

IRAQ : searching for hope

by Cannon Andrew White

For those of you with an eye for detail it will not have gone unnoticed that in the post conference addition of the Journal, in the photograph of Cannon Andrew White he is in fact wearing an Institute of Theatre Technicians badge; for those more recent members this is the forerunner of AODP. This is because Cannon White is in fact the proud holder of the City & Guilds 752, having trained and worked at St Thomas's Hospital, London.

Having been summonsed to a higher calling and taking the cloth, (although some cardiac surgeons would say there is no higher calling than cardiac surgery!), Cannon White's theological career has seen him rise to become the Director of the International Centre for Reconciliation (ICR) based at Coventry cathedral. As a special envoy to the Middle East, Cannon White drafted the Alexandria declaration - the first joint statement from Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders in the holy land. This must be one of the world's most dangerous jobs, all the more amazing as Cannon White reveals that he has Multiple Sclerosis.

In his book *IRAQ: Searching for Hope* Cannon White gives a candid yet insightful account of the events prior to the March 2003 conflict, his accounts starting as far back as 1999. The use of the word insightful was chosen because during this period Cannon White interacted with all of the key players, in fact America's deck of cards, the 55 most wanted men in Iraq featured people from his pre conflict meetings. Although a religious man this is not a book about religion or politics for that matter. However, both are components in the reconstruction of Iraq.

This book is not a rehash of the conflict nor does it set out to criticise the alliance, it is more about the issues surrounding the country, its people and the reconstruction. Cannon White was instrumental in the commissioning of Iraq's first bone marrow transplant centre, his encounters with the "Ali Babas," murderous local bandits knocks Bravo Two Zero into a cocked hat, mindful that he faced them without guns, grenades or air strikes.

In fact as recently as 2004 during a raid on the Iraq Institute for Peace, Cannon White was threaten with being shot and then beaten whilst the institute was robbed, this was all the worse for the fact that it was perpetrated by the Iraqi police in Baghdad.

As the book unfolds it becomes more apparent that Cannon White is one of life's realists. It is refreshing to read about this subject and for it to be presented in black and white; all too often its presentation is through rose coloured glasses or by someone with an axe to grind.

Whilst living the dangerous 007 life style, it should also be remembered that unlike James Bond, Cannon White is a family man with a wife and children, and his work keeps him away from his family, the pain of this comes across in his writing.

This book is written with an easy to read style and comes with a 'well worth a read' recommendation.

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