

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Cambridge		
Unit of Assessment: 31		
Title of case study: Revitalising Muslim-Christian Relations: Tim Winter and <i>A Common Word</i>		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Tim Winter	University Lecturer in Islamic Studies	1 st January 1997-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Tim Winter (also known as Abdal Hakim Murad) has had a major impact on the religious landscape internationally through his role in the formulation and promulgation of the 2007 document "A Common Word" (ACW). In the period 2014-2020 Winter's work, through the pathway of ACW, has inspired institutional and individual dialogues between Muslims and Christians in Rabat, Brisbane, Baku, Khartoum, Alberta, and Indonesia. ACW has also resulted in Winter taking on a leadership role in the Catholic-Muslim Forum, alongside Popes Benedict and Francis, which has significantly improved relations between the Vatican and the Muslim world. Finally, Winter conceived and contributed to a companion volume to ACW for churches and mosques, which has been widely used across Europe, and in Russia and Malaysia, to deepen inter-faith dialogue.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Much of Winter's research is based on the conviction that it is crucial to build dialogue between the Islamic theological tradition and other institutions in the modern world, especially as that tradition both opens up new options for Muslim engagement with other religions, and addresses Jews and Christians with a prophetic call to a shared and peaceful co-existence. First, Winter's vision of Muslim engagement is rooted in his critique of supersessionist interpretations of Qur'anic revelation. Secondly, his analysis of the corresponding attitude of peaceful relations expected from Christians (as well as Jews) is grounded in the interpretation of the Qur'an's proclamatory or kerygmatic addresses to what it terms "the people of the book".</p> <p>First, then, Winter's scholarly confrontation of supersessionist tendencies in classical Muslim theology has shown that that classical tradition is compatible with Muslim participation alongside non-Muslims in common ethical projects. Winter demonstrates [R1, R2] that the advent of the Qur'anic revelation is best understood not so much as unveiling previously hidden truth, but as <i>restating</i> the content of previous prophetic revelations and as <i>recalling</i> people to an ethical monotheism. Winter's publications of annotated translations of classical texts dealing directly with the theme of human flourishing through prophetic guidance [e.g. R4] and his analysis of modern notions of social organisation in light of classical Islamic theology [e.g. R6, R7] serve as paradigms for the scholarly engagement which underpins such common projects. They have also allowed him to reconceive the way Western institutions can teach Islamic theology alongside Christian theology and the study of Judaism [R3, R7].</p> <p>Secondly, his research has focused especially on Muslim-Christian relations. His publications have touched on areas of Muslim-Christian congruences and convergences [e.g. R2], and one book is a three-way dialogue with Richard Harries (then Bishop of Oxford) and Rabbi Norman Solomon [R1]: the volume includes four essays by Winter, as well as an introduction and nine short response-pieces co-authored by Winter, Harries and Solomon. His work engages in critical assessment of the terms under which other monotheisms come to</p>		

deal with Muslims [e.g. R7, R8], again conducted with constant reference to classical Islamic theology [e.g. R6]. His analysis of the classical concept of *dhimma* explores the way in which there are resources in Islamic tradition for promoting a relation of hospitality from Muslims towards Jews and Christians, as well how the latter should respond [R5].

These two strands of Winter's body of research underpin his contributions to *ACW*. His articulation of a non-supersessionist understanding of Islamic revelation is a central theme of *ACW*, according to which Muhammad was "through inspiration, restating and alluding to the Bible's First Commandment." Similarly, the requirement of Muslims "to act in fidelity with the kerygmatic Qur'anic address to Christians and Jews" [R2] and this Qur'anic address to "the people of the book" who should be "disputed with in the most courteous way" (Q 4:171; 16:125) are key themes of *ACW*, which is an exposition of such Qur'anic passages which are, as *ACW* puts it, "an invitation to further discussion within the Christian family and within the Muslim family as well as between Muslims and Christians".

