MSW Responds to Professor Butler

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

A person is often known by the company he keeps - and by the enemies he makes. This is especially true for those of us who blog. Not only must we write early and often, we self-edit, a difficult skill in any circumstance but one which I find is frequently affected by the amount of sleep I got the night before. It is easy to throw out a line, or an entire post, which might be ill-considered, opening oneself up to easy criticism.

Still, there is one criticism to which I had thought my ardent Zionism had made me immune: the charge of anti-Semitism, or winking at anti-Semitism. Yet, that is the charge Professor Anthea Butler has made in a post at Religion Dispatches. Professor Butler takes me to task for welcoming back the Lefebvrista, although it is not yet clear they are back. She acknowledges that I mentioned the residual anti-Semitism that has characterized some of statements from members, and leaders, of the Society of St. Pius X, and she acknowledges, too, that I offered the hope that it might be easier to rid them of their anti-Semitism once they were fully back in the fold. But, this was not enough for her. Perhaps the fact that I called anti-Semitism a "sin" means little to her. It means a lot to me. As I have written on countless occasions, I think the sin of anti-Semitism is a truly horrific one, and one that Catholics today must especially abhor because it is a sin we have so often indulged in the past.

In the event, I am delighted to be attacked by someone with Professor Butler's moral compass. In a blogginghead.tv episode, she displayed that moral compass when, speaking just before Pope Benedict was set to go to England, an event she thought would pan out badly for the Holy Father when, in fact, it was a triumph by all accounts, she asked regarding Pope Benedict, "Does he look any different than a Charles Taylor or someone else who had child soldiers and abused children?" Well, yes, Professor Butler, he does look different. And, if you cannot detect the difference, I am delighted to find myself among those who fail your moral standards.