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SBC Executive Committee
480 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

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M.D. --'Lord Closed Eye
So I Could See Better'

By Jim Newton
For Baptist Press

Dr. Sam Cannata didn't think much about it at the time. A small Rhodesian boy had coughed --just once--while the medical missionary was examining sores in the youngster's mouth.

That one cough cost Dr. Cannata, Southern Baptist missionary, the sight in his left eye but, he says, actually changed his life for the better.

The child had Herpes Virus that causes ulcers in the mouth, not usually a serious disease.

But the virus entered the missionary's eye, causing an infection. As the weeks passed the infection grew worse, and three months later there was a secondary infection. Dr. Cannata spent nine days in a Rhodesian hospital, as the infection grew still worse.

The missionary doctor flew to his hometown of Houston for specialized treatment at the Texas Medical Center and Methodist Hospital where a team of specialists worked six weeks to save his eyesight.

The infection in his right eye healed, but he lost the sight of his left eye. "The Lord closed my eye so I could see better," Dr. Cannata now philosophizes. The eye itself healed, Dr. Cannata says, but it doesn't see.

While he was recuperating, he "looked back over my life and I didn't like what I saw," he recalled. After his eye had "healed", the doctor and his wife, Ginny, went to San Francisco for the 1962 Southern Baptist Convention.

There, God convicted us of our sins, and we confessed how critical and jealous we had been of other missionaries and nationals. God forgave us and filled us with real joy," Dr. Cannata said, "but he also convicted us to confess our sins to another missionary couple whom we had criticized most."

When they walked into the Cow Palace the next morning, the first persons they met were the missionaries they had criticized. The two couples ate lunch together and, "Finally, we reached up and pulled off the masks we were hiding behind and confessed how critical we had been..." Then they asked their missionary friends to forgive them.

"They forgave us and asked us to forgive them. It was a tearful, yet joyous experience," Dr. Cannata said.

"We learned a little that day," he added, "how to die to self. We learned a little who we are and who God is. And we learned who we can be if we will allow his spirit to fill our lives and take control."

Dr. Cannata's main thrust as a medical missionary is to the rural areas where he treats people in small villages who otherwise would have no medical care. He operates from a government health center at Mehal Meda, about 100 miles from Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital.

The clinic was built for \$12,000 with Lottie Moon Christmas Offering funds (for foreign missions) and was given to the community. It was turned over to the government which staffs the clinic with qualified personnel.

Dr. Cannata is not on the official staff but works at the clinic where he enjoys an excellent relationship with government health officials.

Four days each week, the missionary boards a Missionary Aviation Fellowship airplane and flies to four different rural clinics to provide simple treatment. He holds medical clinics at eight different villages in Ethiopia, driving to the others in a Land Rover ambulance.

There are no expensive buildings in the Ethiopian mobile clinic ministry. Rather, there is a simple basic clinic at Tasi-Tsina, about 10 miles from Mehal Meda, where Dr. Cannata stocks most of his medical supplies. He carries only a minimum of medical equipment and supplies to the remote areas and said he can treat about 95 per cent of the medical problems adequately.

Most of the medical problems include, for example, skin diseases, eye problems, gastritis, parasites, venereal disease, pneumonia and virus infections, and malaria (in the low areas).

The Menz District is in the highlands of central Ethiopia where the altitude is about 10,000 feet. It has a cold climate, averaging 20 to 40 degrees at night.

Dr. Cannata's work in the clinics is part of one of the most comprehensive community development programs operated by Southern Baptist missionaries.

The total approach in the Menz district includes the work of a medical doctor, three agricultural missionaries, a veterinarian, and a team of field evangelists.

The team has sought to not only meet medical needs, but to improve the quality of stock raised by the Menz people, teach the people a trade and provide new markets for the rugs and other products they produce, and help the people help themselves.

The missionaries have also worked closely with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, providing Bible study in the Amharic language in which many priests in the Orthodox church have participated.

Although Ethiopia is a country where drought and hunger are at their worst, the area affected is not near the Menz district.

Dr. Cannata holds one of his flying clinics in the Shenkora District, which is on the edge of the drought area. The most affected area, Dr. Cannata said, is in the eastern and southern regions of Ethiopia closest to the Sahara Desert.

Neither have Baptist ministries in Ethiopia been affected by the political upheaval in Ethiopia, because as Dr. Cannata said, "The new government has been very much impressed with our work and what we are doing to try to help the people."

That dedication to helping was illustrated a few years ago when Dr. Cannata examined the eye of an eight-year-old boy named Temba from the village of Ararti. Temba had been throwing stones with some friends, when a rock accidentally hit him in the eye.

Dr. Cannata examined the eye and took several stitches. A week later, he returned to examine the eye, hoping and praying there would be no infection. As he removed the bandage, he breathed a sigh of relief. The eye was healing.

Missionary Jerry Bedsole, the veterinarian on the missions team, was standing at his side as Dr. Cannata removed the bandage from Temba's eye.

"Good work, Sam," he exclaimed. "You have given this boy what you yourself do not have--two good eyes!" (BP)

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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Bicentennial FeaturePatriotism: Word Much
Abused, MisunderstoodBy Henlee H. Barnette
For Baptist Press

Patriotism is a much misunderstood and frequently abused term. It is like the chameleon which changes its color in different settings.

Consistent in various definitions, however, are the basic ingredients of love for one's country and a passion to serve with enthusiasm its best interests and the welfare of all peoples.

Several of the patriotic postures extant among Americans are phoney.

Among these is a superpatriotism which gives blind obedience to the government regardless of its policies.

Among practitioners of such a dubious loyalty, pride in the nation tends to become ultimate and, therefore, idolatrous.

Then, there is also a pragmatic patriotism. Illustrative of this stance are those who use patriotism for the private gain of prestige, power and wealth.

In contrast to these cults of false patriotism, there is an authentic patriotism which includes the love of a land and a feeling of kinship with one's own people. Genuine patriotism places morality above material interests and refuses to pledge a blind allegiance to politicians. The American flag is not a blindfold but a bright symbol which inspires true patriots to challenge evil at every level of government.

Authentic patriotism is both taught and exemplified in the Bible. Jesus relativized the state when he declared: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" (Luke 20:19-26). To God alone belong the Christian's ultimate loyalty and allegiance.

Not even Romans 13:1-8 justifies blind civil obedience. Even a casual reading of this passage indicates that the state's function is the promotion of justice and order. When a state fails to do this, the Christian is under no obligation to support it.

When the claims of Christ and the claims of Caesar conflict, Christ has the priority. History is filled with courageous persons who have obeyed God rather than Caesar.

Daniel refused to worship the golden idol. John the Baptist challenged Herod, and Jesus called Herod a fox. Peter and John were jailed for preaching the gospel. When the civil authorities warned them to desist from their proclamation, they replied, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Sir Thomas More informed King Henry VIII that he was the King's good servant but God's first. John Bunyan preferred confinement in the Bedford jail over a civil obedience which would silence his preaching. Martin NiemueLLer resisted Hitler saying, "God is my leader."

The Bicentennial should be a time for restudying the Bible's message regarding the proper relationship between God's people and the state. At the same time, let us nurture and practice a patriotism which is authentic. (BP)

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Henlee H. Barnette is professor of Christian ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.