

The Shakers took in Elizabeth Temple, a poverty-striken single mother, and taught her about medicinal herbs.

Mrs. Temple: A Millernial Utopian

BY RON GRAYBILL

In 1883, Mrs. White wrote: "Brother Whalin['s]...health has been very poor, but he is improving since I gave him Mrs. Temple's remedy." On another occasion she wrote: "[Fannie] has been suffering greatly... She has now been using Mrs. Temple's remedy and is having relief." And again: "I send you Mrs. Temple's remedy. Be sure and have Rheba take it." In 1895, she wrote "Will you inquire if any

one of our family has the recipe for Mrs. Temple's remedy, or the recipe for cholera mixture?" So, who was this Mrs. Temple? At first, I thought it was only a brand name on a patent medicine, but there was a real Mrs. Temple who made a small fortune selling her remedy.

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, America was full of passion, promise, and peril. The new steam

presses were spewing out thousands of inexpensive newspapers, books, pamphlets, and posters. Railroads were expanding; the telegraph was spreading across the country.⁵

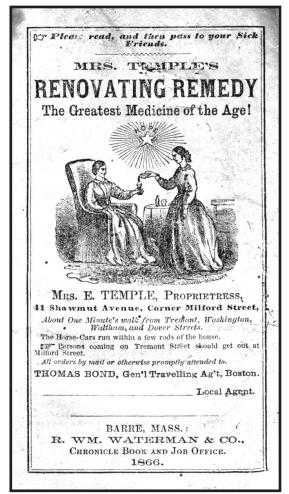
Orthodox medicine was under attack by new medical doctrines.⁶ Indeed, reforms of all sorts sprang up: dress reform, prison reform, asylum reform, health reform. Peace movements and anti-slavery movements sought to rid the world of oppression, exploitation, and violence.

It seemed to many that the long-awaited millennium, the thousand years of peace foretold in the Book of Revelation, might soon arrive. The predominant view was known as "post-millennialism." This view posited that human efforts would improve the whole of society and bring about a thousand years of peace, at the close of which, Christ would return to earth. The Millerites called this a "temporal millennium," and strongly rejected it. They were "pre-millennialists," who believed that the world would get worse and worse before Christ would come. But actually, the pre-millennialists and post-millennialists of the 1840s were very much alike. They both believed the millennium was about to dawn, and that their efforts were essential to bringing it about. The pre-millennialists believed they themselves had to reach millennial perfection before Christ could come. The utopian communities of the day set about identifying the great sins of the age in order to eliminate those sins from their utopian enclave and thus be ready for the millennium. Even if they despaired of perfecting the whole world, they were to be paradigms of millennial peace, whether with the complex marriage of Oneida or the celibacy of the Shakers, the polygamy of the Mormons or the correct Sabbath-keeping of the Adventists.

Later, Mrs. White wrote: "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." So Adventists must reach millennial perfection before Christ can come; Christ can only come after that perfection is reached.

The Shakers, who figure in Mrs. Temple's story, were a utopian community with a number of ties to Adventism.

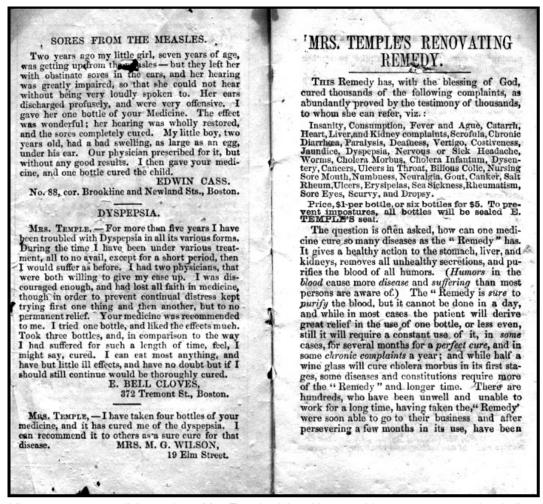
The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, more commonly known as the Shakers, were a Christian sect founded in the eighteenth century in England. They were initially known as "Shaking Quakers" because of their ecstatic behavior during worship services. Shakers came to America in 1774 under the leadership



