

The role of the church history essay

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Introduction The role of the Church in various genocides throughout the twentieth century is a controversial topic. Churches are places of safety and sanctuary, but in the midst of genocide, they did not always hold fast to their righteous image or offer a 'safe haven' for victims. Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack state that the Christian Churches were involved on several levels in preparing the theological, moral, political and mythical groundwork for genocide in the twentieth century.[1] The Armenian genocide was the persecution of the Armenian Christians by the Islamic Ottoman regime. The Armenians were considered to be distinctively inferior to the Muslims. [2] Tensions had been rising between them from the late 1890s, with massacres occurring in these years, but with the final genocide taking place in 1915. Due to the highly religious nature of this genocide, the role of the Church is of specific interest to the historian. Ronald Suny highlights however, that the motivations for murder in the Armenian genocide were not always spontaneously generated from religion, but were driven by decades of hostile perceptions of the 'other'; insecurity in the face of perceived danger alongside the positive support and encouragement of state authorities for lawless and inhumane behaviour.[3] The Armenian genocide would see ninety per cent of Ottoman Armenians killed or uprooted; deported to the deserts of Syria, or as refugees in the Caucasus' or Middle East.[4] The Holocaust is perceived as the worst genocide of the twentieth century as a result of the sheer volume of people murdered combined with the cold industrialisation of killing. The Nazi persecution of Jews started from 1933 within Germany, with the prevalent anti-Semitism paving the way for the eventual near annihilation of European Jews. As Hitler expanded eastwards, the persecution of the Jews intensified, with Nazi death camps

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and mobile killing squads appearing around Europe. The apparent Christian-Jewish dislike for one another revealed itself during the Holocaust. This would be used to strengthen the argument as to why the Christian Churches of Europe failed to help the Jews, but also in the counter-argument that Christians were able to forget this rivalry and rescue Jews. The Christian Church's reaction to the Holocaust has sparked great interest among many scholars, notably Richard Rubenstein and Michael Phayer. Rubenstein questions whether the Pope and the Catholic Church saw any moral obligation to try to impede the extermination of the Jews[5]while others such as Phayer highlight the double edged sword that the Churches faced when dealing with the Nazi party.[6]The Rwandan genocide was the culmination of years of hostility between the Hutu majority and Tutsi minority. This notion of difference between the two tribes was introduced to Rwanda by Belgian colonists. Hugh McCallum indicates that the Church in Rwanda was 'cosy' with the colonists and helped to propagate the notion of ethnic superiority. [7]The colonists believed that the Tutsi minority were superior to the Hutus, however; this balance of power changed hands for years until independence in 1961. At this point the Catholic Church had become manifestly connected with the interests of the dominant Hutu majority.[8]The effect of colonisation on Rwanda was profound; it initiated the idea of racial superiority, and introduced identity cards that would be used in 1994 to identify Tutsi for slaughter.[9]The link between state and Church ensures that Rwanda is a prime example of a genocide in which the Church had a role. This is further promoted through the highly religious nature of Rwanda, as more than ninety per cent of Rwanda's people were baptised Christians.[10]This dissertation aims to cover the various Church's roles within three genocides

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throughout the twentieth century; the 1915 Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Assessing these instances of genocide allows for the analysis of temporal change in relation to the Church's reactions and actions towards the respective genocides. They also allow for the comparison of social, cultural and historical context which, along with the role of the Church, will hopefully allow us to establish an understanding of the role of genocide in history and the changing attitudes towards it within the Church. It is necessary to define what is meant when discussing the 'Church'. In general it is the large-scale religious institution, but in various incidents it will refer specifically to local Churches or the individuals who make up the wider institution such as a particular priest, or the congregation of a specific Church. It is also necessary to define the differences between the church as a perpetrator and as a bystander in genocide. Although the two terms do allow for some ambiguity and cross over in meaning, they are two different roles. A perpetrator is someone who actively participates in the persecution of the victim group whereas a bystander is someone who is aware of the situation but chooses to ignore it. The role of the Church as a perpetrator in genocide, the loss of identity and the use of Churches as places of genocide, and the role of the Church as a bystander will be assessed. These three areas will give a clearer picture of the complex role of the Church in the genocides of the twentieth century. However, it must be noted that when studying the Church, one must be open-minded and not condemn or glorify the Church through certain events; also one must not let personal and emotional feelings cloud judgement and objective analysis. This study will rely heavily on secondary sources, due to the lack of availability of primary sources. However, the primary sources

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used include a variety of legal documents, photographs, radio broadcasts and survivor testimonies. These have been chosen as they exemplify the main themes of this analysis and directly portray the link between the Church and genocide, be it in a respectable or shameful light. As with any source, they do not portray the wider picture of events at the time which might have been considered of less importance, and are as such influenced by events that we may not be aware of. Many of the sources rely on the memory of survivors, who may have forgotten or exaggerated events. However, they are useful as they give snippets of the church's role in the respective genocides and provide us with comparison to the wider events of the time. The historiography of the Church's role within genocides in the twentieth century is plentiful and brewing with hot debate. Anton Weiss-Wendt and Ugur Umit Ungor offer the idea of collaboration in genocide rather than the typical perpetrator, bystander spectrum.[11] This allows for the Church's role to be analysed in a totally new light. Rather than condemning the Church to one role or another, the idea of the Church being a collaborator in genocide is a more fitting description and the use of this idea is where the historiography on this subject is lacking. Timothy Longman's assessment of the role of the Church in the Rwandan genocide is one of the most advanced in the wide-range of literature on this subject. He equally weighs the argument that some members of the Church in Rwanda actively helped the Tutsi and raised opposition to the genocidal regime, against the argument that the Church as an institution was too involved with the state to provide a plausible voice of resistance to the regime and that essentially the Church facilitated genocide.[12] However, Longman often places too much emphasis on the power of the Church in Rwanda. Although they did have a

