

A Criticism of Federici

My criticism refers to Part I, especially Par. 1-6). Federici speaks here of the "sublime command of the Old Testament/ of making known the name of the One God among all people of the earth in every age." He gives references from the Hebrew scriptures; his wording, I think, would be acceptable to Jews; he even speaks of Kiddush HaShem (incorrectly, I believe, since the term today has come to include martyrdom).

My problem is that hardly anywhere in this section is there any specific mention of the Jewish people. Indeed, it seems clear that F. is speaking of the Church's mission. No doubt the intention is good: eliminating the old hostile distinctions. But I find here a too easy identifying of the mission of Judaism and Christianity. Before I, as Christian, may say that my mission, the mission of my people, is the Sanctification of the Name, I must be aware that this is, always has been, the heart of Jewish mission. It's a case of giving credit where credit is due. The French Bishops found the right way: they too speak of Sanctification of the Name, but precisely as one of the glories of the Jewish people.

The old hostilities are past, thank God, Christians no longer feel the need to define themselves over against the Jews - this is progress indeed. But the two people are not one and the same, some distinctions must be kept. Christians see themselves as sharing in the heritage of Israel - but it is precisely a sharing in, not a birthright. The Jews are people of God first, and we are people of God ALSO only because we are linked to them through ~~Jesus~~ Jesus (Cf. Romans 11:17- the image of the live tree, I don't think we have come up with a better image yet).

Is Federici, in his effort to eliminate hostile distinctions, in danger of a new kind of "appropriation"? (Cf. the early Church, which in taking over the Hebrew Scriptures often came close to taking them away from the Jews altogether, e.g. Barnabas). I find Federici's statement, "The Church emphatically takes as belonging to her the sublime command of the Old Testament..... of making known the name of the One God....." too emphatic by far..... What is said here explicitly is taken for granted throughout the section.

I wonder whether, in our relief over Federici's rejection of proselytism, we have not looked carefully enough at this part of the document. I find a kind of covert arrogance here.