TURN IT AND TURN IT AGAIN: THE VITAL CONTRIBUTION OF KRISTER STENDAHL TO JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

The Krister Stendahl Lecture, Stockholm, October 23, 2014

Turn it (Torah) and turn it again, for everything is in it, and contemplate it and grow grey and old over it and stir not from it, for thou canst have no better rule. Pirke Avot 5.25

My title borrows an aphorism from the Mishnah, an early third-century compendium of rabbinic commentary and law. I confess that in borrowing, I have altered what was likely its original meaning: turning the scroll again and again. As a modern shaped by books rather than scrolls, the turning I have in mind focuses on our need as Christians to seek new meanings in biblical texts that seem on the surface to justify the church's superiority to the synagogue. To turn and turn our texts again and again is to engage in the *holy work of seeking understanding.* We have an ethical obligation to confront harmful interpretations and to draw upon scholarly resources that provide new readings.

I had originally intended in this lecture to discuss key elements of biblical scholarship that offer rich possibilities for reconceiving the church's relationship with the Jewish people. As I reviewed many of Krister Stendahl's writings, however, this theme became intertwined with his insights, particularly his overturning of Pauline texts that converted the way many scholars interpreted Paul. Thus, I changed the subtitle to "The Vital Contribution of Krister Stendahl to Jewish-Christian Relations."

Two key essays of the early 1960s of this "extraordinarily far-sighted scholar," in the words of Magnus Zetterholm, gave rise to a radical new view on a long-settled

interpretation.[1] Professor Stendahl upended Martin Luther's reading of Paul—and he did this precisely as a Lutheran. Moreover, his profound pastoral sensibilities complemented his enormous erudition and influence on the field of New Testament scholarship. He had an astonishing ability to express significant theological insights in fresh and memorable ways. His passion lay in working in what he termed the "Public Health Department of biblical studies," seeking alternate ways to interpret texts that have caused "harmful fallout."[2] Once asked by someone who had studied his bibliography why he wrote so much about women and Jews, he replied that these were "two rather striking issues on which the Christian tradition, and in the case of women, the whole scriptural tradition has clearly had a detrimental and dangerous effect."[3] I think the late Bishop of Stockholm would feel great empathy with what the current Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis, has expressed: "I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds."[4]

The privilege of returning to his work has heightened my respect for Stendahl's profound contribution to healing the wounds Christians over the millennia have inflicted on Jews—wounds that have resulted in part from supersessionist readings of biblical texts. It is in this context that I knew Krister Stendahl personally, though not well. He headed a small group to which I belonged that was responsible for organizing the

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[1] Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 98.
[2] "Ancient Scripture in the Modern World," in *Scripture in the Jewish and Christian Traditions,* ed. Frederick Greenspahn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 201-214, citation 205.
[3] Ibid., 204.
[4] See Antonio Spadaro, S.J., "A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis," *America* (September 13, 2013) http://www.americamagazine.org/pope-interview

program for the 1983 National Workshop on Christian-Jewish Relations. I confess I was "star struck," as I was a junior professor at Boston College and he a major NT scholar and former dean of the Divinity School at Harvard.

In an attempt to stay true to the way in which he expressed profound insights in a simple, even disarming, manner, I have organized this afternoon's lecture around four phrases and sentences taken from his writings. That is, I have compiled a brief "sayings source S," using his plainspoken language to address issues that still confront the Christian churches in our time.