After leaving the Shakers, Elizabeth brewed her own medicinal tonic, and set to work promoting it.

of Mother Ann Lee. Her followers believed she was imbued with the female element of divinity. This belief resonated with the spiritualizing remnants of the Millerite movement, people who believed that Christ had already come spiritually. Shakers practiced a celibate and communal lifestyle, pacifism, and equality of the genders. During the mid-nineteenth century, specifically the 1840s, Shakers experienced an Era of Manifestations which included visions and trances for young women.

Enoch Jacobs, editor of the *Day Star* in Cincinnati, Ohio, had already exhibited an interest in the visionary trances of young women by publishing Ellen Harmon's first vision in January 1846. Six months later, in June, Jacobs joined the Shakers. He was one of some two hundred Adventists to join a Shaker commune. Shakers actively recruited Adventists—attending their meetings, even bringing wagonloads to their villages. Most Adventists did not



Like most patent medicine makers, Mrs. Temple claimed hers could cure a vast array of maladies.

stay more than a year or two. Jacobs himself was expelled for violating their rule of celibacy, declaring he would rather go to hell with Electra, his wife, than to live among the Shakers without her.¹⁰

How was Mrs. Temple involved with the Shakers? Samuel and Sarah White had a baby girl in 1809 whom they named Elizabeth. This means she was nearly twenty years older than Ellen White, who was not born until 1827. Both Ellen and Elizabeth ended up marrying a man named James. About 1834, Elizabeth married James Lyman Temple, but he generally used his middle name, Lyman. The couple had two sons, Lyman Jr., born about 1837, and Israel, born about 1845.

The couple were Millerites, or at least Elizabeth was. Half a dozen years after the Great Disappointment, Elizabeth was dangerously ill. Otis Nichols and his wife Mary, hearing she was near death, hastened to her home

in Boston. Elizabeth's brother, who was "not a believer" was asked to leave the room, and the visitors began to pray for Elizabeth. ¹⁴ Mary Nichols anointed her abdomen with oil, because that was where the pain was, and Elizabeth was healed instantly. The next day, Nichols visited her again and found her walking around the house, singing and praising God. ¹⁵

We learn a great deal about Elizabeth Temple once we can identify the mysterious "Sister M" in Ellen White's *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2. As you may know, the names of individuals to whom the original testimonies were addressed have been replaced by a sequence of alphabetical letters in the volumes we have today. So, there is a Brother A, B, C, and a Sister A, B. C and so on until "M" is reached. But we have several clues to Sister M's real identity: she lived in Boston, she had a violently abusive, alcoholic husband, she had two sons who served in

and survived the American Civil War, she was poor for much of her early married life, and then became rich. Every line of the testimony fits Elizabeth Temple exactly.¹⁶

Apparently, Elizabeth's marriage began well; Mrs. White says her husband was an "affectionate, noble-minded man." However, "intoxicating drink benumbed his brain," and he became a hopeless alcoholic. To rouch of their marriage he subjected her to "persecution, threats, and violence. Elizabeth struggled with poverty, barely surviving on the meager wages of a housekeeper. There were periods of time, perhaps long periods, when the couple lived apart. James was in a boarding house in 1855, while Elizabeth lived elsewhere with her younger son. By the early 1860s, James Temple had died.

