

# WHY PUNISH ME?

AUGUSTINE'S  
SINFUL LUST  
UNWRAPPED

Uncorrected proof  
not for resale  
(see back cover)

Michael Moloney  
& Lorna Graham



*“It tackles — head on — an important and pressing subject... it’s vital stuff. It’s about how we safeguard young people, how we grow up, how we interact with others.”*

— Karl French, literary reviewer —

What reviewers have said:

*“This is potentially of interest to anyone concerned with how we grow up, how we are shaped, and how the way that young people are drawn into whatever religious faith into which they are born, how this supposedly, avowedly benign process is enacted can have deeply malign effects on the individual and so on society in general. It tackles – head-on – an important and pressing subject... it’s vital stuff. It’s about how we safeguard young people, how we grow up, how we interact with others.”*

—KARL FRENCH—

Literary Reviewer

*“Awesome how far Augustine’s tentacles of guilt and sinfulness reach. Alone among the world’s civilised nations, Britons are allowed to physically punish children because unelected bishops sitting in the House of Lords advocate it.”*

—CAROLYN THOMPSON—

Reader

*“It takes us directly to a seemingly real situation with flesh and blood people. The menace in the good father’s every action is tangible, and what isn’t said adds to the sense of danger.”*

—ALAN WILKINSON—

Literary Reviewer



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**Michael Moloney**  
& **Lorna Graham**

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ISBN: 978-1-8384816-0-5 (Hardcover)  
978-1-8384816-1-2 (Ebook)

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Editor and contributor:

Lorna Graham, who authored chapters 12 and 13.

*To Dad, to whom I owe more  
than I realised until it was too late to thank him.*

UNCORRECTED  
FOR REVIEW ONLY



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgements must begin with thanks to Pope Francis who prompted me to start writing when I read in February 2019 that he had dubbed his critics ‘friends of the devil’. Most of the words in the following pages were written later. Ruminating on my parents’ years of futile, stoic suffering kept me writing and focussed on achieving closure. The book was made possible by many helping hands, but especially the trailblazers and scientists whose star labours my modest contribution relies upon. They completed the challenging, and often fascinating, research studies without which there could be no discussion. These include the National Secular Society, Humanists UK, teams of academics and scholars, and indeed all of the sources mentioned in my references.

Lorna Graham, who edited and commented as the manuscript progressed, made a contribution to the work far in excess of the chapters she authored. Special credit must be given to my wife who tolerated an entirely undeserved lack of attention for months on end. (That said, I recognise more praise will be needed to get me back in favour.) I am particularly grateful to the book designers WordZworth and IngramSpark the printers, who between them have honed the process of publication so that the many obscure technical processes are comprehensible to a novice, or at least made manageable.

Finally, thanks to you, my readers. Whatever your beliefs, my hope is that after scanning these pages you feel as passionate as I do about the value of an open education for all British children. Today, children in some schools are being insidiously misinformed.

## WHY PUNISH ME?

To properly safeguard our young and defend our liberal way of life for the future, religious studies should be taught from an objective, critical and pluralistic viewpoint so that children are well placed to make up their own minds what to believe and what to doubt.

# FOREWORD

Every week we are contacted by members of the public from all backgrounds annoyed, angered and aggrieved by the inappropriate imposition of religion in their schools. In England three in ten live in areas with little or no choice but a faith school and every year 20,000 pupils are assigned faith schools against their families' preferences. Every week we hear from those locked out of suitable local schools by discriminatory admissions. We speak to parents shocked to find their children being directed to pray in schools or proselytized to in religious education. We speak with teachers facing religious discrimination in employment, or uncomfortable with evangelical visits and pupils experiencing discriminatory sex education. We deal with the extreme examples that can only be called indoctrination and a large range of more subtle problems arising from the privileging of religion.

As coordinator of the 'No More Faith Schools' campaign I am happy to write this brief foreword for the authors, both members of NSS and committed to our goal of removing the connection between religion and state. The evidence of harm presented here should give the government cause to reconsider funding schools organised round and promoting exclusive religions.