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significant authoritative voice within the country; it was miniscule compared to the extremist government. Michael Phayer offers a well-rounded analysis of the Catholic Church's role within the Holocaust. However, he does over emphasise the role of the Vatican but offers multiple examples from around Europe. This allows for an analysis of the whole of Nazi occupied Europe, rather than just one particular country, however, sometimes the information is too general. Simon Payaslian's article on the destruction of the Armenian Church during the genocide allows us to look at genocide in a new light. It broadens the definition of genocide to one that includes cultural destruction as well as human destruction.[13]He highlights the precarious nature of the role of the Church in trying to save the Armenians from the Ottoman regime due to their historical loyalty to the regime coupled with the persecution of their own people. He fails, however, to highlight the role of Islam in the mobilisation of the genocide. Historians of the three genocides often raise the same questions and argue around the same common themes, namely along the lines of the Church as a perpetrator or bystander, but less so around the ideas of the Church as a place of genocide and this link with the further extermination of the victim group. Chapter 1The Weapon of Religion: Churches as PerpetratorsIn the twentieth century, religion and genocide fit together more comfortably than we would like to think.[14]When analysing whether the Churches of the twentieth century acted as perpetrators in genocide, the ' Church' in this instance, must be defined by the people who make the institution -clergymen and the congregation. Three main elements that need to be assessed are the Church's involvement in the mobilisation, organisation and whether they actively participated along with the ' political' perpetrators in the genocide. The Churches of the three respective

genocides fall at either end of the perpetrator spectrum, being either highly involved or in opposition to the acts of genocide. However, it is rare to find a Church that did not act as a perpetrator in some way. The idea of collaboration in genocide is rarely discussed when analysing the victim-bystander-perpetrator spectrum.[15] However, the Church allows for an area of analysis that fits into the collaborator column. Collaboration in genocide is rarely unconditional; collaborators as a collective act in anticipation of specific rewards.[16] The case of collaboration rather than perpetration proves an interesting one and is highlighted thoroughly by the German Churches and Vatican's role within the Holocaust. Within Germany itself, the Churches did virtually nothing to impede the genocide and a great deal to overlook it.[17] However, this is peculiar when a few years previous the Church's voice had been pivotal in the decline of the euthanasia campaign. The Nazi regime had shown that they were particularly sensitive to public opinion, including religious opinion, yet the Church failed to object strongly enough to the genocide that was about to envelop Europe. Although not a case of overt perpetration it conveys mobilisation and organisation of genocide. There is also a case of collaboration when we look at the Armenian Churches; however, this takes a different form due to the Armenians becoming the targets of genocide. With the Armenian ecclesiastical leaders it was a case of loyalty to the Ottoman Empire rather than a collaboration to destroy their own people. The Armenian Church remained loyal to the Ottoman regime to try and retain some influence and potentially hinder the relentless slaughter of more than half of the Armenian population. The Armenian Church, institutionally tied into the Ottoman system of governance, historically preached acceptance of the 'infidel' status and fate

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befallen to the Armenians by the Ottoman government and also opposed rebellion of any kind.[18]The Armenian example is almost identical to that of the German Churches faced with the oncoming threat of Hitler and National Socialism. Most of the Catholic Bishops chose to tolerate, accommodate and collaborate with the Nazis, making it easier for Catholics, swept up in the enthusiasm of National Socialism to still remain within the Church.

[19]Conveying perfectly that in the face of adversity and threat to the Church, the ecclesiastical leaders were willing to accommodate and collaborate with forces ready to inflict mayhem and destruction onto the world. The Rwandan Churches played an essential role in facilitating the descent into violence. As the primary voices of moral authority, they failed to forcefully oppose the increasing exclusion of Tutsi and the growing violence in the years leading up to the genocide while providing strong support to the regime that was encouraging this behaviour.[20]The collaboration of the Churches with the despotic and genocidal regimes did more to mobilise than stop the ensuing massacres. In Rwanda, because of the well-known pro-government and anti-Tutsi sentiment of many of the Church leaders, their failure to speak out in defence of the Tutsi, left an impression in many Rwandan's minds that the Church supported the actions of the regime in their targeting of the Tutsi.[21]In comparison, the German Churches facilitated genocide by a combination of vehement approval, silent indifference, or narrow minded concentration on religious piety resulting in the suppression of morality in the face of widespread inhumanity.[22]It is clear that the Churches played ample part in the collaboration and mobilisation of genocide in the twentieth century. However, they often went further and actively participated in the genocides but it was very rare to see

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the Church as a united institution act as a perpetrator in genocide. The Armenian genocide does not offer a good comparison in this area; therefore focus will be on Rwanda and Germany. The most compelling case for the active perpetration is Rwanda. As Timothy Longman suggests, the Churches in Rwanda could have used their independent bases of power to challenge state power[23]but they chose to use it as a means to exterminate the Tutsi. Due to the silence and participation of the Church, many Rwandan Christians believed that they were doing the will of God by actively participating in the massacres of Tutsis.[24]Parish priests in Rwanda took an active part in deceiving the Tutsi population in their own congregations by calling them to find refuge in the Churches, which then became sites of mass slaughter. [25]Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, President of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Kibuye[26]highlights this:" Ntakirutimana conveyed armed attackers to the Complex on the morning of 16 April 1994...there is considerable evidence in support of this allegation...the evidence that these armed attackers, along with others, participated in the attack at the Mugonero Complex on that date, killing a large number of Tutsi civilians"[27]Although it is unclear from this excerpt whether Elizaphan Ntakirutimana killed any Tutsis himself, it is somewhat irrelevant, as he facilitated the death of many who sought refuge in his Church. The summary judgement from the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda involving Elizaphan Ntakirutimana highlights this sentiment further:" Ntakirutimana conveyed attackers to Murambi Church and ordered the removal of the Church roof so that it could no longer be used as a shelter for the Tutsi...he facilitated the hunting down and killing of the Tutsi refugees hiding in Murambi Church in Bisesero... Ntakirutimana transported armed attackers to various locations to pursue

