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ASA upholds complaint by Nottingham Secularists over “healing church”

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has upheld a complaint from Nottingham Secular Society president Dennis Penaluna. [Read More »](#)

Trevor Phillips’ thoughtless intervention on religious discrimination

The Equality and Human Rights Commission, headed by Trevor Phillips, has issued a report on religious discrimination which struggles hard to find evidence for any large-scale discrimination on religious grounds. [Read More »](#)

Why has the Church got such a huge influence in our education system?

The Bishop of Oxford has been panic-mongering in order to ensure that the privileges that the Church of England enjoys in education are retained and maybe even extended. [Read More »](#)

Catholic adoption agency ordered to stop discriminating against gays is denied further appeal?

The First Tier Tribunal (Charity) has rejected the Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds) adoption agency’s latest appeal, stating that there were no “errors of law” in its judgment that the adoption

agency could not discriminate against same-sex couples wishing to use its services. [Read More »](#)

NSS warns of free speech implications of Scottish football hate bill

Alarmed at the Scottish parliament's determination to rush through an ill-considered bill to challenge sectarianism in football, the NSS made a submission to the Parliament's Justice Committee pointing out potential threats to freedom of expression. [Read More »](#)

Vatican promises report following pressure from NSS Executive Director

The Vatican has at last given an indication that it will submit a report to the United Nations this autumn on its treatment of children. [Read More »](#)

Education Bill – NSS meets minister

As the (English) Education Bill progresses through the House of Lords, NSS Executive Director Keith Porteous Wood and campaigns manager Stephen Evans this week held talks with schools Minister Nick Gibb MP and his ministerial team. [Read More »](#)

From the web

This week's selection of secular items from the web. [Read More »](#)

Bible belt shrinks a few notches

The Southern Baptist Convention reported declines last year in several categories traditionally used as markers of denominational vitality, according to annual statistics released June 9 by LifeWay Christian Resources. [Read More »](#)

Majority of American Christians feel they don't have to take notice of their church's teachings to remain a member

A large-scale survey in the USA by the Public Religion Research Institute has shown that significant majorities of Americans say it is possible to disagree with their religion's teachings on abortion and homosexuality and still remain in good standing with their faith. This held true for major religious groups, including Catholics and white evangelical Protestants. [Read More »](#)

Hungarian constitution re-written as dictated by the pope

The revised Hungarian constitution, which will take effect on 1 January, completely outlaws abortion, gay marriage and protection of homosexuals from discrimination, and allows lifelong imprisonment without possibility of parole. Amnesty International has condemned the document as abusing human rights on several fronts. [Read More »](#)

Book Review: Render unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church

Render unto Rome: *The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church*

(Jason Berry, Crown – Hardback £15.29 from Amazon)

Jason Berry is a Catholic investigative journalist whose previous claim to fame was his powerful exposé on child abuse in the church, *Vows of Silence*. [Read More »](#)

Most Swedish church “members” don’t believe in Jesus

When 10,000 members of the Lutheran Church of Sweden were asked about their beliefs, only 15 per cent of them said they believed in Jesus. According to the survey, 15 percent of church members said they are atheists, while a quarter identify themselves as agnostic. The younger the members, the more likely they are to be atheists or agnostics. [Read More »](#)

Netherlands seeks to ban ritual slaughter without stunning

The Dutch parliament is on the point of passing a law that would end the slaughter of animals by ritual religious methods before they had been stunned or anaesthetised. [Read More »](#)

Declining interest in Catholicism on the web

Internet users around the world are less likely to search for the word “Catholic” today than they were in 2004, according to an analysis of Google data. [Read More »](#)

First women in court over French veil ban

A French court on Thursday heard the country's first case against women refusing to obey a new law banning the wearing of Islamic face veils in public. The two women, who wear the niqab, a veil that covers the hair and face with just a slit for the eyes, were ordered to appear before the court in the town of Meaux, about 40 kilometres east of Paris, for going to the local town hall on May 5 with their faces veiled. [Read More »](#)

Secular Medical Forum

Dr Antony Lempert, GP and chair of the Secular Medical Forum, was featured on Channel 4's 4thought.tv programme on 3rd June, speaking out against religiously-inspired surgery on the most intimate parts of a boy's body. [The episode](#) will be available to view for several months. [Read More »](#)

NSS at the Queen's birthday party

The National Secular Society was invited to a Government reception at Lancaster House in London last week to celebrate the Queen's official birthday. [Read More »](#)

Irish Government sets up inquiry into Magdalene Laundries after criticism from UN committee on torture

The Irish Government has agreed to set up a committee of inquiry to establish the full facts about the extent of abuse and cruelty at the Magdalene Laundries. The religious institutions that ran the laundries are to be asked to release all records on residents past and present. [Read More »](#)

NSS suggests changes to Scottish parliament's "Time for Reflection"

Instead of prayers — as in the Westminster parliament — the Scottish Parliament has a weekly "Time for Reflection". But the involvement by visiting ministers, priests and speakers fails to reflect the religious diversity of Scotland and ignores the fact that about one third of the Scottish population cannot be said to be religious in any way. [Read More »](#)

Eight free schools to open in September – three of them religious

At least eight new free schools will open their doors this September – and three of them will be religious. [Read More »](#)

Baptists wangle their way into schools with “inflatable church”

An inflatable church — in effect, a church-shaped bouncy castle — owned by a Baptist congregation is touring North Yorkshire “to enable school pupils to experience prayer”. [Read More »](#)

More “faith school” bus cuts

Councils around the country continue to target discretionary transport to so-called “faith schools” in their push to cut spending.

Latest are Essex County Council, Cumbria County Council, Suffolk County Council and Wigan Metro Council, which will totally scrap all but mandatory transport subsidies to those who want to send their children to a religious school from 2012. [Read More »](#)

From the Web

[This interview with Bertrand Russell from 1959](#) shows that there isn't much that is new about the modern day “new atheists”. [Read More »](#)

Secular Conference – can you help?

In conjunction with the [Secular Europe Campaign](#) the NSS is holding its first conference on Secularism on Saturday 10 September 2011. The venue will be Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. Nick Cohen, Dr Evan Harris, Sir Jonathan Miller and Baroness Turner of Camden have agreed to participate. Further details will be released in *Newsline* and on the website closer to the date.

We are looking for members who can help organise this conference and offer support on the day. If you would like to be involved, please email tas@secularism.org.uk and we'll let you know what we need. [Read More »](#)

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