

continued from page 43

isn't fashionable to say so. In 2010, I set out to write a chronicle of anti-Christian persecution on several continents. Published in my book, *Christianophobia*, the results of my research are even more disquieting than I expected.

Abu Hamza, 7/7 ringleader Mohammad Sidique Khan and other totemic figures were allowed to practise their religion openly in Britain, yet there is scarcely a single country, from Morocco to Pakistan, in which Christians are fully free to worship without restriction. Muslims who convert to Christianity or other faiths in most of these societies face harsh penalties. There is now a high risk that the churches will all but vanish from their biblical heartlands in the Middle East. A few months ago, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah, officially announced that "it is necessary to destroy all the churches" on the Arabian Peninsula.

One reason Western audiences hear so little about faith-based victimisation in the Muslim world is straightforward: young Christians in Europe and America do not become "radicalised" and persecuted Christians tend not to respond with terrorist violence. This forbearance should of course be a source of pride in many respects, and

would be an unqualified good if properly acknowledged. But it counts for little in a climate where most of what is considered newsworthy involves tub-thumping or outright violence.

The problems faced by Christians are not by any means restricted to the Muslim world. Take India, where minorities – Muslims included – are menaced by Hindu extremists who consider the monotheistic traditions to be unwelcome imports, and resent Christian opposition to the caste system. Between August and October of 2008, Hindu hardliners in the eastern state of Orissa murdered at least 90 people, displaced 50,000, and attacked 170 churches and chapels.

Elsewhere, the culprits include not only communists, but also Buddhist nationalists in countries such as Burma and Sri Lanka. The scale of communist intolerance is a matter of record. Curbs on freedom of worship in countries such as China, Vietnam and Cuba are draconian and sometimes sadistic.

Why does all this matter? One obvious answer is that faith isn't going to go away. Whatever one's view of the coherence of religious belief, it is clear that secularisation has gone into reverse, partly through the spread of democracy. Three-quarters of humanity now professes a religious creed; this figure

is predicted to reach 80 per cent by mid-century.

The prospect should not surprise us. Atheism feeds off bad religion, especially fundamentalism, whose easily disposable, dogmatic certainties now form one of atheism's main assets. On the other hand, it is much harder for atheism to replace the imaginative richness of a mature religious commitment, and the corresponding assurance that life is worth living responsibly, because it has ultimate meaning.

But faith is like fire: it warms, but it can also burn. This point should be granted even if one accepts religion's status as an immense source of social capital.

On the positive side, faith-based conviction has mobilised millions to oppose authoritarian regimes, inaugurate democratic transitions, support human rights and relieve human suffering. The challenge, then, is to promote the peaceful messages at the heart of the world's major faiths, while neutralising perversions of the core teachings.

Rupert Shortt is the author of *Christianophobia: A Faith Under Attack*, published by Rider.

Jack Knife

BOOK REVIEW

The Crashing of a Policeman (NSW Police & PTSD)

By Paul 'Little Jack' Horner
Publisher: Zeus Publications (2011)

ISBN: 978-1-921919-08-4
RRP: \$32.95 (Pbk)

www.zeuspublications.com Order 'Online' through Zeus Publications @ \$32.95

Jack Knife follows the tail-spin of a once vibrant, fully operational police officer into a burnt-out, post-traumatic alcoholic. It is also a tale of a system failing, and of a significant breach of trust.

Jack Knife discusses integrity and debates the environment into which young men and women are thrust with little or no awareness of what they are about to experience, or how to deal with it when they do.

The author takes you through a series of operational police stories that range from saving people's lives, to police officers losing theirs. The overriding theme of the book is discussed in graphic detail, with little or no sanitisation.

Paul Horner, a NSWPF Senior Constable for 11 years, wrote this book with the intention of educating police, their families, and the general public as to what it is really like to be a police officer, and to assist those suffering, and those living with, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD.

During his time as a police officer, the author was confronted with many violent and, at times, life-threatening incidents. The psychological effects of these incidents culminated in him suffering the nightmare of PTSD. After diagnosis and subsequent treatment, it became evident that he would not be able to continue to function as a police officer and he was eventually medically discharged from the NSW Police Force.

The APJ reviewer thoroughly recommends *Jack Knife* to readers as a gritty and honest explanation of what PTSD is, and what it is really like from the perspective of the sufferer and his family.

By APJ Assistant Editor Greg Byrne