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and kill Tutsi; and that he participated in vehicle convoys carrying armed attackers to locations in Bisesero, including Murambi Hill, Kabatwa Hill, Gitwa Hill, Ku Cyapa and Nyarutovu Hill. The evidence does not reveal that Elizaphan Ntakirutimana killed anyone. Rather prosecution witnesses described him as transporting attackers in his vehicle, or as pointing out to attackers the whereabouts of Tutsi refugees. The Chamber has accepted several testimonies of this character and finds that Elizaphan Ntakirutimana thus participated in massacres of Tutsi civilians in the area of Bisesero." [28] Ntakirutimana was not only active in one area and his own Church but several, making him more plausible for the death of potentially thousands of Tutsi refugees. Ntakirutimana also showed contempt for his fellow pastors due to their Tutsi 'race'. A group of Tutsi sent a letter to him informing him that they were to be killed and he reportedly responded with "You must be eliminated. God no longer wants you." [29] His hatred for Tutsis is illustrated here with the use of religion as a weapon to ensure the inferiority of the Tutsi and the genocidal policy of the Rwandan regime. A survivor of the Rwandan genocide recalls one of the atrocities initiated by a priest at a Church full of Tutsi refugees: "...once people had fled to a Church, and they were safe. So, people thought that it would be the same. They fled in the Nyange Church...a priest in that parish sent for a tractor, which destroyed the Church on them." [30] Ntakirutimana was not an anomaly in Rwandan genocide; he was part of the majority. It is irrelevant to those who were there whether the clergyman killed a Tutsi himself; more that they were willing to inflict pain and horrendous deaths on others. It is estimated that more Tutsis were killed in Churches in Rwanda than anywhere else during the genocide. [31] This suggests that clergymen were very active

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perpetrators in the genocide and that Churches provided the perfect place for mass extermination. Although not as explicit as Rwanda, German examples also portray the willingness of Churchmen to participate in the persecution of the targets of genocide. Gerhard Kittel was a famous professor of New Testament theology and supported Adolf Hitler zealously, as did a large percentage of his colleagues. After 1933, he devoted much of his research and writing to explaining why Jews did not belong in, and how they were a danger to Germany.[32]Kittel joined the Nazi party in May 1933 and the next month gave a lecture on the " Jewish Question"; in this Kittel called for the removal of Jews from all important areas of German life.

[33]However, Kittel never openly and directly advocated the murder of Jews.

[34]Kittel is the perfect example of a Nazi enthusiast and it is hard to believe that he did not share the Nazi ideological view that the Jews should be exterminated. Kittel's involvement in spreading the views of the Nazi party was active perpetration in genocide. It is a common mistake that active perpetration only involves killing members of the said victim group; however, this is definitely not the case. Any involvement in the eventual extermination of the victim group is just as important. We cannot aggressively condemn the Church, as although it played a massive role in the facilitation, mobilisation and perpetration of genocide throughout the twentieth century, there were many individuals and groups within the respective Churches who tried to help the victims of genocide. All three genocides offer multiple examples of the moral judgement which should have been employed universally by the Church. Each example restoring some kind of faith that there are good, moral human beings, willing to suffer in order to ease another's suffering. The Armenian genocide offers a rare example of the

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whole Church working together to try and stop the massacres plaguing their ancient homeland. Patriarch Zaven Der Yeghiayan of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople (1913-1922), Catholicos Sahag II Khabayan of the Great House of Cilicia at Sis (1903-39), and Catholicos Kevork V Surenyants at the Mother See of Echmiadzin (1911-1930) witnessed the destruction of their people and had the unpleasant task of searching for the means to end the human catastrophe.[35]The 24th April 1915 was the beginning of the genocide and immediately after this Patriarch Zaven appealed to the authorities for a peaceful resolution to the crisis. He also requested that the Catholicos petitioned the Sublime Porte.[36]Although the branches of the Armenian Church had remained loyal to the Ottoman regime through other atrocities to their people, this was the first step against the genocidal regime. It is not an overt attempt to defy the Ottoman regime but it highlights the strength of these men to put their own safety at risk in order to try and help the thousands suffering at the hands of the Ottoman authorities. In late April 1915, Catholicos Kevork V Surenyants sent an urgent telegram to Boghos Nubar – whom Catholicos had appointed in 1912 to lead the Armenian National Delegation -to secure European support in Armenian matters. He stated that massacres had occurred in Bitles, Cilicia, Erzurum and Van. He also informed Nubar that he had appealed to Woodrow Wilson, the Russian foreign minister Sergei Sazonov and King Victor Emmanuel of Italy to use their favourable positions with Constantinople to find measures to end the persecution so that at least the unarmed civilians could be protected.[37]This was a concerted effort by the whole of the Armenian Church to try and gain foreign support and help prevent the Armenian massacres. Foreign aid for the Armenians was their last hope and the

