

Pastoral care in Higher Education and Education: Muslim involvement in the history of Chaplaincy

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Introduction

Pastoral and practical theology has a long and established history in the Jewish and Christian traditions. The UK tradition of pastoral care has its roots in the Christian paradigm of chaplaincy, which is not a term found specifically in Muslim traditions. Nevertheless the concept of pastoral care is central in Islamic teaching based on the traditions of the Prophet Muhammed. While the term is without a source in Muslim tradition, the Abrahamic faiths, Christian, Jewish and Muslim, define in, each in their own way the unique method of care giving - that of extending oneself in helping to eliminate the suffering of others.

Muslim tradition compels its adherents to aiding others by: giving alms to the poor, feeding the needy, being hospitable to guests, honouring the dead by attending funerals, and being kind to neighbours. Two important aspects that best correspond to Christian tradition of pastoral care, are: visiting the sick, and being a good neighbour.

In Muslim tradition, followers of the faith are commanded to co-operate towards goodness, Qur'an (9:71):

The believers, men and women, are Auliya (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another

In Bukhari, a book on the sayings and traditions of Prophet Muhammed, the prophet said: "None of you will have Faith till he loves for his brother what he loves for himself".

In Jewish tradition, pastoral care has its roots in Hebrew Scriptures, in which Moses and David are depicted as pastors, tending their flock¹. In the New Testament, Jesus refers to himself as the “good shepherd”². The role of helping is best described in the Hebrew term *livui ruchani*³, spiritual accompaniment. In biblical and rabbinic texts, this refers to one who “walks with” another. *Accompanying* people is walking along with those who are experiencing suffering, or illness. Pastoral care or care giving is, from a Jewish perspective, joining people to offer encouragement, help, or simply witnessing their pain and endurance.

In its two thousand year history of the Christian community, and in its efforts to engage in pastoral care especially the Roman Catholic community, it approaches the important issue of pastoral care with a broad perspective on its many aspects: practical care for human suffering, the struggle against injustice, evangelizing the world’s peoples, burgeoning spiritualities, and sacramental celebration (Lynch, 2006). According to Ryerson, Old Testament images of care and shepherding started from ancient Israel (Ryerson, 2002). Pastoral theology has a history stretching back to the earliest centuries of the Christian church (Graham, 1996).

According to one Christian tradition, the word chaplain comes from the Latin word for a cloak and the word grew out of the story of St Martin meeting a man begging in the rain and without a coat. If he had met the man’s need by giving him his own cloak he would have shifted the problem to him. Instead he tore his own cloak in two and shared it, half for the beggar and half for himself. It was, therefore, recognised that a chaplain is someone who shares support with those in the difficulties of life and offers some spiritual help and direction in those difficult times. Chaplains⁴ were those who had charge of the sacred cloak of St Martin.

Chaplaincy in the mid 20th Century

The prison service and the National Health Service are under the management of government bodies. Their strategic plans, and in particular that of the Prison

¹ In Isaiah 63:11 Moses is the shepherd. In I Chronicles 11:2 David is the shepherd of Israel

² John 10:14, “I am the good shepherd and I know my sheep.”

³ *Luh* is the verb used to describe the *mitzvah* (acts of loving kindness) of accompanying the dead. It connotes a person involving oneself in the journey with the other. A chaplain (pastoral caregiver) is therefore known as a *milaveh* (*milavah*) *ruchani*.

⁴ From the original *cappellani* – “custodes illius capae usque hodie Capellani appellantur”

service is regulated by the Home Office. The way prisons are managed is more or less in a structured way across all prisons in England. This is not the case with Higher Education institutions, which are independent and work autonomously. Each university has its strategic plans and offers courses of its choice. Unlike the prison and National Health Service, Universities do not fall under a Government body. University chaplaincy started in the mid twentieth century while Prison and Hospital chaplaincies have a more ancient history. In this regard, existing academic literature and research into the role of chaplains is currently dominated by prison and Healthcare chaplaincy.

Murray (2005) observes the arena of pastoral care and counselling within institutions such as hospitals, prisons and Higher Education Institutions is still largely dominated by Christian ideas and concerns. This is somewhat problematic in an ever-increasing pluralist society as many Christian chaplains lack faith and cultural understanding of people from other faiths. Most hospitals and Prisons provide a chapel but not places of worship for other faiths. This has led to the introduction of multi faith rooms in some colleges and universities, and in some hospitals.