But Mrs. White provided one more fascinating detail about "Sister M." She spent time among the Shakers. We don't know when Mrs. Temple sojourned in a Shaker Village, but it may have been in the late 1840s, and thus during the period when Shakers were experiencing visions. Mrs. White wrote: "Some of the Shakers had received spiritual manifestations, telling them that you were designed of God to be a prominent member of their society."²²

It was common for poverty-stricken men and women, faced with a hard winter, to seek food and shelter among the Shakers. These godly people did not reject these "Winter Shakers," even though they knew that most of them would be gone by the next summer.²³ Some Adventist friends who had helped Elizabeth earlier had joined the Shakers, so, for a time, Elizabeth did also.²⁴

We remember the Shakers today for their elegant furniture, but in Elizabeth's day they were famous as the nation's principle source of medicinal herbs.²⁵ It is entirely possible that during her time with the Shakers, Elizabeth was put to work drying, powdering, packaging, and shipping herbs to apothecaries (drug stores), physicians, and individuals throughout the country. Even if she was not directly involved in the medicinal herb business, she would have been able to see the business in operation.

"The Lord opened the way for you to leave that deceived community," Mrs. White wrote, "and you left unharmed, the principles of your faith as pure as when you went among them."²⁶

Shortly after she left the Shakers, Elizabeth suffered another serious bout of illness. This time James and Ellen White visited her, prayed for her, and again she was



Mrs. Temple had her own bottles made with the name of her tonic on it.

healed. "At the time you felt . . . a decided change, . . . joy and gladness . . . filled your heart. The praise of God was . . . upon your lips. 'Oh, what hath the Lord wrought!' was the sentiment of your soul." 27

At some point, Mrs. Temple concocted her own herbal remedy, doubtless drawing on the insights she had gleaned from the Shakers. She mixed it into a tonic, fed it to family and friends, and they seemed to believe it was effective in relieving their ills. Well, she reasoned, if the Shakers could make money on herbal remedies, so could she. She had nine-inch-tall bottles made with her name and the name of her product embossed into the glass, and "Mrs. Temple's Renovating Remedy" went on the market. By 1864, she had sold 5,000 bottles of the brew. She even had brown stoneware jugs made with her

name stamped on them for customers who wanted to super-size. But "brew" is not the right word, because unlike most patent medicines of the day, Elizabeth claimed hers contained no alcohol.

We should insert here, parenthetically, that the other recipe Mrs. White used was quite different. Cholera mixture included a liberal dose of brandy and a bit of opium (in the form of laudanum) as well.

Even as her medicinal business was growing, Elizabeth realized another welcome blessing. Both of her sons had enlisted in the Union Army and while the younger one, Israel, did not see combat, her older son, Lyman, saw

a great deal. He joined the Massachusetts Tenth Light Artillery Battery and served under General Grant in a number of battles. At the incredibly bloody Battle of Cold Harbor, Lyman spent part of his time on the front lines, but he was not among the 13,000 Union soldiers killed there. He called it "good luck," but Ellen White said "a mother's prayers from an anxious, bur-

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dened soul had much to do with their preservation." $^{29}\,$

So, what was in Mrs. Temple's Renovating Remedy? We don't know exactly what was in those bottles, but we do know the recipe Mrs. White used for it, which she probably got directly from Mrs. Temple. Pasted in the back of her 1892 diary, along with the recipe for cholera mixture, is the recipe for Mrs. Temple's Remedy.

Genetain five ounces; bloodroot, five ounces; cubebs, three ounces; snake root (serpent) three ounces. [Aristolochia serpentaria] The snake root is the large kind, not the fine. All should be powdered finely and then mixed together. For use, take one teaspoonful of fine powder, and steep in the pint of hot water. Dose, — a table spoonful three or four times a day, before or after meals as is convenient.³⁰

How did it taste? We know that too. One of Mrs. White's young secretaries, writing in the 1950s, when she

was old, said: "Sara McEnterfer used to make this for her, and it seemed to be a sort of general cure-all, tonic, or something, that she, Sister White, indulged in quite frequently, with apparent good results, at least I remember she had much faith in the brew, which was the bitterest stuff imaginable; in fact, it was terrible, for it stayed in the mouth so long—that bitterness." ³¹

But it wasn't only Ellen White who believed in it. In 1864, Mrs. Temple published a twenty-four-page pamphlet, full of testimonials from her customers. They claimed to have been cured of scrofulous humors, scarlet fever and consumption, sore eyes, ulcerated kidneys,

rheumatism, dropsy, dyspepsia, numbness, erysipelas, and even insanity. One mother wrote of her darling little boy, four years old, who was on the point of death, but then took Mrs. Temple's Remedy; from the day he began to take it, he cried for bread, and before he had finished one bottle, he was able to walk around the house.