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Church's efforts to ensure this happened restores faith in what the Church as a religious institution stands for. The Armenian ecclesiastical leaders efforts were not in vain either when on 24 May 1915, Britain, France and Russia issued a joint declaration stating:" In the face of these fresh crimes committed by Turkey, the allied Governments announce publicly to the Sublime Porte that they will hold all members of the Government as well as such of their agents as are implicated, personally responsible for such massacres."[38]Not only did the ecclesiastical leaders of the respective Armenian Churches reach out to the international community, they received a quick response. This is remarkable considering these countries were all entrenched in war at the time of their declaration; highlighting that the cries of help from the Church of Armenia had a profound effect on these nations. However, despite their best efforts, the massacres continued and the international threat did nothing to halt the Ottoman authorities in their extermination of the Armenian community. The Churches of Rwanda have been severely implicated in the perpetration of the Tutsi minority; however there were a few individuals within the structure of the Church who were willing to help the Tutsi. Although Rwanda cannot be compared to the case of the Churches in Armenia, as there was no national ecclesiastical effort to stop the massacres and the genocide in Armenia was carried out along religious more so than ethnic lines, these examples do help to highlight that the Church as an institution cannot be totally branded as a perpetrator in genocide. On the first day of the Rwandan genocide, the Hutu priest of the Muramba parish in Kibuya, Augustin Nkezabera, refused to turn over the Tutsi who had sought refuge in his Church to the Hutu militia and was cut down by a machete.[39]Not only does this highlight the bravery of an

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individual clergyman, it also indicates the brutality of the militia in that they were willing to kill their own 'race' if they hindered their progress in the extermination of the Tutsi. There were Churchmen like this all over Rwanda and throughout the entirety of the genocide. Jean-Bosco Munyaneza, the Hutu priest at Mukarange parish in Kibungo opened his Church to both Tutsi and Hutu seeking refuge in the first week of the genocide. On the 12 April the militia arrived to attack the parish and were confronted with Munyaneza who said "if you want to kill, start with me".^[40] It was easier for Hutu priests to try and save Tutsi from the militia due to their ethnicity. This does not diminish their efforts whatsoever; however it does help to highlight the even more courageous efforts by their Tutsi counterparts. The Tutsi, Carlon Alphonse Karuhije, Dean of the Anglican Cathedral Church of St Etienne, is one of the martyrs of the Rwandan atrocities and is credited with saving many lives. He sent his wife and children to relatives in Tanzania for safety, but he would not leave his congregation. The main part of his cathedral compound was seriously damaged and he had to hide in one of the two square towers due to the never ending presence of the interahamwe looking for more Tutsi to mutilate. However, despite his best efforts, his hiding place was discovered in early June and he was "hacked" to pieces by the militia.^[41] During the Rwandan genocide, the country was a place of rotting corpses and bloodthirsty militia men hunting like animals for their next kill. It is remarkable that through all the bloodshed there were some Churchmen willing to try and do 'God's work'. However, it is fair to say that these people within the Churches in Rwanda were the "proverbial voices crying in the wilderness."^[42]

The efforts of European Christians differ from the efforts of the Armenians as there was never a concerted national effort by the Church to try and help those in need. However, their effort is quite similar to that of Rwanda, although based upon religious differences rather than ethnic. Many of the Christians of Europe were able to put the difference in faith to the side and offer refuge and sanctuary to those Jews they could reach. The Christian-Jewish rivalry and perceived hatred was one that many believed would stay throughout the Nazi persecution of Jews; however this was not the case. One of the most famous examples is that of Matylda Getter who headed the Sisters of the Family in Poland and Margit Slachta who headed the Hungarian Social Services Sisterhood.[43]Mother Matylda Getter told her sisters that by saving Jewish children they would be saving their own souls; she also asked them to look into the innocent eyes of any child who arrived at one of their houses and believe that the child had been sent there by God.[44]Getter's sentiment is exemplified through Aneta Krzak's rescue story in which she states that Mother Matylda Getter would say, " I'm saving a human being who's asking for help,"[45]This should have been the view of all Christians throughout Europe when they first realised that Jews were being persecuted by the Nazi regime. In reality Getter's work should not be viewed as extraordinary it should have been one of the thousands, potentially millions, of examples from across Europe, sadly her efforts can only be viewed as extraordinary due to many members of the Christian faith and their respective Churches choosing to collaborate with the Nazis or remain silent. It is estimated that Getter and her sisters rescued around 750 Jews in Poland,[46]which is

amazing given that Poland was the most heavily Nazi occupied European country.

Margit Slachta was in a very different situation to Matylda Getter due to Hungary retaining its own government throughout the Holocaust. Due to this she tried to enlist the hierarchy of the entire Church in the rescue of the Jews. It must be noted however that both of these women started rescuing Jews of their own free will as in neither Poland nor Hungary did a Church authority suggest or command that they should do so.[47]Slachta, like Getter showed the true values of Christianity and in 1944 when Eichmann's pursuit of Hungarian Jews was at its greatest she called her sisters to the Budapest Mother House and told them that everything they stood for was on the line. She told them that if they lived up to the highest perceptions of Christianity and saved Jews their organisation would survive and flourish, even if many of them were killed in the process.[48]Slachta herself was beaten and narrowly escaped execution but was able to save around 2, 000 Hungarian Jews.[49]These women were willing to use Christianity for good and put themselves in real danger to ensure moral and humanitarian values were upheld. A priest in Belgium had hidden one woman and saved many Jewish children. Not only did he save their lives but he had instructed them in Judaism to the best of his abilities.[50]This priest allowed the Jewish faith and identity to continue when it was burning all around him. When the war was over he also personally sought out the relatives of the children he saved or Jewish organisations to take in every single child. It is easy to agree and question with Doris Bergen when she asks, " Why had his faith inspired courage, respect, and profound empathy when so many other Christians, including the Pope, had failed?"[51]It is a question that unfortunately will

