

The book is an enlarged version of a paper, presented by the author in 1979 at a meeting of the Joint Working Group of Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. This study unveils the methodological and structural differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, the differences that lie deep at the root of contemporary social questions on which the two bodies are divided today more than ever. The social teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are characterized by the natural law method, by an abstract, academic and scholarly approach, and by the emphasis on the general principles. On the other hand, the World Council of Churches tries to discover the revelation of God in the freshness and uniqueness of each event using the method of action-reflection. The Roman Catholic Church is a single Church highly institutionalized and centralized with an infallible authority, whereas the World Council of Churches is a council of Churches loosely connected and without any binding authority on the member Churches. The basic differences become pronounced as regards specific issues like human rights, religious liberty, racism, violence, population explosion, position of women in the Church and society etc. But the author is not unaware that the differences between these two camps cannot be exaggerated, for today many of these theological and methodological differences cut across the denominational boundaries. This book is a significant and timely contribution in the field of ecumenism. Discovery of the barriers and their honest recognition is the first step towards overcoming them.