Around one in three publicly funded schools in England & Wales are faith schools, i.e., they have an official religious designation or ethos. Scottish and Northern Irish schools are still strongly divided along sectarian lines.

Abuses of children's rights are common in religious schools beyond the state sector. While we do not oppose independent private religious schools, we are increasingly active in challenging schools where the most basic standards of secular education and even health and safety are often sacrificed in the prioritisation of faith formation.

Our principled opposition to faith schools, comes not from any antipathy towards religion but from our support for children's independent right to develop their own beliefs free from religious discrimination or control. Principles we are glad to see supported by many people of faith, but fiercely resisted by the religious establishment.

The authors of this book have taken aim at that establishment and their arguments will be persuasive to any open-minded reader. Two lines of their argument are particularly relevant to our campaigning.

The first is that the religious establishment that plays such a large role in state education – spearheaded by the Church of England – is increasingly disconnected from the population it seeks to lead. Yet the Church relies on this persona of kindly teacher of the nation and heart of the community to justify its role in education. This disconnect – seen in the consistent and dramatic decline in church attendance, and a growing majority of non-religious citizens – makes the increasing role of religion in schools even more incongruous. Many are driven away by the Church's institutional homophobia and ideas about 'sin' which are deeply disconnected from the moral zeitgeist. The hypocrisy of this moralising while the Church remains mired in safeguarding and clerical abuse scandals, with more than 100 cases of clerical child sex abuse reported every year, is clear for all to see.

Time and again such lax safeguarding is enabled by the state authorities' continuing deference engendered by the Church's establishment status.

Secondly, we increasingly view children not as vassals or property of their parents, but as independent rights holders. Modern pedagogies view the purpose of education as enabling self-actualisation, preparing children with the knowledge and skills to take their own path in life. The idea of education focusing on obedience and moulding unruly children feels like a relic of the last century. But the ideas that children are inherently sinful, that they need instruction to follow the correct path, and that parents choose children's beliefs, are kept alive, albeit often in a weakened state, by religious influence over education.

**Alastair Lichten**

**Head of education, National Secular Society**



# INTRODUCTION

*Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun  
Which was my sin, though it were done before?  
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,  
And do run still, though still I do deplore?  
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,  
For I have more.*

—A HYMN TO GOD THE FATHER BY JOHN DONNE—

Whether or not religion spawns tension and violence around the world is an issue that has been exhaustively discussed elsewhere, and is beyond the modest ambitions of this book. What I hope to do is show how the teaching in certain schools can disadvantage children who are, as I was, imaginative and impressionable. Having a sensitive nature is a positive attribute: it is what makes us human. However, sensitive individuals are especially susceptible to corrosive feelings of guilt and shame. These feelings are sharpened by the relentless burden of culpability imputed by Augustine of Hippo, one of Christianity's foremost saints. St Augustine deemed all humans inherently depraved and sinful, from birth. We will look at Augustine's fourth century teaching and the subjective effect of the drill and doctrine imposed on infants in some faith schools today. Modern thinking, and the new research that we will review, challenges Augustine's dismal verdict on the human condition. We will explore the state's long collaboration with the church, which ensures Augustine's archaic preoccupation with sinfulness continues to be ingrained into the minds of all British infants. Reviewing evidence of the influence

Augustine's ideas have on the long-term mental well-being of apostates, we discover that this group is widely misrepresented in academic research endorsing religious belief. Finally, noting that clerical child sexual abuse (cCSA) continues to bedevil church institutions today, we consider whether instruction in Augustinian theology might play a role in cCSA. From time to time, I will intrude with examples from my own experience as a follower and former acolyte. I will show how Augustine's sin-centred teaching stimulated and sustained a negative mental schema that I endured for much of my life.

A friend of mine shared an instructive story. He said, 'My dad hated seeing people baring an open mouth. When I was a boy, he often used to say that if a fly gets in your mouth, your teeth will turn black and fall out. I am in my forties now, and I know that he was joking, but to this day I close my mouth if I see a fly. It's instinctive: half the time I don't realise I'm doing it.'