In sum, the burden of Winter's research – published in leading presses such as OUP and CUP – is to retrieve classical conceptions of Islamic openness to, and active participation in, peaceful co-existence with non-Muslims, on the one hand; on the other, it seeks to explain the ways in which the Islamic tradition calls others, especially Christians, to that co-existence. The commitment to peace on the part of Muslims and the kerygmatic address to Christians are the principal themes of *ACW*.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- [R1] Winter (ed.) with Richard Harries & Norman Solomon, *Abraham's Children: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Conversation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006). ISBN: 9780567081711
- [R2] Winter, '[Qur'anic Reasoning as an Academic Practice](#)', *Modern Theology* 22(3) (2006) 449-463.
- [R3] Winter (ed.), [The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology](#) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- [R4] Winter, *Imam al-Busiri, The Mantle Adorned* (London: Quilliam Press, 2009): ISBN: 9781872038155
- [R5] Winter [Murad], [Qur'anic Truth and the Meaning of Dhimma](#) (Dubai: Kalam Research & Media, 2010).
- [R6] Winter, '[Realism and the Real](#)', in M.H. Khalil, ed. *Between Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- [R7] Winter, 'Al-Ghazali and Anscombe's Tahafut', in B. Ucar & F. Griffel (eds.), *900 Jahre al-Gazali im Spiegel der islamischen Wissenschaften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015) 39-58: ISBN: 978-3-89971-950-5
- [R8] Winter, '[Some Islamic Reflections on D'Costa's Vatican II: Catholic Doctrines on Jews and Muslims](#)', *Louvain Studies* 40(3) (2017) 286-302.

As the publisher names and journal titles indicate, this research is all of international quality, and meets the 2* minimum requirement.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Background: Winter's Initial Involvement in the Composition and Release of *ACW*

ACW is the most significant statement made by Muslims to Christians in the whole of their shared history. The editor of this document was HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan, who acknowledges in a letter [5.9.2019] that "Winter played a very significant role in the genesis, composition and promulgation of *A Common Word*", his contribution "drawing on his extensive research and experience in Muslim-Christian relations" [E1]. Prince Ghazi documents his numerous discussions with Winter of the English and Arabic drafts of *ACW* by email, phone and in person, including at the Prince's own house and at the 'Blessed Tree' in Jordan [E1]. Winter was also one of the initial signatories, and part of the "core group" responsible for the initial dissemination of *ACW* [E2]. This group consisted of ten

internationally very senior figures (including a former candidate for the Presidency of Libya). It is a mark of great distinction that Winter played such a substantial role throughout the process of both composition and dissemination.

Winter is therefore often called upon to explain the genesis and meaning of *ACW*. He was asked to write the essay 'The Inception of *A Common Word*' in a recent CUP volume about *ACW* [E3]. One contributor explains how Winter has also offered clarification of the meaning and context of some of the statements in *ACW* [E3], and how Winter's "Inception" essay also elaborates the prefatory material in *ACW* about the remarks of Pope Benedict on Islam which were the immediate impulse for the document [E3].

4.1 Subsequent Impact of *A Common Word* (2014-2020)

After the initial publicity in the first five years or so after the *ACW* declaration, we can now see further institutional impacts which the pathway of *ACW* has elicited. For example:

- **World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW).** A 2010 UN resolution [E4], explicitly referring to *ACW*, designated the first week of February every year as 'World Interfaith Harmony Week'. The WIHW website, worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com, contains calendars and numbers of events from 2014-2020: 2014: 419 events; 2015: 1,009 events; 2016: 816 events; 2017: 1,054 events; 2018: 1,232 events; 2019: 1,453 events; 2020: 1,544 events [E5]. To illustrate local activity, a city council in the Philippines in 2016 sponsored a dialogue between Muslim and Christian leaders in the town, and *ACW* was the topic of discussion. One church leader present at the dialogue concluded: "the challenge for us now is to rediscover why we have to love each other as the open letter of 'A Common Word' is telling us" [E5]. Or again, on 22 Feb. 2019, A "Common Word" conference in Pakistan was co-ordinated by seven churches, five mosques, three schools, two universities and two Islamic madrassas. It was held in the oldest Mosque in Pakistan, the Jamia Masjid, the first time it was opened to Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Bahai. It was also attended by young people and children, as well as representatives from various religions and media outlets. Students were encouraged to speak on the subjects of *ACW* and WIHW. The conference focused on the "real problem motivated by religious hatred", in Kashmir, Myanmar and Palestine/Israel conflicts. [E5]
- **A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY).** ACWAY is a global youth movement, inspired by *ACW*, which brings together young people from diverse backgrounds to increase understanding of different cultures and faiths, promote peace and coexistence, develop skills to help local communities and deliver shared solutions in the form of local action. Between 2015-2019 it held fora in Rabat, Brisbane, Baku and Khartoum [E6]. One young Indonesian peace activist commented that the Sudan forum inspired her to believe that "we can make this happen, I still have hope" [E6].
- **Local initiatives.** There are also local organisations which identify themselves as promoting the vision of *ACW*, e.g. "A Common World Alberta", which seeks "to create spaces for gatherings where our faith communities can engage each other in order to overcome stereotypes and embrace our differences", through events such as talks from religious leaders, and a Muslim-Christian Book Club. One Christian commented that having Jews, Christians and Muslims reading the Bible together "opened up a whole new perspective for me, with respect to assumptions and understandings of the Hebrew scriptures"; a Muslim expressed the feeling that, engaging in the *ACW* Alberta dialogue, she was "part of a silent, ongoing social evolution that tends to make the impossible, possible", and another Muslim stated that "attendees have a genuine concern to further their relationship and move forward in a practical way as a result of the dialogue" [E7].
- **Education.** *ACW* features frequently in academic syllabi on interreligious dialogue. For example, the *ACW* document and an academic article about it feature in the "Syllabus/

