

# REFLECTIONS ON WARC/ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

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From its original beginning in 1970 it was hoped that the Dialogue would examine three themes:

Christology

Ecclesiology

The Attitude of the Christian in the World (Common Witness)

The three themes mentioned were matched by three phases:

1970 - 1977	The Presence of Christ in Church and World
1984 - 1990	Towards a Common Understanding of the Church
1998 - 2004	The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God.

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### **Influences on the Course of the Dialogue**

Influence number one was the emphasis or thrust in an individual Dialogue. While some Dialogues may be working more towards visible unity the primary purpose of others may be to seek clarifications and overcome

misunderstandings. I would feel that the WARC Dialogue fits into that second category.

Influence number two - the areas covered are influenced by markers put down by the Reports from previous phases.

Influence number three - the personnel within the Dialogue - those from the Northern World and those from the Southern World - particularly on the Reformed side. Certainly there were two very different approaches - those who begin from a classic theological position and those who begin from a contextual position.

Influence number four - would be the influence of the places from which and the backdrops against which the participants come.

Influence number five - external happenings, totally unrelated to the Dialogue, but which happened during the duration of the Dialogue:

- (a) The Bull of Indiction for the Declaration of the Holy Year in 2000.
- (b) The subsequent decision of WARC not to attend the opening of the ecumenical Holy Year Door.
- (c) The publication of *Dominus Jesus*.
- (d) An audience during the 2000 session with Pope John Paul II.

Influence number six - the influence of what is being said in other Dialogues in which the two partners have participated.

Without going through the whole of the document piece by piece, which time would not allow and which I do not feel I should do at its present state of readiness for publication, may I select some aspects which received great attention:

1. The Church and the Kingdom are not co-terminous.
2. The role of Post-Biblical writing.
3. The role of the Holy Spirit in helping us to discern God's will in the service of the Kingdom.
4. We do not build the Kingdom but we can remove obstacles.
5. An awareness of the role of the poor.
6. The importance of the relationship between a local church, other local churches and the Universal Church.
7. The case studies cautioned against a facile discernment.
8. Common Witness: Worship/Word/Service.
9. The Report concludes with a more meditative and exhortatory chapter.

May I make just one additional comment for those who are involved in ecumenical study: I think you will find particularly useful, when published, an appendix on the theme of the Kingdom of God in International Ecumenical Dialogue.