

## "Mercy Killing" and Euthanasia.

### CHAPLAINS' OPPOSITION.

THE MORAL PROBLEMS which would be involved in any so-called "mercy-killing" of patients in agony by an overdose of narcotic drugs; in the euthanasia of those in pain and incurable; and in the brain operation leucotomy; and decisions to tell dying patients of their approaching death, were among the subjects discussed at the Annual Conference of the Church of England Hospital Chaplains' Fellowship, held at St. Edward's House, Westminster, on May 24th and 25th.

The Rev. J. Gordon Cox, Chaplain of Horton Hospital, Epsom, was in the chair. Chaplains were present from all types of hospital and all parts of the country.

There was general agreement against both "mercy-killing" and euthanasia. On leucotomy it was felt that there was as yet insufficient knowledge on which to found a moral judgment. The Conference agreed that normally it was desirable for any dying patient who was a practising Christian to be told of their approaching death.

The Conference emphasised the need for more instruction being given in the parishes on the Christian attitude to death and expressed the hope that where possible there might be consultation between the doctor and the Chaplain concerned, so that the Chaplain could interview a patient before he was drugged in serious cases. The Conference was reminded that penitence was a preparation for healing as well as for death.

The Conference agreed that it was important that the Chaplain should have opportunities of instructing the nurses on his work, and especially on their part in arrangements to enable patients to receive Holy Communion; and also so that they could see how his work fitted into the work of healing.

In this connection there was discussion on how best to help the personal spiritual life of nurses, enabling them to see the connection between their religion and their work; and on how both the Chaplain and Priests in parishes could best develop the sense of vocation in nurses and those who might become nurses.

### Guilds for Nurses.

Chaplains spoke of their disappointments with the existing Guilds for Nurses, and it was agreed that no existing Guild completely satisfied the Chaplains present. Opinions differed as to whether a new Guild should be started or an attempt made to re-mould one of the Anglican Guilds already in existence.

A devotional address was given by the Rev. Fr. T. L. Manson, S.S.J.E., who spoke of the efficiency and limitations of the modern hospital, of the opportunities before the Chaplain with both staff and patients, and of the frustration all Chaplains felt in their work. The gift of fortitude was essential. The prayer-life of the Chaplain in which he realised that the Lord was his strength and his song could give him the guidance and strength he needed.

### Chaplains and the National Health Service.

The last formal session of the Conference was devoted to some problems arising for Chaplains under the National Health Service. The Conference passed a resolution asking for a standard form of contract between Chaplains and employing authorities; and made some suggestions about such a form of contract. Another resolution urged that a Chaplain (whether whole-time or part-time) should have at least four weeks' annual leave, and that the cost of providing a *locum tenens* should be met by the employing authority.

Further details about the Fellowship of which all Priests doing hospital work may be members, may be obtained from the Rev. L. D. Jones, Cranbourne Vicarage, Windsor Forest, Berks.

## Feeding a Sick Child.

A. E. Hopkins.

WHEN A CHILD IS FEELING ILL the first indication is that it usually refuses to eat. The spoon, cup or plate is pushed away with a fretful air for no apparent reason, and the nurse or wise mother soon realises that something is wrong.

Colds, chills, sore throats and kindred complaints are common amongst young children, and it is well to know how to feed them so as to ensure that recovery is rapid and safe.

In young things, whether it be puppies or children the natural protective instinct is nearly always right.

A high temperature indicating that fever is present shows that the defences of the body are fighting to get rid of the poisons that are causing the illness, and every assistance should be given to endeavour to help this natural defence mechanism.

There is no doubt that many people, particularly young mothers, think that the child must eat in order to keep up its strength, but experience has proved that the method of forcing food on a sick child only aggravates the condition.

Unwise feeding will prolong the illness and slow down the processes of recovery. In some cases it will even lay down the foundations for a future illness.

The old saying "feed a cold and starve a fever" has, through the ages, been incorrectly construed. The original version "if you feed a cold you will have to starve a fever" is obviously the right one, in the light of present-day knowledge and shows that even in the past, wise mothers and nurses realised that wrong feeding in times of illness could cause a lot of complications.

Despite the perennial argument as to what constitutes a cold and how to treat and cure it, there is no disagreement on the point that noxious poisons are present in the system, and that the body is trying to get rid of them in its own way.

To withhold solid food from a child which shows signs of approaching illness is a wise precaution always. It will often prevent the development of fever which can be so distressing and weakening, and will allow the recuperative forces of the body to assert themselves.

A child with an illness of any kind should be kept in bed, for rest in an even temperature is a most important factor in its treatment. Body-building and strength-producing foods should be forgotten for the time being and books on invalid feeding should be religiously put out of sight.

A sick child does not need bread and milk, gruel or beef extracts, and patent foods should be shunned at this time. The digestion cannot deal with frequent doses of food whilst the sick body is trying to rid itself of the unwanted poisons. Too many jobs on a young system create a strain which has a tendency to weaken instead of strengthen the bodily resources.

Modern dietetic methods, which are the outcome of long experience, indicate that fruit juices and water are all that the body needs at the onset of illness. It is controversial whether these methods are so modern after all, for it is recorded in history that the Greeks, Egyptians and Far Eastern races knew all about the values of water and juices during sickness and for that matter, in maintaining existing good health as well.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)