By 1866, Mrs. Temple's

business was really thriving and she published another promotional pamphlet. By this time, she had hired a sales agent. A single bottle cost \$1, equal to about \$27 in today's money. And although some maladies could be cured with a single bottle, chronic conditions might require a whole year of treatment. Little wonder Mrs. Temple grew rich.

But Mrs. White's interest in Mrs. Temple was not only about her bitter remedy, it was that money and its impact on her spiritual life. Daniel Walker Howe, in *What Hath God Wrought*, cites foreign visitors' observations about America during this period:

Most observers at the time [found] Americans obsessively preoccupied with earning a living . . . Americans pursued success so avidly they seldom paused to smell the flowers. A kind of raw egotism, unsoftened by sociability, expressed itself in boastful men, demanding women, and loud children.

God had tested Mrs. Temple in her days of poverty, Mrs. White said, and she had passed the test admirably; he had protected her from the Shakers' devices; but then he had decided to test her with prosperity and, on this test, she was failing. Indeed, she was not the only one—all through the 1850s and 1860s, Mrs. White issued numerous testimonies warning various Adventists that their pursuit of money was damaging their spiritual life.

Mrs. Temple does seem to have wandered to the margins of Adventism over the years. During the years of her poverty, Elizabeth maintained her subscription to the *Advent Review*, paying a dollar or two per year, but

contributed little else. Once her fortunes changed and her business began to grow in 1863, she became very generous with the church. She paid \$10 to get more than a dozen copies of the new prophetic chart to share with friends and prospective converts. In 1864, she made several large donations, which in today's money would probably amount to \$700. She even offered discounts on her Remedy to poor people. But after mid-1866, when her new pamphlet proudly boasted that her medicine was the "Greatest Medicine of the Age," her donations

ceased—she didn't even maintain her subscription to the Advent Review, and there was no mention of consideration for the poor. Perhaps there was more than a little pride shown when city directories started listing her occupation as "physician."

In 1867, she married Ransom Hicks, who in earlier years had been part of the Messenger Party, vociferous opponents of Ellen White. He had once equated Mrs. White with Jezabel.³² The marriage didn't last long, even though she was stuck with his name on legal documents till the end of her life.³³ The marriage symbolized Mrs. Temple's spiritual decline, or at least the loosening of her Adventist ties.

Mrs. White reminded Elizabeth of the role prosperity played in her spiritual decline: "As means came into your hands, I saw you gradually and almost imperceptibly separating from God." "The business and cares of your new position claimed your time and attention, and your duty to God was not considered." Mrs. Temple did feel that her new position as a prosperous businesswoman required her to upgrade her house and her wardrobe. An additional factor undermined her spiritual life. Her son Lyman had married, and he and his wife were living with Elizabeth. The wife objected to Elizabeth praying aloud during family worship, so

Elizabeth abandoned family devotions.³⁷

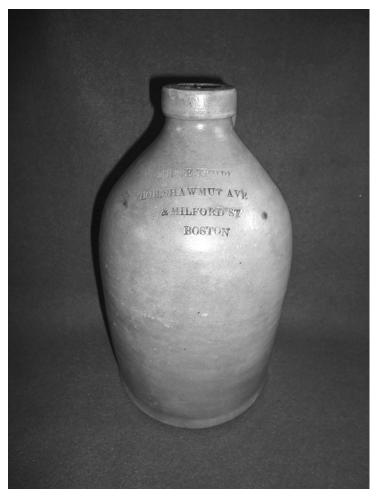
She had divorced Hicks by late 1868. In December, the Whites, on an eastern tour, stopped in Boston and visited with Mrs. Temple. The visit must have involved some touching personal appeals and confessions. Mrs. White wrote, "We left Boston and Sister T. [Temple] yesterday about noon. We hope now her long state of inactivity will end and she be again an interested worker in the cause of God, as she has been."38 Arriving home, James White wrote in the Review, "The Lord is doing a great work for this woman,

who is consecrating herself anew to God."39

After returning home, and already assured of a positive response, Mrs. White mailed Elizabeth a long testimony. She sympathetically reviewed the older woman's whole life up to that point, and urged her to return to a more active, more committed religious life—something, it appears, she had already decided to do. Mrs. Temple responded in a letter to Mrs. White, which was published in the *Review*:

