**Book Title: Why Punish Me?** *Augustine’s sinful lust unwrapped*

**Scheduled for publication 28th September 2021**

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**SYNOPSIS (350 words)**

The UK is a mostly secular society, yet most of us born in these islands were taught his ideas, by law.  St Augustine’s fourth century hair-shirt texts shape our society—our politics, our schools, and darkly, how we relate to ourselves and each other.

In school we learn Augustine’s values, contradicting British notions of decency and fair play.  We are taught to profess sorrow for wrongful actions and we expect to be pardoned behind the back of our wronged victim.  According to polls, most of us reject religion later in life, but billions of neural connections made in our infant brains are not simply freed.

Following Augustine’s doctrine on penance, the Church of England service admits sin and begs forgiveness or mercy twenty-four times.  Grace and love are said twice.  In faith schools today, infants are told to recite similar prayers, often by a cleric.  Teachers do not set out to sexualise pupils, but an authority figure causing a child to feel guilt and shame is a known child sexual grooming technique.

The UK Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse reports 100 new sexual abuse cases by clerics each year, yet nothing in literature explains this deviance credibly.   Augustine claimed that humans are naturally wicked and we are predisposed to be sinfully lustful from birth.  In these pages we find he was mistaken.  The possible influence that his ideas might have on the sexual abuse of altar boys and the callous neglect found in Ireland’s mother and baby homes, is grippingly scrutinised.

The author suggests Augustine’s teaching might play a more influential role in child sexual abuse and adult mental well-being than has generally been recognised in mainstream social science.  He reviews multiple research papers endorsing religiosity, highlighting a lack of rigour.  And we discover why academics shun this field of study.

This thought-provoking book fills a gap in the shelf, opening a compelling new front in the current wave of popular religious critiques and revitalising the  ‘God Debate’.  The lucid descriptions of faith school drill and doctrine will stir readers who suppose Christianity is a benign influence, to think again.

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**SYNOPSIS (200 words)**

**Why Punish Me?** is a meticulous exploration, initially from a child’s-eye viewpoint, of St Augustine’s fourth century teaching.  The author served as altar boy and chorister while attending church schools in Ireland and England, where he faced abuse.  Here he recalls daily prayers of self-censure and remorse, a penitential ritual still practised in some British schools.

Britain is a mainly secular society, yet most of us born here were taught Augustine’s ideas, by law.  His ancient hair-shirt texts shape our lives—our schools, our politics, and darkly, how we relate to ourselves and each other.  In school we are taught values at odds with modern notions of decency and fair play.  According to polls, most of us reject religion later in life, but billions of neural connections made in our infant brains are not then freed.  Augustine’s shameful ideas about sex and sin pervade or culture, normalising negative thought patterns.

Tracing his religious background, the author suggests Augustine’s teaching on sinful lust might play a more influential role in child abuse and adult mental well-being than has generally been recognised in mainstream social science. The lucid descriptions by a schoolteacher of the indoctrination methods used in faith schools today will stir readers who suppose Christianity is a benign influence, to think again.

**SYNOPSIS (100 words)**

The ‘God Debate’ is given a shot in the arm with this new assault on St Augustine.  The author, who was sexually abused as an altar boy, gives a child's-eye view of the shadow cast by his drilling in Augustine's fourth century ideas.  Augustine’s hair-shirt texts shape our society—our schools, our politics, and darkly, how we relate to ourselves and each other.  The lucid descriptions by a schoolteacher of the indoctrination methods used in faith schools today will stir readers who suppose Christianity is a benign influence, to think again.

**SYNOPSIS (50 words)**

An acclaimed fresh perspective on the current crisis within Christianity.  Vignettes from the author’s church school where he faced abuse, illustrate the work.  He explores British faith schools, to report what role drill and doctrine might play in child sexual abuse and adult mental well-being.