**Fundamentalism Uncovered – project summary**

This two-year research project seeks to:

- Understand religious fundamentalism(s) as religious and intellectual systems, their attractiveness and how and why they function as they do.
- Conduct a theological analysis of fundamentalist beliefs and practices
- Explore similarities and differences within and between fundamentalists and identify trends, including what prompts religious violence
- Discuss implications for wider society and make policy recommendations
- Disseminate findings to the academic community as well as to a wider audience

The project will use Ruthven’s working definition of fundamentalism (‘A religious way of being that manifests itself in a strategy by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identities as individuals or groups in the face of modernity and secularisation’) and examine the changes since the last major study of Fundamentalism (1987-95) by Marty & Appleby.

Kessler proposes 3 broad categories of Fundamentalism which will be explored:
- Quiet – Pious Fundamentalism (passive)
- Loud – Assertive Fundamentalism (active)
- Extreme – Violent Fundamentalism (pro-active)

The research will consider both Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic religious fundamentalisms and will examine shared characteristics such as: the role of patriarchy, the desire to return to a Golden (mythic) Age, the significance of Sacred Texts and Truth claims, the apparently anti-pluralist attributes, the importance of charismatic leadership and influence of globalisation.

The research will also examine characteristics that are particularly noticeable amongst some religious fundamentalisms but not others eg., sacred land is important to Jewish, Sikh and Hindu fundamentalists but not to Christian or Buddhist; proselytism is central to Christian and Muslim fundamentalism but not Jewish or Hindu etc.

The project will include reflect on how fundamentalism is considered by co-religionists, especially in terms of 'tackling' or 'reconciling' non-mainstream beliefs and practices. This will shed light into how fundamentalism relates to mainstream interpretations of the same religion.

Finally, it is hoped the project will provide the basis for a longer-term study of religious fundamentalism.