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I am encouraged and discouraged at the same time by the “Testimony” of our “Anglican Bishops in Dialogue”. I am encouraged that they are meeting at all! And that they are doing so as an explicit act of faith in Christ and in his life and purpose. But I am discouraged that, after several consultations, their common statement remains articulate only at the level of numbingly broad generality. It is as if “reconciliation” in Christ were an abstract theme, and not one mired in the particulars of specific acts and responses, about which the statement is silent.

It is encouraging that, in the midst of ongoing anger and recrimination among Communion bishops and leaders, ones that continue to include litigation and explicit excommunication, these bishops are willing to gather together to pray and maintain their witness as brothers and sisters in Christ, even in the midst profound disagreement. As the “Testimony” makes clear, such gathering is vital and demanded in a world of continued and embedded violence and division. If Christians cannot do this, then their own faith is vain. So, I commend them for doing so, in some cases in the face of personal ridicule and rebuke.

But why cannot we hear about the actualities at issue in *this* particular Christian press for reconciliation? Coventry Cathedral, site of their meeting, became a symbol for this goal because of very specific realities: the terrors of National Socialism in Germany, aggression and resistance in the Second World War, the genocide of Jews, and the need to bring together peoples and Christians of Britain and Europe out of the ruins of *this* conflict and its specific meanings. Anglicans around the world, analogously, are estranged due to specific actions and commitments, and their reconciliation cannot bypass these matters by appeal to something mistily beyond them. It is discouraging to hear about “eschatology” and ecclesial “family” in the face of our divisions, when what is demanded is the toughness and sacrifice of concrete negotiation in Christ one Church over matters of articulated belief, biblical interpretation, and moral witness. The theology of the “Testimony”, in this case, smacks of dilution and avoidance.

So: I hope the Consultation will continue; and I will be praying for its participants, and that their number will grow. There is no understanding, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation without meeting face to face, often with exhausting patience. But I will also be

praying that they do far more than report on the vague traces of a meandering journey, but will finally engage the very specific “sword” that pierces each other’s heart in the light following Jesus together at this time and in the midst of our very peculiar challenges as Anglicans.