Migration to the shores of Britain brings new cultures, new challenges and demands. This can be challenging for Christian chaplains who are used to working in a Christian environment with fellow Christians. It can also be challenging for chaplains of other faiths working in an already existing ecumenical chaplaincy. The Church of England dominates chaplaincy in Britain and where chaplaincy is already set up, it is usually an Anglican chaplain in residence. Therefore, anyone from a different denomination or faith, entering chaplaincy in the Education sector, enters it where there is already an Anglican chaplain or an ecumenical team. Robinson (2004) suggests that a Christian HE chaplain's mission to students is a multifaceted affair. He suggests HE chaplaincy should build dialogue between the faiths represented on campus, both enabling Christian dialogue to be articulated but also to ensure real dialogue in the first place; chaplains should be collaborative, working through teamwork and networks to build chaplaincy to the whole institution. Chaplains should follow a holistic approach, that is to ensure conversation is being carried out with the whole person, and the whole community; and lastly he argues that chaplaincy should be integrated, so that all parts of the ministry are working together linking prophetic work and pastoral work to challenge unacceptable attitudes and practice on the part of individuals and institutions alike. While this is a Christian perspective, it doesn't resolve issues/concerns from people of other faiths. One example is that of a Christian chaplain who put up resistance for an ablution (washing) area for Muslims⁵ stating he sees some of them praying without

⁵ A compulsory requirement for Muslims before prayer

washing. This highlights the importance of cultural understanding between the faiths.

Muslim increase in education in the 1980s and 1990s

Nearly all Muslim migrants to the UK in the late 1960s and 1970s came as labour migrants. Their offspring growing up in Britain decided not to become labourers or factory workers and entered into education, particularly Higher Education and many became professionals in their chosen field. In Higher Education, this led to the needs of Muslim students being identified; such as prayer rooms, (segregation within the room or separate rooms being provided where available) halal food, fasting, pilgrimage, among other concerns. This further led to universities seeking advice and guidance to help deal with the needs of Muslim students and some turned to Muslim staff members, usually lecturers. The trust that had been built over the years with Muslim staff enabled an approach and some Muslim lecturers found themselves in dual roles – of lecturer as well as of Muslim advisor. This inevitably led to the development of Muslim chaplaincy in Higher Education, with Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) being the first Institute to offer a training course for chaplains.

Muslim Chaplaincy

Within Islam, there is no formal, structured hierarchy of religious professionals, such as may be found in Christianity (Gilliat-Ray, 2008). There is certainly no such thing as ‘chaplaincy’. However, in Islamic history, individuals have been engaged in ‘pastoral care’ beginning with the Prophet Muhammed. As explained above pastoral care has an important place in the Islamic tradition.

There are many Quranic verses and the Prophet’s *hadith* which inspire and exhort believers to visit the sick, to be compassionate, to comfort and feed the needy, and so on. In light of this encouragement, the development of Muslim Chaplaincy can be seen as building on a very well established but less formal institutionalised understanding of pastoral care in Islam (Gilliat-Ray, 2008).

According to the tradition (hadith) of Prophet Muhammed, he said: “Help one another in righteousness and virtue but help not one another in transgression.” He also said: We are commanded to be kind to the neighbours whether they are of kin or are strangers. This is indicated in the Quran (4:36):

Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the poor who beg, the neighbour who is

near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer

Prophet Muhammed recommended Muslims be kind to their neighbours and treat them well. He said: “(Angel) Gibra’il impressed upon me (the kind treatment) towards the neighbour (so much), I thought as if he would soon confer upon the neighbour the (right) of inheritance” (Bukhari and Muslim).

God’s mercy is such that he divides it into a hundred parts. He keeps ninety-nine parts and sent one part to earth by which the creations are merciful to each other. Thus the Prophet’s narration: He who is not merciful to others, will not be treated with mercy” (Bukhari). Muslims are also encouraged to give charity, that it is a pillar of the faith.

The Quran (93:9-10) states:

Therefore, treat not the orphan with oppression.
And repulse not the beggar.

Feeding the needy and the wayfarer, looking after guests, and orphans are emphasized in the Quran and in the sayings of Prophet Muhammed.

In light of this, Muslim Chaplaincy in Higher Education is developing and the needs of students and staff are now met in some universities that recognize the invaluable contribution Muslim chaplains make in higher education. Apart from pastoral support, an important aspect of Muslim chaplaincy work is that which initially started out as that of advisor to the university on Muslim and Islamic issues that affect students and staff.

Development of chaplaincy in the 1980s and 1990s

The standard concept used to make sense of the role of religion in society since the fifties has been that of secularisation, that the Western world is in an advanced state of living without gods. Modern society runs on non-religious principles. In Callum Brown’s, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000*, he argues that religion (Christianity) is in decline due to the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, and through the social and economic dislocation of the industrial revolution. He states that while there is a residual Christian presence the Church going habit is non-existence. Less than three percent of people attend Church in some counties in England. Fewer than half the people get married in Church. One in five babies get baptized. In 1900, religiously solemnized marriages were 85%. In 1997, this was down to 39%. Another major factor for the decline in religiosity was the change in trend and

morality in the 1960s with the sexual revolution and the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1967.

While large parts of Western Europe show signs of secularisation, much of the world is witnessing a renaissance of religious belief and affiliation, which can often take fundamentalist forms. According to authors John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, in their book *God is Back*, religion is making a comeback (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2009). Stephen Timms MP for East Ham, recently said, 'less than three percent of the population, i.e. Muslims, have brought religion to the fore in Britain'.

