**BOOK SUMMARIES (350, 200, 100, 50 WORDS), BIOS & TARGET READERSHIP**

**Book Synopsis (350 Words)**

Britain is a mainly secular society, yet most of us born here were taught Augustine’s ideas, by law.  We are shaped by his fourth century hair-shirt texts.  In school we are taught his values, often contradicting British notions of decency and fair play. We learn to silently say sorry for our wrongful actions, and to expect forgiveness. All behind the back of the 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.

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 predisposed to be sinfully lustful from birth. 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 rigorously scrutinised in this new book.

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 documented sexual grooming technique.

Here, the author considers whether Augustine’s teaching on sex and sin 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 research papers endorsing religiosity, highlighting a lack of rigour. And we discover why academics shun this field of study.

Lucid descriptions by a schoolteacher of RE lessons in faith schools today, will stir readers who suppose Christianity is a benign influence to think again.  With a foreword by Alastair Lichten, Head of education, National Secular Society, this thought-provoking book fills a gap in the shelf.

The author opens a compelling new front in the current wave of popular religious critiques, revitalising the ‘God Debate’.

**Book Synopsis (200 Words)**

*St Augustine’s Sin*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.

**Book Synopsis (100 Words)**

The ‘God Debate’ is given a shot in the arm with this new assault on St Augustine. The author served as altar boy and chorister while attending boarding schools in Ireland and England, where he faced sexual abuse. With the Vatican decrying critics of the church as ‘Friends of the Devil’, he reflected on the drill and doctrine of his schooldays.

Augustine’s teaching on self-censure and penitence, endorsed in many faith schools today, are studiously explored. The author suggests these dark ideas might play a more influential role in child abuse and adult mental well-being than has generally been recognised in mainstream social science.

**Book 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 Augustine’s dark ideas to discover what role drill and doctrine might play in child sexual abuse and adult mental well-being.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY (250 Words)**

Joe Baker is a retired engineer and entrepreneur.  In his childhood, he served as altar boy and chorister while attending faith schools in Ireland and England, where he encountered abuse. With the Vatican decrying critics of the church as “Friends of the Devil”, he thought back to his schooldays. He recalls the daily prayers of self-censure and remorse prescribed by St Augustine, a penitential ritual still practised in some British schools.

Still performing in his local church choir, Joe has a scholarly knowledge of the church and an intimate acquaintance with its people and their rites and rituals. Reading about the evasiveness of the churches in response to disclosures of child abuse, he resolved to use his familiarity with drill and doctrine to evaluate Augustine’s shameful theology.

Tracing his own religious background, he sketches subtle pressures that colour the thinking of both followers and apostates. He suggests Augustine’s teaching on sinfulness and infantile lust might play a more influential role in child abuse and adult mental well-being than has generally been recognised in mainstream social science.

In the final chapters, educationist Lorna Graham, a schoolteacher for 26 years, brings faith schools to life depicting her struggle to deliver a critically conscious, dialogic education to her charges.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY (100 Words)**

Joe Baker is a retired engineer and entrepreneur.  In his childhood, he served as altar boy and chorister while attending boarding schools in Ireland and England where he faced abuse. With the Vatican decrying critics of the church as ‘Friends of the Devil’, he thought back to the drill and doctrine of his church schooldays.

In this book the author reveals the shameful consequences of Augustine’s dark influence. Lorna Graham, a teacher for 26 years, brings faith schools to life describing her efforts to deliver a critically conscious, dialogic education to her pupils.

**TARGET READERSHIP**

The readership demographic for *St Augustine’s Sin*is similar to that for other works critical of religion, by Dawkins, Hitchens, Fry, etc.  However, this new scrutiny of the effect of indoctrination on school children, adopts a novel child’s-eye perspective.

No follower wants to hear criticism of their faith. The authors avoid challenging Christianity directly; Instead, they examine some of the already contentious teachings of St Augustine.  Intelligent young people, recent Christian apostates or those contemplating apostasy, will be responsive to a sincere critique from a church insider. Pre-publication reviews indicate a strong prospective audience of educated thinkers who have reached a reflective stage in life. This is a profile you may recognise as typical of your readership.

1. Audience in ‘The God Debate’
2. Other educated seniors, 50+.
3. Questioning 17 – 24 year-olds.
4. Open minded thinkers.
5. Child protection workers and anyone involved in child minding or education.

This important new contribution to discussion is timely.  Recent polls show that the UK population is turning away from religion.  The launch is supported by a lively promotion effort.  The National Secular Society and Humanists UK are both actively campaigning against faith schools.