The founder of my old school, Cardinal John Henry Newman (recently canonised and now St Newman), put the idea another way. He wrote in his school notebook, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and, when he is old, he will not depart from it.'<sup>1</sup> Reading the reports of evasiveness by the Vatican in response to the disclosures of cCSA,<sup>2</sup> I thought back to my childhood and the religious education (RE) that I had undergone in schools. Existing literature offers implausible rationalisations for cCSA, while my memory of school drill in rites and rituals offers an explanation that I find persuasive, and it reaches back in history to implicate that keystone of Western Christianity, St Augustine. It occurred to me that teaching Augustine's ideas might inadvertently build a favourable grounding for the subsequent exploitation of a child.

St Augustine, whose literature informs Christian faith, was a tormented man writing in unenlightened times. A revered doctor of the church, he is held up as a role model for healthy spiritual development. Yet, as bishop of Hippo, he advocated a dubious moral code and he wrote disgusting tracts about infant sexuality. Later, when we examine his life, we will review the historical background that

helps explain this apparent paradox. We will evaluate the soundness of his ideas, which are not just tolerated but compulsorily taught to infants as definitive in Britain's schools.

As soon as I could speak, my mother told me what all infants in Christian households are told, that I was born with original sin and I had been baptised to wash the sin out. Later in life I learned that original sin is Augustine's mark of guilt for concupiscence (sexual lust),<sup>3</sup> which by his decree is ineradicable. In his autobiographical works, Augustine wrote of 'filth' and the 'itch of lust in infants',<sup>4</sup> declaring that babies are born stained with guilt from original sin, the sin of sexual lust. He reframed baptism to do away with the sinful flesh, but he held that lust is not removed.<sup>5</sup>

When I started my own family, Augustine's idea that children are contaminated by the lust of their parents in conceiving them was hideous and repugnant. In the Augustinian view, a baby is not innocent and unsullied, with potential for self-determination. Rather, a child is born in sexual sin and needs external regulation for the rest of its life to control its lustful impulses. Most Christian adults take a blithe view of original sin and many will be unfamiliar with the significance of the rite of baptism. However, St Augustine's teaching is required reading for church men and women who learn that baptism does not entirely cleanse original sin. Sexual lust is dampened down but some concupiscence remains in a baptised infant, a doctrine endorsed in the catechism of the Catholic Church.<sup>6</sup>

Teachers and parents might overlook or ignore the sexual connotations, but we will see how clergy focus their lives on scripture. The overwhelming majority of priests and vicars I meet seem kindly and well meaning, yet they insist children are born marked with the stain of original sin.<sup>7</sup> If they did not believe Augustine's doctrine that there was sin from carnal guilt in little children that needed acknowledgement and forgiveness, they would not solemnise baptism, because sacramental grace to douse lust would be superfluous.

Augustinian theology is the bedrock of Christian faith in the Western Church, inculcating notions of personal guilt and sin. RE

is required and funded by the government, and schools in the UK are obliged by law to promote Augustine's fatalistic doctrines.<sup>8</sup> In fact, only 60% of primary schools currently comply,<sup>9</sup> but in these schools RE helps shape the lives of nearly one half of British infants.<sup>10</sup> These children are having their life chances affected by reciting unhelpful prayers like the ones we will review in chapter two. Infants are told they were inflicted at birth with the stain of original sin. As these children grow up, clerics, supported by teachers and childcare workers, reinforce the disgrace they administered by getting children to perform Augustine's penitential admission of wrongdoing and making them beg for forgiveness and mercy.<sup>11</sup> Chapter 3 draws attention to how impressionable infants are inculcated with these unhelpful ideas. Reviewing primary school curricula, we find Augustine's hair-shirt ritual of self-inflicted guilt and censure is still recited by infants in faith schools.<sup>12</sup> Receptive young minds are repetitively weighed down with his ancient creed of mock sinfulness and self-blame.