I. "It's not about me."

In a number of his essays, Professor Stendahl spoke about the principle of *tua res agitur*: "it is your case that is dealt with"—or more colloquially, "it's all about you." That sense of the biblical stories being *his* story nurtured his initial attachment to the Bible: "I had begun to feed on the mysteries of God. And it was intellectually a most stimulating awakening…. I felt like Peter and I felt like Paul—especially when they had negative feelings. I felt like all the disciples." Later, however, he learned ways of reading that were "so much less ego centered":

> The Bible was really not about me. It was about many other things—in the long run, much more interesting things. It was about many things in many distant lands, from many distant ages…. Now it spoke to me from a great distance, of centuries and cultures deeply different from my own. And it began to be, just by its difference, that the fascination grew, that it had a way of saying to me, there are other ways of seeing and thinking and feeling and believing that you have taken for granted. And it just added to my love.[5]

[5] Krister Stendahl, "Why I Love the Bible," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 35/1 (Winter 2007) http://lit.genius.com/Krister-stendahl-why-i-love-the-bible-annotated. His son, Rev. John Stendahl, reads his father's essay.

Thus, characteristically, he turned the principle of *tua res agitur* on its head: The Bible is not about me. That realization, he said in an essay published shortly before his death, became the "watershed in my love story with the Bible." [6]

In many respects, this simple statement—the Bible is not about me--encompasses Stendahl's revolutionary rereading of Paul. In good Lutheran fashion, Stendahl inherited an understanding of the Letter to the Romans as a "theological tractate about my soul," even "during the end of the Second World War, when the camps in Auschwitz and Dachau opened up."[7] That is, much of the Western church interpreted Paul as being preoccupied by the same existential question that had gripped Luther: "How can I find a gracious God?" Because human beings could never live up to the demands of the Torah—simplistically equated with Jewish law—their efforts to save themselves were fruitless. Following the Law entailed a futile attempt to earn divine love through good works. Luther discovered that one could be saved from the "penetrating self-examination" that constituted the "introspective conscience of the West" through justification by faith and without the works of the Law. Christ alone saved one from sin and meaninglessness.

It is stunning to think of the young Krister Stendahl, just six years after finishing his doctorate in Uppsala, challenging this fundamental Augustinian-Lutheran axiom of Pauline interpretation. What *chutzpah* to charge the Western church with wrenching Paul from his original context![8] Paul, he first argued in 1960, possessed a "robust" conscience,

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Just two years earlier Stendahl had challenged the church on the role of women. In 1951, all faculty members except one who held positions in New Testament at Swedish universities had declared "as our definite opinion, based on careful investigation, that the ordination of women would be incompatible with New Testament thought and would constitute disobedience to the

unlike Luther, and was not preoccupied with questions of forgiveness. Nor was Paul concerned with *Jewish* observance of the dietary laws and the rite of circumcision—it was the Gentile observance of these Jewish boundary markers that he criticized. Thus, when the Apostle to the Gentiles spoke about justification, he did so to *Gentiles* in order to defend Jesus-following Gentiles as full heirs to God's promises to Israel.

Further, as Stendahl argued in a lecture in 1963, Paul's mystical encounter on the Damascus Road was a "call" rather than a "conversion," a new mission rather than a change of religion from Jew to Christian:

> We must somehow recognize… that Paul's message was related not to some conversion from the hopeless work righteousness of Judaism into a happy justified status as a Christian. Rather, the center of gravity in Paul's theological work is related to the fact that he knew himself to be called to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, an Apostle of the one God who is Creator of both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Rom. 3:30).[9]

Yet the seed of Stendahl's challenge fell on stony ground for many years: Judgment of Judaism as a legalistic religion mired in works righteousness was still firmly entrenched in both the church and the academy of Christian scholars.

Perhaps this is an appropriate occasion to tell a story about another Stendahl. During a lecture in the Boston area over twenty years ago, I illustrated my point about the deeply embedded anti-Jewish perspectives in the life of the church. Among the examples I chose was the sixteenth-century hymn "Salvation Unto Us Has Come," which I had discovered in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* while teaching in a Lutheran family camp, Holden Village, in my native Washington State.

Holy Scriptures" (cited in Richard Horsley, "Krister Stendahl's Challenge to Pauline Studies," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium: Essays in Honor of Krister* Stendahl, R. Horsley, ed. (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International), 1. See Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966).

[9] Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 15.

Salvation unto us has come
by God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our mediator.

