

Madison Unites with the Baptists

Milton Siepman, president of Tennessee Christian Medical Center, wishes he had a Urim and Thummim, so he could know the will of God in regard to the decisions he is presiding over.

Well, he has the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy on his bookshelves, but apparently is not reading them.

“But,” you might ask, “Why would the president of some Protestant hospital in America have Spirit of Prophecy books in his library?”

—Because we are talking about the head of what was once Madison Hospital!

Madison, Tennessee, was the birthplace of institutional self-supporting work by our people!

“Tennessee Christian Medical Center” is the new-modeled name for all that is left of Madison.

And now it is united rather closely with the Baptists.

“No, not Madison!” Yes, sad to say, yes. Read on.

Madison was founded in 1904 by Ellen G. White, working closely with E.A. Sutherland, Percy and Lillian Magan, Nellie Druillard, and several others.

She told them to start a self-supporting ministry which would not be under denominational control. Period. Circumstantial events and divine guidance had revealed to her that this was the way to start and maintain projects which could continue to be faithful to the Spirit of Prophecy blueprint.

Amid great difficulties the little project grew, until it included the Nashville Agricultural and Normal Institute (1904, which later became Madison College; Madison Rural Sanitarium, 1906, which later became Madison Sanitarium; and Madison Foods, 1917).

In April 1963, her counsel was violated when the institution was turned over to the Adventist denomination. A little over a year later the college was closed down. The name, “sanitarium,” was replaced by “hospital.” The food factory was sold to Worthington Foods and moved to Ohio. By 1964, all these changes had been completed.

As for the medical work at Madison, the Sanitarium became Madison Hospital in 1964; it was handed over to Adventist Health System in 1975, and the name was changed to Tennessee Christian Medi-

cal Center in 1985. In 1992, M.R. Siepman became the 17th administrator of our medical work at Madison. Arthur W. Spalding would turn over in his grave, if he knew what had happened.

But if you go to 500 Hospital Drive, Madison, Tennessee today, you will find it looks even more different than ever before.

There are new names, new faces, and new ownerships.

The latest change for the tattered remnants of that blueprint institution came on November 15, 1996. And when it arrived, such words as “Seventh-day,” “Adventist,” “Sanitarium,” “natural remedies,” “Spirit of Prophecy” were no longer to be found.

Instead, all that the 500 people attending—what were called “festivities” that day—heard about were “Baptists” and “Christians.” Guess which we are?

We are thankful the Baptists now consider us Christians, but they no longer consider us Adventists. I think we lost something.

Baptist Hospital is middle Tennessee’s largest nonprofit medical center. Several years ago, TCMC and Baptist entered into negotiations to explore ways to work more closely together. Although Baptist was by far the larger of the two, TCMC had the advantage of vacant acreage at Madison, on the outskirts of Nashville. So TCMC offered to let Baptist erect a large suburban hospital next door to TCMC, if Baptist would agree to work together with TCMC on a number of other projects:

- Joint ownership of a new nonprofit organization, called *Baptist Tennessee Christian Medical Group, Inc.* (BTCMG). (You will note that, throughout all the joint ventures and building projects, the name, “Adventist,” has been carefully omitted. All concerned are mutually ashamed of it.) BTCMG would be the employer of all physicians at the various Madison facilities. In other words, henceforth the Baptists would be co-employers of Adventist doctors in the area.

- A real estate company, on which the new Baptist hospital would be built, was also formed. This

company, half owned by the Baptists, would lease office space to BTCMG, to Adventists, and other physicians in the Madison area.

The two firms, combined, will pretty much lock in Adventist medical doctors in that area.

- But a third entity, called *Baptist-Centra Care*, was also started. This group, also owned equally by the Baptists and Adventist Health System, would manage a number of clinics.

Well, we were the “Christian” in the Greater Nashville Baptist-Christian medical coalition; now we find ourselves the “Centra” in the Baptist-Centra Care Clinics. But what is “Centra” supposed to stand for? I am afraid it stands for “compromise.” The Baptists are still Baptists, and we are now “Centra,” or those who have moved to the center, halfway to the Baptists and other churches.

The Southern Baptists are powerful in the Greater Nashville Baptist-Christian medical coalition. The headquarters of their Southern Baptist Board is located there, and they own a variety of facilities in town. So, in Nashville, we decided to unite with the Baptists. Who cares that they believe in the doctrine of salvation, once-saved-always-saved, and detest the Bible Sabbath! Business advancement is thought to be more important than religious scruples. Apparently, yoking ourselves with the most earnest of the church bodies (next to the Catholics) demanding Sunday laws seems to be a good idea.

The first grand achievement of this new Baptist-AHS union in the Nashville area is the Baptist Medical Plaza at TCMC. It is a massive building, jammed up next to our TCMC (formerly Madison Hospital). This massive construction project, now completed, was jointly paid for by the Adventists and Baptists, and is land handed over to the joint Baptist-Adventist realty firm, which leases it to them. It was hallowed land which Ellen White dedicated to God’s work.

Now, wait a minute. If we paid for half that new medical center,—then why is it called the “Baptist Medical Plaza at TCMC”? Good question. Apparently, we consider the Baptists more important than we are. Also we wanted to please them. They had long ago tired of the word, “Adventist,” and apparently even “Christian” and “Centrist” were bothering them. How can a good Baptist keep fellowship with one of those people who keeps the commandments of God!

But, then also, why call it “at TCMC”? Because they already have a large “Baptist Medical Plaza,” on Hayes Street, at their immense medical complex in the center of nearby Nashville. They wanted to give their new one a more distinctive name. But why have two “Baptist Medical Plazas” in the Nashville area?

Yes, why?

But why is the one at Madison called “Baptist

Medical Plaza” when we own half of it?

Because Adventists are so generous. Remember how we gave our fleet of Denver, Colorado, hospitals to the Catholics? (See *Introducing the Three New Sisters of Charity Hospitals [WM-675]*.) Other Adventist hospital transactions have also been made. Unfortunately, most of them have not been disclosed.

Five stories high, long and wide enough to fill a city block, with 95,000 square feet of space, the Baptist Medical Plaza at TCMC is there because we agreed to pay for half of it—and, by its name—let the Baptists *appear to own it entirely*. If you can figure that one out, go right ahead.

One late Friday afternoon in November, after the early start of a winter Sabbath, the “festivities” of the gala opening were winding down and employees were trying to clean up after hundreds of people who were still strolling through the halls, laughing and enjoying themselves.

But the workers had a lot of work ahead of them that evening and the next day. For the new Baptist Medical Plaza at TCMC had that Friday declared itself open for business.

And it is business; 1990s business by Adventist Health System, in a variety of handed-over (pardon me, the gentler term is “co-owned”) medical facilities across America.

“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

“Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store.

“The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

“And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness . . . And thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee.

“ . . . And thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed alway.

“The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone.

“And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee.

“The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low.

“He shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

“Because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded thee.”—*Deuteronomy 28:15,17,25,29,33,36,37,43,44,45*.