Teachers on both sides of the Atlantic used to put dull pupils in a corner and make them wear a pointy **dunce cap**. This practice of open humiliation was scrapped 100 years ago. Yet today the state supports schools that publicly shame children with Augustine's contrived guilt. In 1927, British philosopher and Nobel laureate Bertrand Russell declared 'People in church debasing themselves and saying they are miserable sinners, and all the rest of it, seems contemptible and not worthy of self-respecting human beings.' Nearly a century later the cradle of Russell's intellect still requires infants to be indoctrinated in these self-abusive terms. The pages that follow examine the background to this shameful tradition, how it is enforced and propagated in today's schools, how it inhibits some children and how it might tempt acts of cCSA. Here we unravel how discriminatory government appointments ensure the perpetuation of Augustine's negative creed.

My RE was actually Augustinian indoctrination, similar to that in many faith schools, and as you progress through these pages it will become clear why I take pains to make this distinction. Shrewd

intellectual critiques of religion by Anthony Grayling, Richard Dawkins, Victor Stenger, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, Dan Barker and the late and much-lamented Christopher Hitchens, among many others, fill the bookshelves. But these great men cannot speak for those who spent years being indoctrinated and drilled, as I was, in Augustine's undignified ideology.

RE was plain and simple in my schooldays, but for today's schoolchildren it is technically sophisticated. Demand for religious content is sufficient to sustain commercial producers offering slick media presentations, including Augustine's penitential pleading. Using well-conducted research studies we examine how school drill and doctrine instils Augustine's potentially disturbing ideas in young minds. Then we look at some of the measurable outcomes in affected Western societies. I will argue that Christianity's Augustinian teaching can have enduring and far-reaching effects on some children into adulthood. We will compare his primitive ideas with recent scientific discoveries and then review compelling evidence that the attitude of adults towards children is shaped by Augustine's unsafe teaching.

Almost all children (99%) schooled in Britain today will go on to renounce religion soon afterwards, as I did.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, apart from the wasted hours of misspent lesson time, repudiation does not promptly disengage the billions of neural connections made in the brain during a child's formative years.<sup>14</sup> I, and countless other apostates, have experienced distress caused by the RE we received in childhood. Little rigorous research has been published regarding the lifelong effect of instilling Augustine's ideas in young people.<sup>15</sup> Indoctrination of minors as a factor contributing to mental ill-health is surprisingly lacking from that literature which does exist. The possible effect of sustained drilling on the minds of receptive infants has not escaped notice entirely, but research presents particular challenges. In extreme cases, RE gives rise to trauma,<sup>16</sup> but the milder upset borne by others is unrecorded and quietly disregarded. We will look at the work that has been done and the difficulties involved in the study of religion. Comparing diverse cultures, we see how

Augustinian guilt is so prevalent in Western societies it has become normalised. Here we will learn why existing literature claiming benefits for religiosity is unreliable, and we hear about a surprising inhibition reported by psychologists to explain why this field of study is shunned by academia.

The mental scars inflicted by my upbringing in a Roman Catholic (RC) community still mark me. Following my parents' alienation at the behest of a priest, my mother sent me to a Catholic boarding school where I encountered abuse. Reading the many reports of child exploitation and sexual abuse and reflecting on my own experiences, I was moved to speculate why the Christian community appears to hold an unduly liberal attitude towards the mistreatment of children. It is not just clerics who shock us with their abuse of children. Nuns also seem disposed to mistreat young people, as the unmarried mothers-to-be care homes scandals noted here show. Examining the literature, we question why some ecclesiastics seem to have a disdainful view of children, typified by my indecent clerical beating overseen by nuns, described in chapter 6. We review speeches by bishops in the House of Lords to discover why the English, unlike other secular populations, continue to permit children to be physically punished in the home.

Augustine's version of the ritual known as penance, also called confession or reconciliation (meaning reconciliation with God, not with the victim of wrongdoing), is morally questionable. His doctrine, discussed in chapter 7, teaches children a moral code of mock culpability, secretive disengaged justice, and arbitrary retribution, which conflicts with the principles of fairness accepted by enlightened societies. I recall the sense of ambivalence and the moral limbo I experienced in my adolescence as I struggled to resolve the confusing beliefs I had been indoctrinated with – beliefs that I did not value and did not own.