I received your testimony last evening, for which I thank the Lord. It is true. It seemed to spread my past experience, trials, and the

A single bottle cost a dollar, equal to about \$27 in today's money. And although some maladies could be cured with a single bottle, chronic conditions might require a whole year of treatment. Little wonder Mrs. Temple grew rich.



For some ailments, a long series of doses was recommended. Customers could order the Remedy by the jug.

dealings of God, fresh before my mind, as though it was but yesterday. I could not have stated facts more correctly. I read and wept until I had read them over twice, and commenced to read them a third time. It was past eleven o'clock, and I thought I would leave them until this morning. . . . Oh! I am astonished to think that I should be so ungrateful to my Heavenly Father, who has done so much for me. . . . What a change has come over me. . . . What heavenly wisdom I need to be a just steward. . . . How many times I have felt to thank the Lord that, in his providence, you and dear Bro. White, came this way, and for your faithfulness God will bless you, and everyone who is faithful in trying to search out his lost sheep. . . . We had a good meeting yesterday. There were three children that arose and requested an interest

in our prayers. May the Lord convert and lead them in the way everlasting.⁴⁰

In *Testimony for the Church*, 17, which appeared even before Mrs. Temple's confession could appear in the *Review*, Ellen White published the whole testimony. Elizabeth Temple's name was blanked out, but many Adventists would have known exactly whom Mrs. White was addressing. However, they would almost immediately have seen Mrs. Temple's positive response in the *Review*.

In the final fifteen years of Elizabeth Temple's life, she remained a faithful Adventist. In the 1870 *Boston City Directory*, her ad restored the line "The poor always liberally considered." Her enterprise does not seem to have continued at the same level, and she spent a good deal of money trying to set her sons up in the grocery business. ⁴² Nevertheless, she maintained her subscription to the *Advent Review* and contributed a handsome \$100 to help buy a printing press for J. N. Andrews' missionary efforts in Europe. By 1876, she had moved out of town about ten miles, but she was still the first to arrive at the Boston Church for a Sabbath of fasting and prayer. It was a "blessed season,"

the pastor reported. In fact, Sister Temple paid it the highest compliment a pioneer Adventist could offer: "This is a '44 meeting," she exclaimed, "such as we experienced just prior to the tenth day of the seventh month."⁴³

We don't know much more about those final years of Mrs. Temple's life. The day after Christmas in 1884, Elizabeth Temple died, and rests in the "blessed hope." 44

Endnotes

- 1. Ellen G. White to W. C. White, Feb. 6, 1883, Letter 19, 1883.
- 2. Ellen G. White to J. E. White and Emma White, Aug 19, 1895, Letter 126, 1895.
- 3. Ellen G. White to Mary White, Jan. 10, 1890, Letter 79, 1890.
- 4. Ellen G. White to Marian Davis, Nov. 12, 1895, Letter 103, 1895, paragraph 4.
- 5. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought* (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), 564, 691, 696.