According to Alan Murray, ex adviser to the Church of England in further education, 'Muslims have confidence in their religion which can be seen in their willingness to pray'. The willingness to pray stems from the fact that Muslims are the only faith group that are required to pray five times a day (in congregation). Friday afternoon prayer in congregation is compulsory with almost all Muslims, students and staff attending. For Muslims, the prayer requirement envisages a safe, clean, private place and a cleansing (ablution) area as well. The catalyst for progress in Muslim chaplaincy and prayer rooms was the increasing number of Muslim students in Colleges and Universities and the facility for prayer not being available.

The twentieth century saw an increasing interest in the theoretical and empirical study of everyday lived experience (Cashman, 1993). In the past fifty years pastoral and practical theology have reinvented and redefined themselves (Browning, 1991). Practical theology can therefore be understood as an academic discipline, which treats human experience as sustained analysis and critical reflection. Pioneers like Carl Rogers, talk about a human approach, caring for the whole person with a particular focus on empathy.

Anton Boisen (1876-1965), a key figure in the development of pastoral education in America, and the founder of the Clinical Pastoral Education movement, first highlighted the importance of the theological study of lived experience (Patton, 1990). Boisen argued that attention to patients experience could itself generate new understanding about the human condition and the nature of humans relation to God, thereby contributing to new theological insights (Poling, 1991). Chaplaincy can therefore be viewed as developing from people's narratives about their pain, their anguish, and their resilience. It is also about how chaplains develop their skills through these narratives, using their experience and religion as a guide to give support and comfort in times of hardship and despair.

Muslim involvement in the prison and hospital chaplaincy started about the 1970s and this was haphazard, locally organised and focussed on meeting the basic religious needs of patients and inmates (Beckford and Gilliat-Ray, 1998). This

was very much similar to the development of chaplaincy in the education sector, which started off as a Muslim member of staff being used as an advisor. It was not until 2003 with the onset of Muslim chaplains training programme offered by Markfield Institute of Higher Education, that Muslim chaplaincy in education gained prominence. More universities turned to filling Muslim chaplaincy posts externally rather than use the dual role position of a staff member.

In both hospitals and prisons, the growth in the Muslim patient and prison population and the increasing complexity with this growth meant Muslim religious professionals were needed. Muslim religious professionals or chaplains had an important role to play. The issues were beginning to extend beyond advising on religious needs. A more active and informed Muslim chaplain was required to advise on a whole range of issues. So new posts were created which facilitated the development of Muslim chaplaincy. There was a very similar discourse taking place in the education sector across the country.

Current developments

With the growth of Muslim learners in colleges and universities, and with their needs that are comparatively different from those of people of another faith, there is a strong case for Muslim chaplains in the education sector. Particularly in colleges and universities where there are a significant number of Muslim learners. The chaplain's role is supportive, serving as a counsellor and guide to the psycho-spiritual needs of staff and students. The basic role of the chaplain is to be involved with others for the provision of holistic care in the education sector. 'Holistic care' is concerned with the whole person and includes their social, emotional and spiritual health or well-being. Chaplains work alongside other professionals collectively and collaboratively to provide psycho-social-spiritual services for their 'clients'. Chaplains actively demonstrate how religious communities can work alongside each other in an environment of mutual respect that promotes dialogue, builds community cohesion and so in turn challenges extreme perspectives (Clines, 2007). Chaplaincy in Further Education is a growing ministry, usually in the form of ecumenical, and increasingly, multi-faith teams (www.fbfe.org.uk)

For Muslims in Britain, there has been an emergence of new and inclusive chaplaincy structures and committees that give Muslims a voice to articulate their ideas and concerns. The Certificate in Muslim chaplaincy provided by Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) first offered in 2003 marks the important social and educational engagement in chaplaincy for the Muslim community. The Association of Muslim Chaplains in Education is set up to support Muslim chaplains who work in the education sector, both FE and HE. The Muslim Council of Britain and the Department of Health deliver healthcare Chaplaincy

training for Muslims who are interested in becoming chaplains in the NHS. Therefore, chaplaincy is starting to become a career option for Muslims who aspire to serve their community within the context of a public institution. Other organisations, like NIACE have developed and delivered a basic Faith leaders course for those interested in chaplaincy in a Multi faith context.

The National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (fbfe) have written a training manual for LSC called 'Welcome to Chaplaincy', which is a self taught modular manual for chaplains working in Multi faith. Cardiff University have undertaken a project on Muslim chaplaincy, while communities and local government (CLG) have commissioned The Experience Corps and Faith Matters to develop standards for chaplaincy work in all the different sectors. Muslim support in the education sector (MSed) is being set up to support colleges and universities by giving advice and guidance in issues of concern regarding Muslim learners and/or Islamic issues. MSed will also provide CPD to college and university staff around Islamic issues, equality and diversity and community cohesion, among others.