Followers deem that when a priest forgives transgressions, he stands as Christ, in person. We look behind the Latin phrase **in Persona Christi**, the title given to Catholic priests by the pope, meaning that

a priest stands 'in the person of Christ', which allows priests to forgive sins. Although generally associated with Catholicism, all Western denominations offer to forgive transgressions without thought or consideration for the aggrieved party. Christians are accountable only to a confessor for wrongdoing and the confessor is compelled by canon law to absolve the penitent if they are contrite and accepts a penance, usually prayers to the saints. If a believer is sorry and has confessed, forgiveness is guaranteed by canon law regardless of any moral or judicial considerations. Those who find comfort in religion can develop ethical blind spots or maladaptive feelings of guilt, and we will examine these issues as we progress. We go on to consider enlightened concepts of decency and fair play compared with Augustine's ancient philosophy. We explore contemporary approaches to wrongdoing which displace Augustinian ideas with evidence-based methodologies. Government research demonstrates the superiority of progressive judicial systems like restorative justice.

We have considered Augustine's readings on the doctrines of original sin, penance and sacrifice. In chapter 8 we are ready to sift the moral lessons these ideas teach our schoolchildren. Augustine thought humans were born wicked and predisposed to being bad and sinful. He taught that only the Christian God can distinguish right from wrong. Acts of goodness can only be achieved by means of God's grace, and forgiveness is His sole prerogative. We look at game changing advances made by British researchers in identifying the source of human morality and we find Augustine was wrong. Far from his doctrine of preordained human wickedness, science reveals we are born with a socially positive and valuable sense of cooperation and fair play. This valuable sense of right and wrong that has evolved in humans predates Augustine by thousands of years. Telling children that they were born wicked and are predisposed to evil is not only potentially harmful, it is also dishonest.

Examining psychologists' assessments of Augustine's state of mind, we take time out here and allow ourselves to speculate upon why he took the view he did. Aided by expert study, this

light-hearted digression offers a fascinating theory that could account for Augustine's dark psyche. No other country in the world demands all its children be indoctrinated in outdated Augustinian values. We uncover the sordid reason why the British state alone continues its headlong charge in a direction opposite to the wishes and needs of the majority of its citizens.

In the course of my research for this book I have encountered thousands of accounts from adults articulating feelings of exploitation and betrayal by their evangelical schoolteachers.<sup>17</sup> Like me, these individuals were too naïve to demur as infants. Now, many express a view like mine; that their schooling punished them. Here we review some of the disturbing ideas and images infants are being exposed to in faith schools. It is hard to disagree with Dawkins when he claims that religious indoctrination is a form of child abuse.<sup>18</sup> Dawkins was criticised by Augustinian apologists for insulting people who have endured physical child abuse, but having been abused mentally and physically myself I can speak from both sides of the argument. However, the term **abuse** is contentious and I prefer to describe religious indoctrination as a form of punishment. According to Merriam-Webster, punishment is 'suffering, pain, or loss that serves as retribution'.<sup>19</sup> Indoctrination in Augustine's ideas undoubtedly punishes some children, and the evidence for that claim is contained in these pages, which recount my childhood experience.

Reviewing judicial reports and criminal records, we look at the backgrounds of convicted child sex offenders and the personal histories of the world's most notorious distributors of child pornography, to identify a correlative influence. With caveats regarding data collection and acknowledging international and cultural inconsistencies in defining child abuse, we move on to investigate recent records of 'darknet' internet child pornography. Then we compare that data with countries where Augustine's followers are dominant.

Chapter 11 trawls through the many theories that have been posited to explain the aberration that is cCSA. We have noted the remarkable paucity of rigorous research in this field. In the absence



of clear evidence, the cause of clerical cCSA is open to speculation. A report commissioned by the Catholic Church itself implies that nearly three quarters of victims of predatory clerics fell within the range that would identify the abusers as paedophiles, according to the clinicians' manual. We consider whether the Augustinian theology nuns and clerics are taught regarding infant concupiscence might be a factor in cCSA. Could Augustine's doctrines on infantile guilt and culpability be unconsciously moulding the attitude of clerics towards young people? The church's report goes on to confirm that the indoctrination clergy receive in seminaries is a factor in cases of cCSA. Here is testimony from the church itself, admitting the far-reaching influence of Augustine's unsafe ideas.