never be answered. All we can do is be grateful for the existence of individuals like this Belgian priest and realise that not all Christians and members of the greater Church can be tarred with the same brush. Chapter 2A Sanctuary No More: Churches as Places of Identity and GenocideGenocide is not simply the brutal act of murder; it has deeper meanings and consequences. It fosters emotions from both the perpetrators and victims and highlights the extent of human hatred. Genocide often entails the perpetrator's desire to extinguish the very idea of the group as an entity, the instruments used to transmit the group identity and often the very memory of the victim group. This is achieved through the destruction of cultural elites, museums, libraries and places of worship. Perpetrators are often able to diminish the idea of nationhood and individual identity, while imposing their own ideals onto the group in question. To achieve this 'total' genocide, the Church was an opportune place to start, as religion and the Church were often representative of identity and had significant meaning in many victims' lives. Although many of the victims may not have been particularly religious, it still represented a part of who they were and allowed for them to have a safe haven. Religion often offered escapism from everyday life. Regardless of how religious a victim was, their place of worship offered a home away from home and was, although maybe a dormant part of their identity, still existent. In times of great need, one's relationship with religion and the Church is heightened. Through the destruction of Churches and murder committed within Churches many victims and survivors lost their faith. The genocides of the twentieth century not only stole lives but killed souls and exterminated culture. One of the most prominent examples of the Nazis using a synagogue as a place of 'total' genocide is in the Bialystok ghetto in <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-of-the-church-history-essay/>

1941. The Nazis did not carry this act out until later in the war because Bialystok was under Soviet control due to the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. However, after the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany, the Nazis reclaimed the territory.[52]28th June 1941, the second day of the reoccupation of Bialystok by the Germans became known as ‘Red Friday’. The Nazis locked between 700 to 1, 000 Jews inside the great synagogue and set the building on fire.[53]The burning of Jews in their place of worship illustrates Nazi hatred towards Jewish identity to the world in a more overt form than had been previously displayed. Through this action, the Nazis effectively killed two birds with one stone. Not only were they removing a religious building but burning with it the memories and identity of those inside the building and those forced to watch. The Nazis made a good attempt at trying to annihilate Jewish culture through the desecration of shops and more importantly their spiritual home, the synagogue. While the Nazis were conjuring their master plan for a Jewish free Europe, Germany was a hotbed of anti-Semitic feeling and 1938 saw an unprecedented rise in the desecration of synagogues across the country. Kristallnacht proved disastrous to the existence of synagogues across Germany. One example is that of the Synagogue on Frankfurter Straße in the city of Altenkirchen in the State of Rhineland-Palatinate. This synagogue was in use before the Nazis took power in 1933 but was burnt to ruin on November 9th 1938. The extent of the damage can be seen through the following photographs: January 1938[54]November 1938[55]The photographs above show the extent of the damage done to one small synagogue, rendering it uninhabitable and providing a massive blow to the morale of the Jews, who at this point in time, still had hope that their situation within Germany might improve. The Nazis

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also ultimately had a problem with the institutions of organised religion, and loyalty to authorities other than the German state. Evidence from Poland provides the perfect example in which the Nazis found themselves in direct conflict with the Catholic Church. In Poland the Christian tradition increasingly came to be seen as an element of resistance against Nazi influence and the Churches were an obstacle which the Germans could not ignore.[56]To suppress the Polish people and their culture, the Nazis knew that they would have to destroy Catholicism. In June 1940, the security police reported that the clergy led the opposition to German occupational authorities and that they were at the core of resistance activity. This led to the deaths of many Polish clergy in various concentration camps – in Wroclaw 49% of the clergy died, in Chelmno 48%; in Lodz 37% and in Poznan 31%.[57]The Nazi Suppression of Catholicism led to the suppression of both Polish culture and identity. This in turn would lead to the expansion of genocide and the imposition of the values of the Third Reich which included eliminating ‘foreign’ cultural traits in favour of Aryan ones. The theme of the desecration of places of worship is a common one throughout the genocides of the twentieth century. Churches in Rwanda provided the perfect setting for the mass murder of thousands of Tutsis at once. It has been suggested that more people were killed in Churches in Rwanda than anywhere else throughout the whole genocide. The Church was supposed to be, for many Tutsi, a sanctuary; somewhere they could seek refuge in their time of need. However, this sentiment was exploited by the Hutu extremists and interahamwe. The interahamwe knew of the historical status of Churches as sanctuaries from the violence of the 1960s and 1970s, and were aware that the Churches could facilitate their mass slaughter of Tutsi.[58]However,

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Longman highlights that in Kibiliria and Bugesera, the Tutsi may have sought refuge in Church buildings but that the Bishops never openly supported the principle of sanctuary.[59]The Eglise Sainte Famille – Holy Family Church – has achieved a special kind of infamy even in a country where many Church buildings were slaughterhouses. Shortly after the presidential jet crashed, around 8000 Tutsis living in Kigali sought safety in the main Church and its out-buildings. They then became victims of a sinister game of hide and seek. They were in the hands of Father Wenceslas Munyeshyaka and Odette Nyirabegenzi, a fanatical leader of the interahamwe, who promised to look after refugees while in fact finding ways to have them killed.[60]Hugh McCallum, a journalist, present in Rwanda at the time of the genocide, witnessed first-hand the destruction and carnage left behind in Rwanda's supposed sanctuaries. McCallum describes the scenes left behind at Ntarama Church in Kigali. He states that the Church doors were jammed half shut with corpses. The windows had been blown in by fragmentation grenades to ensure that no one had escaped. Inside bodies were piled a metre deep under, beside and on top of the rough wooden benches. The walls were splattered with gore and bloody hand-prints in one last plea for mercy. [61]McCallum's account of Ntarama highlights that for these perpetrators of genocide, not even a Church, which the majority of Rwandans had some affiliation with, was sacred. For the interahamwe and Hutu militia mobs the only objective in their minds was the total extermination of the Tutsi "cockroaches". Josephine Uwanahoro, a Tutsi who survived Ntarama said " we will never come back to this Church. It is a graveyard. The angels have left us." [62]For Josephine and many of the other survivors of the Rwandan genocide, the Hutu extremists not only slaughtered their family and friends,