Theirs was a false, misleading dream
Who thought God's Law was given
That sinner might themselves redeem
And by their works gain heaven.
The Law is but a mirror bright
To bring the inbred sin to light
That lurks within our nature.

And yet the Law fulfilled must be,
Or we were lost forever;
Therefore, God sent his Son
that he Might us from death deliver.
He all the Law for us fulfilled,
And thus his Father's anger stilled
Which over us impended.[10]

At the conclusion, his son, Rev. John Stendahl, pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Newtons, just up the road from Boston College, wryly pointed out that the hymn was in the first instance meant as a critique of the Catholics—not Jews. It is a grace of our time, as this lecture series bears witness, that Lutherans and Catholics work together to heal what has divided us from each other as well as from Jews.

Krister Stendahl's work in the early 1960s has become foundational for what is often termed "new perspectives on Paul," so ably analyzed in Zetterholm's *Approaches to Paul*. But that is a longer, more complicated story than I propose to narrate this afternoon. Rather, I suggest we return to his watershed principle for reading the Bible—

[10] The hymn is attributed to Paul Speratus (1484-1551) in *The Lutheran Book of Worship* (Philadelphia: Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in American and Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), #297.

"It's not about me"—and turn it to: "Yes, *it is* about us," particularly if the Pharisees are involved. For many Christian preachers and teachers, the Pharisees in particular serve as foils for the teaching of Jesus. Jesus offers the way of justice, mercy and love, in contrast to the self-righteousness, legalism, and hypocrisy of the Pharisees. They represent the aridity of Judaism, whereas Jesus reveals the abundant life of Christianity.

The NT portrait of the Pharisees, while complicated, is primarily negative. That depiction, however, is part of a later polemic on the part of some followers of Jesus, who took issue with one of few major leadership groups in Jewish circles to survive the Temple's destruction in 70 C.E. As many scholarly and popular commentaries have pointed out over the course of the past 25 or so years, the Pharisaic movement had a great deal in common with Jesus' movement in that both sought the renewal of Israel

Among the problems with making Pharisees the representatives of a moribund Judaism is that we accustom ourselves to negative judgments regarding Judaism. Then, when "real" Jews appear in front of us and certain texts are read, the experience can be—and should be—unsettling. For example, as part of my work as a scholar in residence for a week at the University of Notre Dame, I taught an upper-level theology course taught by a rabbi and medieval scholar who held a chair in Jewish studies. After a few introductory remarks, I invited the students to begin study of a passage from the Gospel of Matthew, in which Jesus engages in a heated diatribe against the scribes and Pharisees. A student volunteered to read the passage aloud:

> Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, [2]"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; [3]therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. [4]They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. [5]They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long.

> [6]They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, [7]and to be greeted with respect in the market-places, and to have people call them rabbi. [8]But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. [9]And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. [10]Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. [11]The greatest among you will be your servant. [12]All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Suddenly, the reader stopped, closed her Bible and declared she could read no further. "I am so embarrassed to read this text in front of Rabbi Signer." A strange quiet pervaded the room—something had hit home. Though the passage was familiar to many of them, it was only on this occasion, in the presence of a Jew who was also their beloved teacher, that they experienced disequilibrium.

Stendahl's reading of Paul has implications for how we understand Pharisaic Judaism, although he did not himself develop them.[11] The considerable literature on the Pharisees that has emerged in both scholarly and pastoral contexts overturns the conventional portrait that has been so useful to preachers in driving a wedge between Jesus and Judaism. Among many groups seeking to reorient Jewish life, the Pharisees were a lay scribal movement—a "school" of thought—that protected and enhanced Jewish identity through teachings centered on practices such as Sabbath observance, tithing, fasting, and following the dietary laws and purity norms.