In the last few decades, the Christian communion has been confronted with an avalanche of cCSA cases from around the world. Most claims involve Catholic priests, but thousands of Church of England (C of E) clerics have also been implicated in cCSA. Although the Catholic community has the most cases of abuse at the time of writing in March 2021, cCSA has been uncovered throughout the Christian communion, despite having been carefully concealed by ecclesiastics at every level of authority. The C of E has been obliged to deal with thousands of complaints of cCSA and has taken desperate measures to cover up cases of abuse.<sup>20,21,22</sup> Finally, analysing the latest government statistics, we assess whether clerics are more liable than others in society to sexually abuse children today.

Recent high-profile lawsuits and harrowing testimony given to public inquiries have kept the issue in the headlines. Meanwhile, cover-ups continue to surface, and victims' groups say the churches have not done nearly enough to guarantee reform and safeguard children. Church history is laden with prevarication and evasion in dealing with cases of cCSA.<sup>2</sup> Despite multiple demands for change to Church procedures and practices, safeguarding has been erratic and half-hearted. We explore evidence that ever since Augustine, cCSA has bedevilled the Church, while ecclesiastics have carefully papered over cases within their ranks.<sup>23</sup> Evidently, little has changed

and new cases are still being reported. In November 2020, the UK Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) reported that the crisis is ‘far from a solely historical issue’, adding that more than 100 allegations of cCSA had been reported each year since 2016.<sup>24</sup>

I am indebted to Lorna Graham who wrote the final chapters of this book. With 26 years’ experience of teaching in primary schools and in secondary religious education, Lorna writes with authority about infant proselytisation and the current obsolete connection between the state and religion. Media attention has rightly focused on radicalisation, highlighting the danger posed to society by fanatical religious indoctrination. Less attention has been given to the routine teaching in state-funded primary faith schools that Lorna explores. Some readers have expressed doubt that the practices described in these pages are relevant today. Lorna corrects this misconception with accounts of her primary school classroom experience, and parents themselves describe intensive faith indoctrination.<sup>25</sup> Ofsted reports give a disturbing picture of how primary school RE lessons are being conducted today.<sup>26</sup>

Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), recently introduced into British schools, is not as widely taught as some might think. In fact, many schools do not publish a policy on SRE and others neglect to cover the subject fully or misrepresent the facts.<sup>27</sup> For an annual subscription of £456.00, Ten:Ten Resources will provide lessons to meet the government’s requirement for objective relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) ‘...through the prism of Catholic RSHE’.<sup>28</sup> In other words, RSHE will be delivered in an explicitly distorted, faith-friendly form. Chapter 12 highlights the omissions and inaccuracies that result from schoolteachers failing to present the facts of life clearly and objectively. The failure to give comprehensive information on this important topic is liable to put young people at a serious disadvantage when they leave school.

Before progressing further, it is useful to clarify the lexicon used by professionals in the field. The terms **child grooming**, **child molestation**, **child sexual abuse** and **child sexual exploitation** (CSE) might

be used interchangeably by the media, but there are important distinctions. Grooming is the process whereby an adult prepares a child to ease the way for sexual abuse. Molestation is an outmoded term; child sexual abuse is more precise and is the preferred term to describe an adult using a child for sexual stimulation. According to Google Trends ([trend.google.com](http://trend.google.com)), child sexual abuse is slowly becoming the more popular search string. CSE is an umbrella term, which covers all child sexual abuse including prostituting, trafficking and underage marriage.

