

## GILBERT HAVEN: PREACHING FROM THE BEYOND!

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In April, 1890, Star Publishing Company published a sixteen-page pamphlet by Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) Bishop Gilbert Haven.<sup>1</sup> This puzzling tract, entitled “Immortality Demonstrated—Appeals to the Methodists,” avails Methodists to accept mediumship in churches and to welcome Spiritualism with open arms. Ten years prior to this publication, author Bishop Haven died on Saturday, January 3, 1880.

This tract was written in February, 1890, by medium Ms. Carrie E. S. Twing, who channeled Bishop Haven through mechanical writing in Springfield, Massachusetts: “The lady’s hand moved with great rapidity and without any apparent action of her will. She declared that she had no thought of what was to be penned, and the movement of her hand was independent of her volition.”<sup>2</sup> Mechanical writing, specifically automatic writing, is classified as a physical phenomenon of Spiritualism. During the interaction between medium and spirit, the medium’s hand is moved independently of their will as the spirit controls what they wish to have communicated.<sup>3</sup> This psychic interaction results in the spirit’s words penned in their own style and voice. The medium is the conduit.

Ms. Carrie E. S. Twing was noted as a lauded and reliable medium, as well as a member of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, and president of the New York State Spiritualist Association.<sup>4</sup> As well as the writer of two works by Bishop Haven, she also recorded a number of books by Samuel Bowles.<sup>5</sup> For the promotion of Bishop Haven’s second otherworldly publication entitled “Glimpses of Heaven” published in 1897, the publishers noted: “Mr. Haven acknowledges that he is fortunate in being permitted to

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<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Haven, *Immortality Demonstrated—Appeals to the Methodists* (Springfield: Star Publishing, 1890), 2; Gilbert Haven (1821–1880) was a radical bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church who advocated for civil inclusiveness both within the church and in society. His ministry revolved around the abolishment of slavery, and civil and social justice for African Americans. (Text taken from Dale Patterson, Mark Shenise, and Robert Williams, “Gilbert Haven Papers,” *GCAH*, accessed August 14, 2020, <http://www.gcah.org/history/gilbert-haven-papers>.)

<sup>2</sup> Haven, *Immortality Demonstrated*, 3d page of cover.

<sup>3</sup> Eli Wilmot Sprague, *Spirit Mediumship: Its Various Phases: How Developed, and Safely Practices: A Compendium of Psychic Science: For Séances, Circles and Individual Use: The Medium’s Companion and Guide* (Detroit: Rev. E. W. Sprague, 1912), 80.

<sup>4</sup> *Westfield Republican*, August 31, 1920, p.8. “Carrie E. S. Twing: A Well known writer and able lecturer died at her home near here on August 25<sup>th</sup>”

<sup>5</sup> “Light,” *Eclectic Publishing Company* 27 (1907): 310.

use her hand to pen the remarkable statements to be found in his book.”<sup>6</sup> Even the spirits were impressed with her work, and preferred her attention for their services.

“Immortality Demonstrated—Appeals to the Methodists” includes a sketch of the earth life of Bishop Gilbert Haven, Haven’s three-chapter appeal to the Methodists, a tribute from one of one of Haven’s friends (signed Veritas), suggestions for the people to be more open to spirituality and more practical in Bible reading, and a poem entitled “What is religion?” by William Denton. The short biography of his life focuses on his work as a bishop, but also details his marriage to Mary Ingraham (m. 1851) who passed away on April 30, 1860. In recounting his death on January 3, 1880, the writer quotes Bishop Haven’s final words and his desire to see his late wife: “It is so delightful dying—it is pleasant—the angels are here—God lifts me up in his arms. I cannot see the river of death—there is no river, it is all light—I am floating away from earth into heaven—I am gliding away unto God.” A few hours before he departed, he said: “After I have seen the Lord, I shall want to rest for the first thousand years with my head in the lap of my Mary.”<sup>7</sup>

About ten years after Bishop Haven left his body, his words had returned through the automatic writing of Carrie E. S. Twing. These words spoke extremely highly of the work of mediums and the field of Spiritualism in the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the third chapter of the tract, Bishop Haven noted that conversing through the medium was the only time he was permitted to give his views unabashed, since “his earthly lips were sealed in silence; but [his] spiritual nature has been quickened.”<sup>8</sup> He suggested that the church welcome those endowed with the “gift” of mediumship as they could “cast out devils.”<sup>9</sup> He noted that being open to the presence of spirits allows one to learn from loved ones that have passed, and therefore not suffer an interruption of communication following their earthly passing. Expecting a counter argument, Bishop Haven explained why spirits would not just stay in Heaven: “But as Heaven is the dwelling place of God, and God is everywhere, is it not natural that he should make his heaven where he feels at home?”<sup>10</sup> Earth is, therefore, defined as a landscape for Heaven, and the roaming of spirits a normality.

At the end of the tract, Bishop Haven left his readers with a few words of advice on how to lead their lives. He suggested: to be wiser and more practical when reading the Bible, to find the purpose in life, to glorify Christ, to lead a life of religion everywhere, and finally to not shut your eyes to truths that are self-evident.<sup>11</sup> He quoted Scripture often throughout, and his voice echoed the same aptness and eloquence as it did during his life, as noted by

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<sup>6</sup> Henry Aaron Budington, *Death is Birth: The Outcome of Transition* (Springfield: Star Publishing, 1897), 29.

<sup>7</sup> Haven, *Immortality Demonstrated*, 3d page of cover.

<sup>8</sup> Haven, *Immortality Demonstrated*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Haven, *Immortality Demonstrated*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Haven, *Immortality Demonstrated*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Haven, *Immortality Demonstrated*, 10–11.

commentators of the pamphlet.<sup>12</sup>

His appeal for Methodists to welcome spirit communion into their churches reverberates throughout the entire pamphlet. It is certainly an interesting focus for Bishop Haven to pen after his passing. Perhaps it is best to consider the nature of the intentions of the medium and publisher propelling Spiritualism. Carrie E. S. Twing was a distinguished member of the Spiritualist movement, and the Star Publishing Company published quite a few texts on the subject, printing over a thousand copies of this single tract. Nevertheless, the pamphlet is an interesting artifact from the beyond, and can be appreciated for its otherworldly provenance.

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<sup>12</sup> Budington, *Death is Birth*, 30.