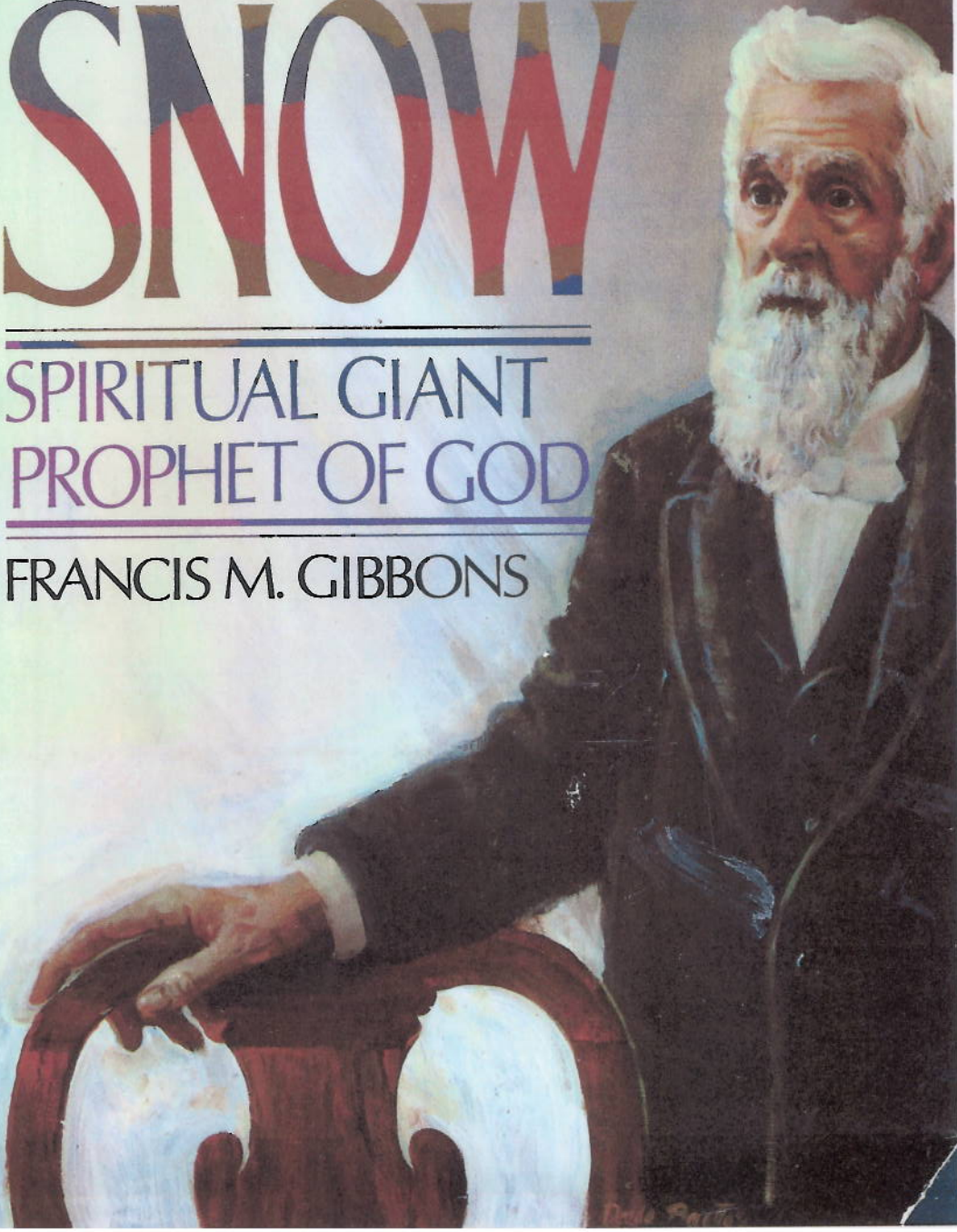


LORENZO SNOW

SPIRITUAL GIANT
PROPHET OF GOD

FRANCIS M. GIBBONS



Chapter Twenty-six

Raising the Dead

In the early part of 1891, Elder Snow's niece Ella Jensen came down with a fever accompanied by a sore throat and headache, symptoms of a late winter cold. However, two or three days later, Ella broke out in a rash and red spots appeared on her palate, and the illness was diagnosed as scarlet fever. Since the patient was almost twenty years old and, except for her sickness, in good health, no great concern was shown over her condition. However, as the disease hung on and she failed to respond to the usual remedies of the day, complications set in and her condition rapidly worsened until her life hung in the balance. She oscillated between life and death for several weeks, being attended around the clock by her concerned family and by helpful neighbor volunteers. In early March, Leah Rees, a family friend, came on duty at 8:00 P.M., intending to stay until morning. "Ella asked me to sing and play for her," Leah reported, "but goodness, I was so worried about her condition, I felt more like crying." Stifling her melancholy feelings, Leah played the old-fashioned harmonium in the Jensen home and sang until the patient fell asleep. She then lay down on the couch to rest. About 3:00 A.M., the volunteer nurse was awakened by Ella's calls. Ella asked her for a comb, brush, and scissors, explaining, "They are coming to get me at ten o'clock in the morning." She told Leah that she wanted to look presentable for "them." When Leah inquired about the identity of these unknown visitors,

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she was told by Ella that her deceased Uncle Hans Jensen and certain "messengers" had appeared to her. "I am going to die," she said, "and they are coming at ten o'clock to get me and take me away."

Assuming that this improbable story was merely the jumbled product of a fevered brain, the nurse tried to soothe her patient and coax her back to sleep, but to no avail. When the request for comb, brush, and scissors escalated into a somewhat angry demand, Leah complied.

