



Is belief in God a matter of public concern in contemporary Wales?

Tania ap Sion

An important new study has been published this month in the journal *Contemporary Wales*, which raises the question, “Is belief in God a matter of public concern in contemporary Wales?”

The authors of the study, Professor Leslie J Francis, Dr Tania ap Sion and Gemma Penny (from the St Mary’s Centre) trace the changing face of religious diversity in Wales from the conceptualisation of diversity in denominational attendance, in the exercise undertaken alongside the 1851 census, to the conceptualisation of diversity in self-assigned religious affiliation included in the 2001 census. They propose an alternative conceptualisation of religious diversity in terms of belief rather than in terms of attendance or affiliation.

Using quantitative data gathered between 2011 and 2012 this alternative conceptualisation is tested among a survey of 1,124 male students (13 to 15 years of age) attending state-maintained schools in Wales. The data demonstrate significant differences between the worldviews of young theists and the worldviews of young atheists. The young theists espouse a more positive view of pluralism in contemporary Wales, including both cultural diversity and religious diversity. The conclusion is drawn that religious belief promotes, rather than detracts from, social cohesion.

In this sense, religious belief may be construed as a matter of public concern in contemporary Wales.

Article details:

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