achievement requirements” in programme REDI4000 (Autumn 2019) at Oslo University [E8]. In the 2014-15 course, “Unity and Diversity in Contemporary Islamic Thought”, at Heythrop College, one of the “Aims” is listed as “Explore main issues in contemporary Muslim thought including interfaith engagement with Judaism and Christianity especially with regard to ‘a common Word’ initiative”, and one of the Learning Outcomes is: “Demonstrate a deep understanding of various Muslim views on central issues in contemporary thought including interfaith engagement with Judaism and Christianity especially the importance of ‘a Common Word’ initiative” [E9]. ACW has elicited many academic publications, showing that it is still at the forefront of discussion of Muslim-Christian relations in the popular sphere and in academia [E2, E3, E10].

It is evident, then, that ACW has had enormous reach and significance. It has not just impacted isolated individuals, but has been widely adopted at institutional levels, and has inspired the creation of institutions such as ACWAY and the UN’s *World Interfaith Harmony Week* with their numerous activities challenging and instilling hope in those who participate.

4.2. Winter’s Involvement in the Catholic-Muslim Forum

One of the most salutary outcomes of ACW has been the series of Catholic-Muslim Forum meetings. Pope Benedict’s controversial Regensburg address in 2006 led to mass protests in many Islamic countries, with bombings and killings probably also a consequence of the speech. In this context of Muslim-Christian relations having reached a low ebb, Muslim leaders formulated ACW in response to the address. (Pope Benedict was the first addressee of ACW listed in the document.) Winter was part of the initial delegation to the Vatican to present ACW to Pope Benedict. Winter went on to have several interactions with Pope Benedict about the document, and the Catholic-Muslim Forum was established to engender a joint commitment to peace in the wake of the Regensburg address and ACW. Winter became the prime drafter of the Muslim sections of the declaration produced at the first meeting.

This declaration led to a series of ongoing meetings of the Catholic-Muslim Forum, most recently in 2014 in Rome and 2017 in Berkeley, USA, involving discussion now with Pope Francis. Ingrid Mattson, also part of the 2014 dialogue, has remarked that Winter is “certainly the most esteemed, profound and effective Muslim theologian in the English-speaking world”, and that he was “the intellectual leader of the Muslim delegation” in the Catholic-Muslim dialogue. He exercised, she writes, “delicate leadership during the sometimes-tense negotiations”. Mattson comments that between 2014 and 2019 “Winter has made immeasurable scholarly and programmatic contributions to an ethically and intellectually sound engagement between Christians and Muslims.” [E1]. One of the Vatican members, Monsignor Khaled Akasheh, the Bureau Chief for Islam in the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, remarked in a discussion of religious freedom that Winter has been a “herald of this freedom” in the negotiations [E1]. One of the Muslims in the delegation, Yahya Pallavicini, concluded that Winter “has contributed with his research to develop a new spiritual and intellectual opportunity in the field of Interreligious Dialogue between Christians and Muslims”; Winter’s “serious approach on doctrinal and historical aspects have inspired the work of the Catholic-Muslim Forum increasing the mutual understanding of the secrets and languages of the sacred texts” [E1].