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but extinguished a common identity and place of worship for all Rwandans. It is possible for us to try and understand how Josephine and many of the other survivors now feel towards the Church when we look at photographs of the Ntarama Church massacre: Aftermath of the massacre[63]Genocide memorial sign[64]The total disregard for human life is conveyed through the piling of the bones in the Church and in the background the Church looks more like a demolition site. The sign tells us that approximately 5000 people were killed in this tiny Church. It is understandable that any Rwandans present at this sight of mental and physical torment would not want to return to a place which was once sacred, but now hosts the apparition of a lost faith. There was no longer anywhere for victims to express their loss and remember their loved ones in a positive way. Loss of faith became one of the major side effects of genocide throughout the twentieth century. The issue of theodicy – how can a God who is powerful, loving and just allow evil to occur?[65]- comes to surface in genocide. This issue has much more salience in both the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust than Rwanda. Although it is undeniable that the majority of Tutsi survivors would have suffered a loss of faith and questioned what happened, the Rwandan genocide was essentially not a battle of religions. In regards to the Holocaust, many Jews did lose faith in their religion, but many also lost any respect for those who claimed to be Christian, and particularly the Pope. As leader of the most powerful Church, the Pope was God's representative on earth. However, he chose to accommodate the 'forces of evil' rather than fulfil moral obligation to human decency.[66]Similarly, genocide had a profound effect on the Armenian Christians and the Ottoman authorities made a severe dent in the Armenian spirit. One survivor recounted the process that he went through in <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-of-the-church-history-essay/>

attempting to reconcile the genocide with the existence of God. He stated that he frequently asked: " Why should those things have happened to the Armenians...if there was a Lord and God? Where were they? This is a question, and I would like to know [the answer]. If he is a mighty God, and he knows everything, [then] he should have turned the swords and the guns against them [the Turks]."[67]The Armenians were in a state of confusion as to why this terrible fate had befallen them and their devotedly Christian nature made it even harder. For the Armenians, God was their last saviour in the face of evil, yet, it was as if he had turned his back on them in their utmost time of need. One survivor remembers his mother crying out to God during the deportations saying, " Are you blind? Have you gone blind?"[68]God and his representatives on earth closed their eyes to the suffering right in front of them. The perpetrators severed ties between some Armenians and God through their genocidal campaign. The Ottoman authorities were determined to wipe-out the existence of the Armenians, therefore Christianity, from the face of the Ottoman Empire. They made an excellent attempt at doing so which is evident in the loss of faith experienced by many of the survivors, their forced conversion policies and the total desecration of many of the Churches. Certainly the destruction of the Armenian Churches during and since the genocide was representative of the Turkish drive first to exterminate the Armenian people and then to eradicate all memories of its existence across the ancient Armenian homeland. Simon Payaslian offers statistics on the Armenian Apostolic dioceses:

Before WW1**1954****CHURCHES****PARISHES****CHURCHES****PARISHES**

Patriarchate of Constantinople	1634	1778	3842	Catholicosate of
Echmiadzin	1650	1660	3303	54Catholicoste of Cilicia
	214	267	404	5Patriarchate
of Jerusalem	1810	95		Catholicosate of Aghtamar
	272	194	00	TOTAL

3788**3909****417****446**

Table 1[69]These numbers are astonishing and highlight succinctly the success of the genocidal campaign against the Armenians. Half-way through the twentieth century not even one quarter of the Armenian Churches were left. However, it is unclear from these figures whether all of these Churches were destroyed or turned into mosques. Nevertheless, it is irrelevant, as whether completely destroyed or converted into an Islamic place of worship, both acts helped in the elimination of the Armenian identity from the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman's utter disrespect for anything Armenian is conveyed qualitatively through Morgenthau:" Nothing was sacred to the Turkish gendarmes; under the plea of searching for hidden arms, they ransacked Churches, treated the altars and sacred utensils with the utmost

indignity, and even held mock ceremonies in imitation of the Christian sacraments. They would beat the priests...When they could discover no weapons in Churches, they would sometimes arm the bishops and priests with guns, pistols, and swords, then try them before courts-martial for possessing weapons against the law..."[70]To the Ottomans, religion was a simple way to humiliate the Armenians. One survivor, Abraham Hartunian, describes the desecration of an Armenian Church in the town of Severeke in Diyarbekir Province, which resonates very highly with the way in which Rwandan Churches were desecrated nearly eighty years later:" The mob had plundered the Gregorian Church, desecrated it, murdered all who had sought shelter there, and, as a sacrifice, beheaded the sexton on the stone threshold...The blows of an axe crashed in the Church doors. The attackers rushed in, tore the Bibles and hymnbooks to pieces, broke and shattered whatever they could, blasphemed the cross and, as a sign of victory, chanted the Mohammedan prayer: ' La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammedin Rasula-Ilah' (There is no other God but one God, and Mohammed is His prophet)...The leader of the mob cried: ' Muhammede salavat!' Believe in Mohammed and deny your religion. No one answered...The leader gave the order to massacre. The first attack was on our pastor. The blow of an axe decapitated him. His blood, spurting in all directions, splattered the walls and ceiling"[71]The likeness of this event with that of Rwanda is uncanny, allowing us to realise that it is not just the physical act of genocide that needs to be achieved for many of the perpetrators, it is the total annihilation of the chosen victims' existence. This again can be shown through photographs of the Khtzkonk Monastery built in the 7th to 13th centuries in Armenia: Early 20th Century 1966[72]It is abundantly clear when assessing <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-of-the-church-history-essay/>