Yet Christians have been reluctant to absorb the insights about the Pharisees. The new understanding of Pharisees is an "inconvenient truth," to borrow a phrase from Al

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[11] See, however, his 1967 essay, "Judaism and Christianity II: A Pleas for a New Relationship," in which he says: "The whole system of thinking, with its image of the Pharisees and of the political messianism of the Jews, treats Jewish piety as the black background that makes Christian piety the more shining." This essay appeared in several sources; I cite it from Krister Stendahl, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 22. In his earlier work on *the Bible and the Role of Women*, first published in Swedish in 1958, he reflected the more conventional view of Pharisees.

Gore's 2006 documentary film. This becomes clear from the excerpt from Matthew 23 used earlier. What if we were to recognize that Matthew 23 *is* about us—a diatribe against *our* misuse of religion, *our* hypocrisy, *our* susceptibility to privilege and flattery? So, too, what if the fulminating of Israel's prophets is not just an outcry against the Israelites' infidelity to the covenant but also about *ours*?

So, I agree with Stendahl. The Bible is not about me/us. But I append. The Bible *is* about me/us. We require the wisdom to discern the difference.

II. "But words like that that grow legs and walk out of their context."[12]

This memorable phrase appears in a lecture Professor Stendahl gave in the early 1990s in which he explored the notion of religious pluralism. At the outset he identified three biblical texts that would seem to argue against pluralism.[13] In a brief exposition of each, he shows how the respective passages are more complex than they appear, and that matters of religion do not represent a "zero-sum" problem. Professor Paul Knitter, a beloved colleague at Union until his recent retirement, astutely analyzed this aspect of Stendahl's work in relation to that of Robert Wright in the first lecture in this series in October 2009.[14]

In the unpretentious phrase, "words like that grow legs and walk out of their context," Stendahl encapsulated the difficulty posed by texts in the New Testament that

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[12] See Krister Stendahl, "From God's Perspective We Are All Minorities," *Journal of Religious Pluralism* 2 (1993)).

[13] Acts 4:15 ("…for there is no other name under heaven given among human beings whereby we may be saved"); John 14:6 ("… I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father through me."); and Matthew 28:19 ("… Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

[14] Paul F. Knitter, "Christianity and the Religions: A Zero-Sum Game? Reclaiming 'The Path Not Taken' and the Legacy of Krister Stendahl," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 46/1 (Winter 2011), 5-21.

give rise to negative views of Jews and Judaism. In the Gospel of John, for example, "the Jews" are connoted with virtually everything negative in that Gospel: fear, murmuring, murderous intent, diabolical origins, blindness, darkness and death.[15] Arguably, of all the words that grew legs, the one that grew the largest and most destructive is this: "Crucify him!"[16]

The texts that assigned culpability for the crucifixion of Jesus to Jews—whether as certain groups (e.g. the chief priests, scribes and elders of the people) or as a whole—walked right out of the realm of intra-Jewish disputation and marched into the supersessionist language of the early church writers. Their disparaging words in turn contributed to the church's deadly legacy of denigration of Judaism as a legalistic and obsolescent religion. Depictions of Jews as disloyal and treacherous people helped to fuel violence in the Crusades and pogroms. The "Christ-killer" charge in all its varied manifestations enabled—not caused—the Nazi genocide.[17]

Christian interpretations of the death of Jesus that blamed Jews have done unspeakable harm to Jews—and to the church's moral integrity. It is mortifying to discover the depth and breadth of the violence against Jews, both rhetorical and physical, that has shadowed preaching and teaching about the death of Jesus. The bitter offerings we Christians have brought to the banquet of biblical interpretation haunt us, requiring us

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[15] See Ruth Sheridan, *Retelling Scripture: "The Jews and the Scriptural Citations in John 1:19—12:15.* Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 45.

[16] "He [Pontius Pilate] said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Pilate asked them, "Should I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor. Then he handed him over to be crucified" (John 19:14b15). Or consider a Matthean counterpart: "Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!'" (Matthew 27:25).

