

An Author Responds

In "[Building an 'Ethnocracy'](#)" (9/29), Drew Christiansen, S.J., gives a thoughtful overview of my book *Contested Land, Contested Memory* and presents my arguments regarding the exclusion of the "other" in the construction of Israeli collective identity and the damage this has inflicted. What I feel is missing from the review, however, is my accounting of why this process occurred. I believe that the collective memory of trauma played, and continues to play, a significant role in shaping Israel's development. This is a key aspect of my book.

The Zionist movement did not merely grow out of the discrimination that Jews experienced in 19th-century Western Europe. Its roots lay deeper, in the centuries of persecution and violence inflicted on Jews throughout Christian Europe, which continued to manifest themselves in state-sanctioned pogroms in the late 19th-century Russian Empire and which were later to reach their most horrifying culmination in the Nazis' "Final Solution."

What I have tried to do in my book is to examine how two tangled histories of suffering, Jewish and Palestinian, and the traumatic collective memories they have engendered are woven through the political and physical landscapes of Israel and inform Jewish and Palestinian-Israeli lives today.

As we seek to understand these histories, we must be prepared to look unflinchingly at the role played by the church for centuries in fostering or condoning the anti-Semitic persecution that eventually gave rise to Zionism, and that paved the way for the Holocaust.

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