these two photographs that there is virtually nothing left of this beautiful piece of architecture and place of worship. These serve to further highlight the astounding statistics of the lack of Churches left after the authorities had finished their genocidal operation. Similarities can be drawn between all three genocides, when it comes to the aspect of destruction of valued religious property. All three genocides exemplify a need for the persecutors to break morale and generate loss of identity through the desecration of places of religious worship, in order for them to achieve their final goal of total genocide. Chapter 3 Could They Have Been Saved? Churches as Bystanders The issue of the Church acting primarily as a bystander to the atrocious events happening around them has provided great debate among historians. The common question which arises is: could more individuals have been saved if the Churches had spoken out? This is a hypothetical question which only contributes to this argument in a conjectural form. Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight the bystander aspect of the Church's role in genocide, in order to establish whether more victims could have been saved. It must be noted that when assessing the Church's role as a bystander to genocide in the twentieth century, the Armenian genocide does not offer a useful comparison with the Rwandan genocide and the Holocaust. The Armenian Church did much to try and help the victims of genocide. It is therefore not appropriate to discuss their role as a 'bystander'; they were as much a victim of the genocidal aspirations of the Ottoman authorities as ordinary Armenians. Therefore this discussion will be based upon the Churches of Rwanda and those involved in the Holocaust." Q: Who assisted your survival? A: No one." [73] The case for Rwandan ecclesiastical leaders as bystanders in the genocide of the Tutsi minority is <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-of-the-church-history-essay/>

profuse. Beginning on 10th April 1994, the Pope issued a series of distressed and passionate calls for the violence in Rwanda to stop. By the 27th April, His Holiness was one of the first world leaders to characterise the events in Rwanda as 'genocide'.^[74] However, these pleas from did not have a great effect on the ecclesiastical community in Rwanda. Although on May 13th 1994, Protestant leaders and four Catholic Bishops produced a conciliatory document which put equal blame on both the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the "Rwandese government" or interahamwe. It also called on both to stop the massacres. However, the document never mentioned the word genocide and refrained from naming the organisers of the evil engulfing Rwanda.

^[75] Regardless of the efforts of the Pope and the Protestant leaders of Rwanda, very little was done by other Church leaders. This, however, is not surprising. Gross abuse of human rights had been taking place in Rwanda long before the crisis of April 1994 and most of the Churches had already failed to speak up by this point.^[76] The dominant powers of the Churches regarded those who opposed the regime as threats to public order, but more importantly to the hierarchical authority within the Church. By refusing to condemn the scapegoating of and violence towards the Tutsi early on, Church leaders allowed ethnic tensions to escalate uninhibited.

^[77] Remaining silent in order to retain individual and institutional power is common in both the Rwandan genocide and the Holocaust. Church officials at all levels refused to denounce specific instances of ethnic and political violence, even when Church personnel and buildings were targeted. The Church's continuing loyalty to the genocidal regime led to many Rwandans concluding that ethnic and political violence was consistent with the religious teachings of the Church.^[78] The Churches of Rwanda failed to provide a

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moral obstacle to the obscene massacres taking place. The Church for many Rwandans was the only 'pure' voice of authority and if that was now tainted with the blood of the Tutsi, how could ordinary Rwandans be expected to think or act any differently from their apparent moral compass. In Rwanda, people killed because they were told to do so by the government and through the medium of radio. However, the Churches failed to teach Christians that in some situations they "must obey God rather than man." [79] The ecclesiastical leadership of Rwanda failed its people through refusing to oppose the interahamwe and not trying to end the massacres. The Churches did not have access to the media to counteract the interahamwe's installation of a murderous mind-set among the militia and general populace. Regardless, it would not have mattered even if they did have the means. The Church leaders were just as ethnically indoctrinated as the ordinary Rwandan, and therefore, they did not want to help the Tutsi. Years of ethnic conflict and indoctrination came to fruition in 1994, and whether religiously driven or not, the Hutu majority wanted to exterminate the Tutsi 'race'. Although there were voices from within the Church hierarchies of Rwanda crying out for the murder to stop, they were few and far between. The Church did not want to speak out. They comfortably assumed the role of the bystander or active perpetrator. The Tutsi were not important to most of them; power, influence and survival was. As much as we, with hindsight, can look back at the events of 1994 in Rwanda and ask why the Church did not do more to stop the massacres, at the time the Church remained "too closely linked with the ruling regime to be a credible voice of protest. Their many declarations during the genocide were insignificant and inadequate. Church reaction was too late and too

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little." [80] The debate over Pope Pius XII's involvement with Hitler and his silence throughout the whole of the Second World War is only the beginning. It is worth noting that through Pope Pius XII's silence, many of the Catholic leaders followed suit. Therefore the main focus will be upon Pius XII.

However, this does not undermine the silence of other Christian Churches across Europe. In this area we can apply Edmund Burke's idea of 'collective omission' and 'collective inaction.' 'Collective omission' is the failure of a group that collectively chooses not to act, in this case the Vatican. 'Collective inaction' on the other hand is the failure to act of a 'collection of people that did not choose as a group to remain inactive but that could have acted as a group'; [81] the Christian Churches of Europe. However, with regards to the Holocaust no one 'did enough' to help the Jews. Michael Phayer suggests that Catholics were morally ambiguous due to, on one hand being taught that Jews were Christ-killers and on the other being taught that murder was sinful. [82] If this was the case then, is it any wonder Catholics and the Church reacted the way they did to the Holocaust? It is in the nature of Catholicism to brand the Nazis as 'sinners' and claim that evil deeds are out of their hands. This moral ambiguity led Catholics to respond to the Holocaust in extreme ways: some as rescuers but many as Nazi collaborators. [83] Through silence and collaboration with the Nazis, the Catholic Church allowed for the murder of millions of innocent Jews. The Catholic Church however often came to the defence of 'converted Jews', as they saw state action against them as a clear violation of agreements that assigned to the Church the right to determine who was and who was not a Catholic. Overall, however, Jews did not figure highly among Catholic wartime priorities. Their primary concerns were the safeguarding and