Having received the things she had so imperiously demanded, the sick girl found that she lacked the strength to fix her hair and so prevailed upon her friend to do it. As Leah brushed her hair, the girl asked that her parents be awakened so she could tell them about Uncle Hans and the messengers. Leah protested that it was very early and that her parents were tired and needed rest, but soon gave in to the daughter's demands. When the sleepy pair appeared at her bedside, Ella recited the astonishing facts about the visitation. If anything, they were more incredulous about Ella's story than Leah had been and, fearing their daughter was delirious, tried to placate her and to tempt her back to sleep. "No," she announced with finality, "I am not going to sleep any more. I know I am going to die and that they are coming to get me."

Leah left the Jensen home about 8:00 A.M., confident that her friend was near death, not so much from Ella's story about the nocturnal visitors as from her frailty.

The dying girl's father, Jacob, later recounted the events that occurred between Leah's departure and ten o'clock. "[Ella] wanted to see all the folks and bid them good-bye. All who were near came in, all but Grandma Jensen. She was in town and I sent for her. She arrived just when the others of us had said good-bye. Ella put her arms around her grandmother's neck and kissed her good-bye. It was not more than a minute after that when her pulse stopped and she passed away. I was holding her hand and felt her pulse stop."

Jacob and his wife decided to advise Lorenzo Snow, who had married Sarah E. Minnie Jensen, Jacob's sister. Since Lorenzo was then in a meeting at the Brigham City Tabernacle, Jacob hitched up his team and drove to town. Tethering his

horses nearby, he entered the tabernacle and, finding that Elder Snow was speaking, wrote a note to him and had it placed on the pulpit. "President Snow stopped his talking," Jacob later reported, "read the note and then explained to the Saints that it was a call to visit some people who were in deep sorrow and asked to be excused." In the vestry, the dead girl's father told his brother-in-law what had happened. After meditating for a moment, the apostle said, "I will go down with you." But as the pair was leaving, Elder Snow told his companion, "Wait a moment, I wish you would go into the meeting and get Brother Clawson. I want him to go also." (Lorenzo was very close to Rudger Clawson and once called him "just about the finest disciple of Christ" he had ever met.) The three then left the tabernacle together and rode the mile and a half to the Jensen home.

On arriving there, they found that Annie Cecilia Nelson, a nurse and midwife who had served the community for many years, had made initial preparations for the burial by "laying the body out," washing it, and dressing it in clean linen.

After entering the room where the body lay, Ella now having been dead for about two hours, the apostle stood for a while in deep meditation and then asked for some consecrated oil. This "surprised" Jacob Jensen who, nevertheless, complied with the request. When he had received the oil, Lorenzo handed it to Rudger Clawson, requesting that he anoint the girl, which he did. The two of them then laid their hands on Ella's head as Elder Snow sealed the anointing. "During the administration," Jacob Jensen reported later, "I was particularly impressed with some of the words which he used and can well remember them now. 'Dear Ella, I command you, in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ, to come back and live, your mission is not ended. You shall yet live to perform a great mission.' He said she should live to rear a large family and be a comfort to her parents and friends."

Elder Rudger Clawson left this account of the incident: "We then laid our hands upon her head, and the anointing was confirmed by President Snow, who blessed her and among other things, used this extraordinary expression, in a commanding tone of voice: 'Come back, Ella, come back. Your

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walk upon the earth is not yet completed, come back.' Shortly afterward we left the home."

Ella's body remained lifeless for more than an hour after Elder Snow and Elder Clawson had left. Then, as her parents sat near her bedside, Ella suddenly opened her eyes. "She looked about the room," her father reported, "saw us sitting there, but still looked for someone else, and the first thing she said was: 'Where is he? Where is he?' We asked 'Who? Where is who?' 'Why, Brother Snow,' she replied. 'He called me back.' "

At first Ella was not overjoyed with what Elder Snow had done. "Why did he call me back?" she asked complainingly. "I was so happy and did not want to come back. At ten o'clock my spirit left my body. It took me some time to make up my mind to go, as I could hear and see the folks crying and mourning over me." Once Ella had received a glimpse of the other world, however, she went willingly and enthusiastically. She said that at the moment her spirit passed through the veil, "all care and worry left me." She first beheld an extremely large room or hall, so large she could not see the end of it, thronged with happy, smiling people. "It was like going along the crowded street of a large city," she wrote, "where you meet many people, only a very few of whom you recognize." Among those whom she did recognize was her grandfather Hans Peter Jensen and his son and namesake Hans Jensen, Ella's uncle. With Uncle Hans was his wife, May Ellen Valentine Jensen.

When Ella reached the end of the large room she had first seen, she entered a smaller room filled with children, who were being supervised by Eliza R. Snow. While listening to the singing of these children, Ella heard the voice of Lorenzo Snow, calling her back to mortality. "Sister Ella," said the voice in a commanding tone, "You must come back as your mission is not yet finished here on earth." Obedient to that command, Ella walked back through the large hall, advising relatives or acquaintances along the way that she was going back. However, she had no enthusiasm about the prospect. "It was very much against my desire," the young woman wrote later, "as such perfect peace and happiness prevailed there; no suffer-

ing, no sorrow. I was taken up with all I saw and heard; I did hate to leave that beautiful place.

"As I returned I could see my body lying on the bed and the folks gathered about in the room. I hesitated for a moment, then thought, 'Yes, I will go back for a little while.' I told the folks I wanted to stay only a short time to comfort them."

The "little while" Ella referred to stretched into a period of over sixty-five years. Four years after her brief sojourn in the spirit world, she married Henry Wight, and they produced a family of eight children. After having loved and cared for this large brood and having lived a productive life, Ella Jensen Wight passed away on October 23, 1957 at age eighty-six.