[17] Obviously, this is an enormously complex topic. See my *Redeeeming our Sacred Story: The Death of Jesus and Relations between Jews and Christians* (New York: Paulist, 2013, particularly chapter 6, "Christianity's Troubling Telling and the Holocaust," 137-156.

to fast from triumphalism. As Stendahl writes in the introduction to his monograph *Holy Week Preaching*, "our celebration of Holy Week must be one of repentance" in the effort to uproot "every possible plant of anti-Semitism."[18] Repentance must be founded on the recognition that interpretations of biblical texts have real consequences for real people.

We must take responsibility for those words that grew legs and developed capacity to inspire and sustain violence—and we must *grieve* for the "detrimental and dangerous effect" such words had on the lives of real people (e.g., Jews, slaves, women). To take responsibility for the consequences of how we have used biblical texts involves more than intellectual knowledge—although it certainly requires careful thought. It necessitates the courage to be affected by the wounds of history that Christianity has inflicted and to be responsive to disturbing truths about one's own tradition.

It was also Stendahl who reminded Christians with regard to Jews and Judaism that we are obliged to honor the commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exod 20:16 and Deut 5:20).[19] To put it plainly: Christians have used texts to bear false witness against Jews—albeit often because they assumed that the texts were factual. This is not a matter of rewriting but of rereading and reinterpreting sacred texts.

Situating texts in their historical context is key to reinterpretation. And since "Crucify him" was the most damaging of all those words that walked out of context, it is crucial that we place the passion and death of Jesus in their historical framework. In the Roman Empire, crucifixion was a widespread mode of torture and murder, imposed on thousands of Jews and other groups over whom the Empire ruled. Crucifixion, moreover,

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[18] Krister Stendahl, *Holy Week Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 9.
[19] I could not find a textual reference to this reminder about our obligation to honor the commandment, but I have memory of him saying it in public.

had a chilling deterrent effect. It was "highly organized, massive state terrorism, intended to intimidate the vast peasant and slave populations of the [Roman] empire into passivity."[20] It was a "spectacle for the edification of those watching"[21]

Jesus was crucified by the authority of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, likely in collaboration with the Jewish high priesthood. Together they formed the "power class," though the power was not equal: the Roman governor controlled the high priests. Although the precise charge cannot be established with absolute confidence, it is likely that Pilate viewed Jesus as guilty of sedition for having preached about the counter-kingdom, that is, the Reign of God. It may be that Luke has a historical kernel of such an accusation in claiming: "Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, 'We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king'" (23:1-2).

Jesus thus stands not in primary opposition to Judaism but to the Empire over which Caesar rules as lord and savior. Responsibility for his death falls not to "the Jews" but to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, in alliance with the power class. Jesus, the Jew from Nazareth, suffers the excruciating death by crucifixion not as the lone victim of Jewish hostility to the Son of God, but as one of thousands of Jews (and others) whom the Empire tortured as a deterrent, lest they resist its rule.

III. Christianity as a "construct"

[20] Stephen J. Patterson, *Beyond the Passion: Rethinking the Death and Life of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 9.
[21] Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 233.

Another key to interpreting sacred texts may be found in the recommendation Stendahl offered in 1997 that we must "stress again and again" that Christianity is a "construct… that had not yet been formed—especially in New Testament times—and that the Jesus movement existed once as a Jewish 'way' in Palestine and in the Diaspora."[22] This emphasis is largely absent in the in church today. Consider, for example, how casually we speak of Jesus' followers as "Christians," as if with his death and resurrection the ways between Judaism and Christianity had parted like the waters of the Red Sea.

Were we to absorb that Christianity was a construct not yet formed in the first century of the Common Era, we would have to set aside simplistic dualisms and think more imaginatively. Such an act of the imagination might also reveal to us what a limited construct we made first-century Judaism to be. "Jews" and "Christians" are complex and capacious terms, both historically and in the present. "Jewish" and "Christian" identities were fluid in the early centuries, and "Jew" encompassed people in starkly different social, economic, political and geographic realities. In the New Testament period there were "Jesus-following Jews" and "non-Jesus following Jews."