- 6. Ibid., 471-472.
- 7. Ibid., 285.
- 8. Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1900, 1941), 69.
- 9. Suzanne R. Thurman, "Oh Sisters Ain't You Happy?" (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 2002), 130.
- 10. Lawrence Foster, "Had Prophecy Failed? Contrasting Perspectives of the Millerites and Shakers," in *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 173–188.
- 11. Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620–1988 for Elizabeth Temple, Boston, Births, Marriages and Death; see marriage record to Ransom Hicks in 1867, see Ancestry.com.
- 12. Lyman W. Temple in "Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861–1865," see Ancestry.com.
- 13. Israel S. Temple in "Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1961–1865," see Ancestry.com.
- 14. "I saw that Bro. Bates erred again in praying for the sick before unbelievers. I saw if any among us were sick and called for the elders of the church to pray over them we should follow the example of Jesus. He went into an inner chamber, and we should go into a room by ourselves separate entirely from unbelievers, and then the atmosphere would not be polluted by them. By faith we could take hold on God and draw down the blessing. I saw that God's cause was dishonored and reproached in W. New York at the general conference by praying for the sick in the midst of unbelievers." September 26–29, 1850, MS14-1850.4.
- 15. Otis Nichols, "Letter from Bro. Nichols," *Present Truth*, Vol. 1 (May 1850): 79–80.
- Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 2 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1948), 268–288.
 - 17. Ibid., 268.
 - 18. Ibid., 269.
- 19. Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Hastings, May 21, 1849, Letter 5, 1849.
- 20. James L. Temple in the Massachusetts State Census, 1855, see Ancestry.com; Elizabeth Temple in the Massachusetts State Census, 1855, see Ancestry.com.
- 21. Elizabeth Temple in the Massachusetts State Census, 1865, listed as widow, see Ancestry.com.
 - 22. White, Testimonies, Vol. 2, 271.
- 23. Stephen J. Paterwic, *The A to Z of the Shakers* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 247.
 - 24. White, Testimonies, Vol. 2, 271.
- 25. Amu Bess Miller, Shaker Medicinal Herbs (Pownal, VT: Storey Books, 1998), 2.
 - 26. White, Testimonies, Vol. 2, 272.
 - 27. Ibid., 273.
- 28. John Davis Billings, *The History of the Tenth Massachusetts Battery of Light Artillery* (Boston, MA: Arakelyan Press, 1909), 268.

- 29. White, Testimonies, Vol. 2, 275.
- 30. Ellen G. White, typewritten note pasted in back of Diary 26, 1892.
- 31. Edna Kilbourne Steele to Bessie Mount, March 18, 1955, see "Mrs. Temple's Remedy" in Ellen G. White Estate, Document File 34-G-2-A.
- 32. Theodore N. Levterov, "The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844–1889" (PhD diss. Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 2011), 86.
- 33. Ellen G. White to J. E. and W. C. White, December 2, 1868, Letter 25, 1868; Massachusetts Death Records, 1841–1915 for Elizabeth Hicks. We know this is the death record for Elizabeth Temple because her maiden name is listed as "White," and the date matches the date of her obituary published in the *Review*; S. N. Haskell, "Obituary Notices. Temple," *Advent Review*, Vol. 62 (February 24, 1885): 127.
 - 34. White, Testimonies, Vol. 2, 278
 - 35. Ibid.
 - 36. Ibid., 279.
 - 37. Ibid., 280.
- 38. Ellen G. White to J. E. and W. C. White, December 16, 1868, Letter 26, 1868.
- 39. James White, "Eastern Tour," Advent Review, Vol. 32 (Dec. 22, 1868): 285.
- 40. Elizabeth Temple, "Sister E. Temple, of Boston, writes . . . ," *Advent Review*, Vol. 33 (March 2, 1869): 79.
- 41. James White, "Testimony No. 17," Advent Review, Vol. 33 (February 16, 1869): 64; Ellen G. White, Testimony for the Church, No. 17 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publ. Assn., 1969), 91–115, now in White, Testimonies, Vol. 2, 268–288.
 - 42. J. N. Andrews to James White, Jan. 26, 1874.
- 43. M. Wood, "A Good Day in Boston," Advent Review, Vol. 47 (January 27, 1876): 31.
- 44. Elizabeth Hicks in the Massachusetts, Death Records, 1841–1915, see Ancestry.com; S. N. Haskell, "Obituary Notices: Temple," *Advent Review*, Vol. 62 (February 24, 1885).



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