The NSPCC says, ‘When a child or young person is sexually abused, they’re forced or tricked into sexual activities. They might not understand that what’s happening is abuse or that it’s wrong. And they might be afraid to tell someone’, and ‘Abuse is sexual touching of any part of a child’s body, whether they’re clothed or not.’ The Sexual Offences Act 2003 defines inappropriate touching as sexual assault if (a) the touching is intentional, (b) the touching is sexual, (c) the child is under 16. The Act goes on to define touching as sexual if a reasonable person would consider that, (a) whatever its circumstances or any person’s purpose in relation to it, it is because of its nature sexual, or (b) because of its nature it may be sexual and because of its circumstances or the purpose of any person in relation to it (or both) it is sexual. Touching includes touching, (a) with any part of the body, (b) with anything else, (c) through anything.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the boundaries for what constitutes child sexual abuse are wide but clear and detailed. Bearing in mind the context, and the relationship between clergy and altar boy, any touching other than hand to hand is inappropriate and therefore could meet the criteria for sexual assault. If I were to cite simply **abuse** or another general term when relating the incidents I encountered I might be alluding to any number of acts, varying in gravity and harm. Since there could be uncertainty, I have made a point of particularising the behaviours I witnessed or experienced and I trust the reader will understand the necessity for my accounts to be graphic and detailed.

From the time I could hold a pen, I have kept a diary in which I scribble anything that catches my interest. Although my notes were

never a strict chronological record of events, some of my early writing survives to trigger memories of my boarding school days. These recollections provided a starting point for laying out the evidence in the following pages with the authenticity of someone with a lifetime of involvement in the Christian community. With the Vatican decrying critics of the Church as ‘friends of the devil’,<sup>30</sup> I felt spurred to record my experiences to highlight the effect that Augustinian indoctrination has had on my life and on the lives of others.

Many of the issues raised here are not new. Countless luminaries have discussed failures in the school curriculum, and secular groups bristle with letters from former faith school pupils voicing their concerns. I will examine these concerns from the perspective of my personal experience inside and outside the sacristy to shed light on the interaction between clerics and children. Lorna focuses attention on state-funded faith schools where some children might be affected by the same guilt and moral confusion that has scarred many of us. We noted earlier that today over one million infants are undergoing similarly unhelpful schooling. Nearly all of them are likely to reject religion later. This book gives many good reasons for government to stop financing and promoting religion and end the Church’s outdated participation in education.

A YouGov/Daybreak survey in September 2010 found that school performance was the factor highest rated by parents when considering schools for their children. The religion of the school was rated as an important factor by fewer than one in ten people.<sup>31</sup> Over many years, opinion polls have consistently found that a majority of taxpayers do not want to fund faith schools. In June 2014, The Guardian reported a survey by Opinium showing that 58% of voters believe faith schools, which can give priority to applications from pupils of their faith and are free to teach from the perspective of their own religion, should not be funded by the state or should be abolished.<sup>32,33</sup> Safeguarding should start with separating the state from religion so that schools do not indoctrinate young people and risk preparing them for possible abuse. Many Christian individuals and institutions

carry out valuable charity work, but compassion, altruism and goodwill are pervasive human values that span doctrinal boundaries. The good work done by some Christians does not compensate me, and millions of others, for the life-changing sectarian indoctrination that we endured. For those readers who think faith schools have a benign religious function, I hope that the personal experiences I describe and the research explored in the following chapters will give them cause to think again.

Given the wealth of positive assessments of Augustine already lining the shelves, a critical evaluation seems perilous, but I will depict the man as I see him. Every step of the way I have referenced my work with original material or other reliable evidence that supports it. Unfortunately, this has led to a rather overblown reference section, but better that than have my readers left doubtful. I would like to think that the ideas within are couched in terms accessible to all. That being the case, I apologise in advance if some viewpoints are perceived to be excessively polemical. I hope the reader will forgive any impertinence, given my background, and understand that no disrespect is intended.

The National Secular Society (NSS) (<https://www.secularism.org.uk>), Humanists UK (<https://humanism.org.uk>) and many other groups campaign vigorously for an end to religious influence in the education of young people. More information on many of the topics discussed in this book is available on their websites. Whether or not you believe, as I do, that all children in Britain should enjoy their right to receive a broad and balanced education, free from indoctrination or discrimination based on ethnicity, religion or belief, you might like to contribute to the debate at [www.mike-moloney.com](http://www.mike-moloney.com).