Instead of implying rigid boundaries, it is more accurate and pastorally responsible to present "Christians" and "Jews" in the first three centuries of the Common Era more as dialects of a single language (e.g., Spanish speakers in Mexico and Puerto Rico) than as separate languages—and with many gradations.[23] As the second century C.E. developed, "Jesus-following Gentiles" came to outnumber "Jesus-following Jews."

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[22] Krister Stendahl, "Qumran and Supersessionism—and the Road not Taken," *Princeton Theological Seminary Bulletin* 19/2 (1998), 134-142; citation, 142.

[23] See Daniel Boyarin, "Semantic Differences; or 'Judaism/Christianity,'" in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christian in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 65-85.

"Christians" gradually became separate from "Jews" as a religious entity but only over a lengthy period of time. There was no single turning point of separation: the "dialects" became the "separate languages" at different times, under different circumstances, and in different locations.

Further, to regard Christianity—for that matter, all religious traditions-- as *constructed* obliges us to examine interpretations, formulations and practices that may no longer serve us well or that may be harmful, particularly in our relations with the religious other. In Stendahl's challenging assertion: "I always felt that to speak about the uniqueness of Christianity or the uniqueness of Christ does more for the ego of the believer than it does for God." (He delighted my ego with his next sentence: "*Has God only One Blessing?* is the wonderful title of a recent book.")[24]

Krister Stendahl brilliantly deconstructed how many in the church thought about women, about Paul, and about Judaism. I suspect many regarded him as a threat to the "very foundations of Protestant theology."[25] Perhaps some still see him that way. For many, however, he provided new conceptual foundations and formulations that contribute to the continuing work of "constructing" Christianity and thereby of creating a new relationship with the Jewish people.

IV.

"Leave room for Holy Envy"

Stendahl frequently used an old Swedish expression, "It is pathetic to hear mosquitos cough." He admitted, "I don't know why this is funny, but in Swedish it is

[24] "Why I Love the Bible." See my *Has God Only One Blessing? Judaism as a Source of Christian Self-Understanding* (New York: Paulist, 2000).
[25] Horsley, "Introduction," 2.

funny." I don't know why it is funny, either. But I can enjoy his humor without having to own it. Which leads me to the fourth and final of my Stendahl sayings: "Leave room for Holy Envy":

> Holy Envy: when we recognize something in another tradition that is beautiful but is not in ours, nor should we just grab it or claim it. We Americans in our imperialism think that if we like something we just incorporate it and we think that we honor others by doing so. But that is not the way. Holy envy rejoices in the beauty of others.[26]

This was one of his ground rules for interreligious exchange: Allow others to define themselves. Compare the best of their tradition with the best of yours. Leave room for Holy Envy. Holy Envy is the preeminent sign that one is beginning to understand the tradition of another—to recognize its power and beauty, yet refrain from taking it as one's own.

I wrote this lecture during the intensity of this fall's Jewish holidays—Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. So much about these holidays gives rise to Holy Envy: the strength of celebrating in community, the depth and breadth of ritual practice, the beauty of the blessings—and dancing around the synagogue while holding Torah scrolls aloft, a dance that then spills out into the streets. Rabbi Irving Greenberg refers to this celebration as "holy pandemonium."[27]That is wisdom Krister Stendahl would appreciate. After all, one of his other rules for reading the Bible: "Don't be so uptight."[28]

I began this lecture with the aphorism from the Mishnah about turning and turning the scrolls, a reference that takes on new meaning as we picture our Jewish friends

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[26] "From God's Perspective We Are All Minorities," 6.
[27] Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 115.
[28] "Why I Love the Bible"

dancing joyously with Torah scrolls last week. I conclude with gratitude for the blessings bestowed by Krister Stendahl's own turning and turning of texts. His commitment to the holy work of seeking understanding continues to be a blessing.