

Theological Dimensions in Muslim Chaplaincy - An Attempt at Systematization

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Abstract

This contribution addresses the question of what role Islamic theology – in the broader sense of an umbrella discipline that encompasses various sub-disciplines of the Islamic canon of subjects such as *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *kalām*, *taṣawwuf* or ethics – plays in Muslim chaplaincy and what contribution it can make to the professionalisation of chaplaincy. Based on a project called ‘Theology of Chaplaincy’, it reflects on and systematises the form in which different theological dimensions are evident in Muslim chaplaincy practice. Even if conversations between chaplain and chaplaincy-seekers do not always consist of theological content, the term ‘Muslim chaplaincy’ already refers to theological roots. Without a theological dimension and connection, chaplaincy would in fact no longer be chaplaincy, but psychological or social counselling. The need of chaplaincy-seekers for normative guidance in medical ethical decisions often comprises theological components just as much as a request to recite the Qur’an or a conversation about guilt and forgiveness. Accordingly, the theological dimensions can present themselves in different forms, appear explicitly or merely resonate implicitly and claim different relevance depending on the conversation. The implicit theological dimensions in particular – such as the chaplain’s own attitude – which are usually not explicitly verbalised in the encounter, are important influencing factors in chaplaincy that need to be reflected upon. By systematising these various theological dimensions, conclusions can also be drawn about the competencies that professional chaplains need to have and the relationship between chaplaincy and theology. In addition, these dimensions enable a reflection on how theological dimensions – e.g. normative questions of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* – can be dealt with.

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