After a high level of tension between the Vatican and Muslim leaders, then, relations are now very strong not least because of the high esteem in which Winter is held in the Vatican and the stimulus, provided by ACW, to peaceful discussion.

4.3 Impact through *Text and Reflections: A Resource for Parishes and Mosques*

The final principal strand of impact comes through the popular-level publication of Lejla Demiri’s edited booklet, *A Common Word: Text and Reflections. A Resource for Parishes and Mosques* (2011), an important pathway to the impact of Winter’s research. As editor, Demiri has stated, “It was Tim’s idea to produce the Texts and Reflections booklet” [E1]. This booklet comes with an introduction by the editor (previously a doctoral student of Winter), the text of ACW, and two essays of commentary. The former is written by David Burrell CSC (Notre

Dame), who has elsewhere said of Winter: “His presence is overwhelming ... He was always my mentor in Islamics” [E1]. The second essay, by Winter, draws on a number of strands of his research, such as his analysis of the meaning of *dhimma* ([R5] above).

Interfaith activists have commented on its usefulness. One Christian reports: “Demiri’s book has proved to be a vital resource in my inter-religious work in Rome” [E1]. A Muslim in Germany notes that it is “an indispensable resource for students who wish to deepen their understanding of inter-faith dialogue” [E1]. A Muslim RE teacher has stated: “I have used Prof. Demiri’s booklet in interreligious events. e.g. as an example of Muslim initiatives for interreligious dialogue. I would like to use parts of the booklet in my lessons, too. I just need to translate it into German. The chapters are not too long and very clear. And there are a lot of sources (Quran and Hadith) that we can use for example for discussions in our lesson.” [E1]. These examples from Italy and Germany illustrate the booklet’s effects in practical inter-faith work.

In addition to the existing English editions (published in the UK and Malaysia) and the Albanian translation, the book has now been published in Russian (2018) and Spanish (2020); translations have also been prepared in Romanian and Bulgarian, with plans currently afoot for their publication. The Russian publisher, for example, remarks that the book was distributed to those involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue, and “received positive feedback from Muslim and Christian audiences (scholars, theologians as well as ordinary believers)”. The book was also distributed to students at the annual Summer Theological Institute, which attracts students from other Russian-speaking, former Soviet countries. These students “are actively engaged in Christian-Muslim dialogue” [E1].

In sum, this small book has further extended the reach of *ACW* into a range of countries where religious tensions are very high, and it has been of major significance for the work of inter-faith activists.

Overall, the contribution of Winter’s research to *ACW* has been a pathway to multiple forms of impact. Some of this has been indirect, follow-on impact (WIHW; *ACWAY*; *ACW Alberta*) with enormous reach and significance internationally. Some, such as the Vatican Catholic-Muslim forum elicited by *ACW*, has resulted more directly in Winter providing leadership at a high institutional level in Muslim-Christian dialogue; this has also taken place at a crucial juncture, when Muslim-Catholic relations were seriously endangered. Winter’s research, via the pathway of *ACW*, has therefore led to his exerting a truly global influence. It is not often that a British academic can claim to have had a major international impact inspiring people, both at an institutional and individual level, to pursue world peace, but Winter’s research via the pathway of *ACW* has done so.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[E1] Private email correspondence on *A Common Word*. Available on request.

[E2] Sarah Markiewicz, *World Peace through Christian-Muslim Understanding* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016) 267.

[E3] Y. Said & L. Demiri, eds. *The Future of Interfaith Dialogue: Muslim-Christian Encounters through A Common Word* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018) 13-30 and 178 n. 4.

[E4] United Nations General Assembly, [Resolution 65/5](#).

[E5] <https://worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com/event-calendar/>; Article [Love of Neighbor in Christianity: A reflection inspired by “A COMMON WORD”](#). On the occasion of the WIHW Celebration 2016 in Zamboanga City. [Pakistan 2019 event report](#).

[E6] *ACWAY* [webpages](#) on fora in Rabat, Brisbane, Baku and Khartoum; [Sudan forum report](#).

[E7] *ACW Alberta* [webpages](#) and [blog](#).

[E8] Oslo University, [Syllabus](#) for REDI4000 - Interreligious relations.

[E9] Heythrop College webpage (archived, available on request).

[E10] V.L. Horsfjord, *Common Words in Muslim-Christian Dialogue* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).