promotion of institutions, integrity and the mission of the Church in a turbulent and dangerous world. Pursuing this goal in the 1930s the Vatican preferred conservative, authoritarian or even Fascist regimes to those of democracies or worse, the Soviet Union.[84]Fascism was perceived as a lesser evil than Bolshevism, therefore the Vatican chose the path of neutrality and silence in the extermination of the Jews. Pope Pius XII proved to be a controversial character in the Catholic Church's role in the Holocaust. Pius' development of the Concordat between the Vatican and the Nazi regime, and then his 'neutrality' towards the persecution of the Jews gave him this status. The Concordat was signed in the Vatican on 20th July 1933 by Eugenio Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) as Cardinal Secretary of State and Franz Von Papen. This document stipulated that only purely "religious, cultural and charitable" Catholic organisations were entitled to protection. All others were to be abandoned or merged with Nazi organisations.[85]The Concordat was the Nazi way of keeping the Catholic Church on their side while they persecuted the Jewish people of Europe. Article 5 of the Concordat stated that:" In the exercise of their clerical activities the clergy enjoy the protection of the state in the same way as state officials. The state will proceed, in accordance with the general provisions of civil law, against any insult to their person or to their clerical capacity, as well as against any interference with the duties of their office and, if necessary, will provide official protection."[86]The Third Reich would give protection and allow the continuation of Catholicism, as long as they did not interfere with Nazi policies, including the suppression of the 'Jewish problem.' This document not only held the Vatican to silence in the face of adversity but many other Catholic Churches across Europe. The Nazis knew how to make the Vatican

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compliant to their plans, and were successful in doing so. The Concordat between the Vatican and the Nazi regime only goes part of the way to explaining Pope Pius XII as a bystander in the annihilation of the Jewish people. There is the common assumption and lack of understanding over why Pius XII chose to remain silent against the genocide of the Jews. However, it was not out of character for the Vatican to take a bystander role, or profess neutrality in conflict. It is essential to view Pius XII's reaction to the murder of the European Jews in the context of its reactions to other events. The Vatican failed to denounce Italian aggression against Abyssinia in 1935; it also failed to protest against the Nazis pre-war policies of involuntary sterilisation, the ' euthanasia' campaign or the imprisonment of hundreds of priests in camps such as Dachau. Pius also never explicitly condemned the Nazi occupation policies in Poland in which they murdered twenty per cent of the Catholic clergy,[87]or the murder of ' gypsies' and three million Soviet prisoners.[88]Evaluate the array of atrocities that took place in the 1930s, the Vatican failed to speak out strongly against anything. Our expectation of the Pope has conditioned us to believe that Christianity is the ideal moral compass, and that if they could not show the most basic moral duties to another human, how could anyone else. The Pope's role as the leader of the Catholic Church is burdened with moral responsibility and leadership. Consequently it is shocking that this institution chose a back seat in such a large scale atrocity. It is unrealistic to assume that Pius XII could have turned the tide of the Holocaust purely on his own, but it would be misguided to conclude that he was therefore powerless.[89]Although rescue of Jews by members of the Catholic Church did happen, it is doubtful as to whether papal silence allowed this to happen. There is also the argument

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that Pius XII was not silent. This is mainly in accordance with Pius XII's Christmas radio broadcast of 1942. In the broadcast Pius states: "Humanity owes this vow to those hundreds of thousands who, without any fault of their own, sometimes only by reason of their nationality or race, are marked down for death or gradual extinction." [90] Pius XII's radio broadcast left much to be desired. Pius highlighted that he was aware of the extent of the genocide taking place, but failed to explicitly mention the Jews. He also under-emphasises the extent of the genocide from millions to 'hundreds of thousands'. This could have been in order to justify the Catholic Church's silence in the matter. However, it was a way to express to the world that the Vatican was not willing to come into direct conflict with the Nazis. Richard Rubenstein believes that it was a statement of 'what the living owe the dead', not a statement to end the slaughter. [91] Pope Pius XII's 'appeal' also came too little, too late. By 1942, millions had already been exterminated by the Einsatzgruppen, in concentration camps or in the ghettos. It would take more than a half-hearted appeal from the Pope to stop the Nazi murder machine. The Vatican slipped into the role of bystander in the Holocaust quite comfortably. However, it must be noted that there was always significant risk for the Vatican if they opposed the Nazis. They were in the heart of Fascist Italy and it was within the power of the Italians and later the Germans to close down the Vatican press, silence their radio and end communication with the outside world. [92] Regardless, while important tools to the Vatican; they are menial in comparison to the loss of life that was enveloping Europe. It is easy to be in agreement with Rubenstein when he states that the Pope should have recognised a moral obligation, within his power, to rescue Europe's Jews. He also raises the interesting question of

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whether Pius XII regarded the demographic elimination of Europe's Jews as a benefit for European Christendom or more simply whether he recognised any moral obligation to rescue the Jews.[93]It is extremely unfair to say that Pius relished the elimination of the Jews from Europe as a win for Christianity but from the evidence, he never saw any moral obligation to rescue the Jews from the clutches of the Nazis. Germany itself provides a great case study of Churches unwilling to speak out against the Nazi persecution of the Jews in order to preserve themselves and their institution. The Catholic and Protestant Church in Germany proved their value and 'Germanness' to the Nazi regime, in their opposition to Judaism.[94]In co-ordinance with this, Church resistance to political activity was basically non-existent.[95]The Concordat, however, also played a part. The Vatican silenced themselves along with many Catholic Churches throughout Europe. The Vatican started a domino effect of muteness, with each country falling silent one after another. The introduction of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 saw the Churches of Germany adopt a policy of non-intervention. However, after the suppression of opposition political parties and free speech, the Churches were the only remaining possible force that could have influenced public opinion.[96]Too much emphasis is placed on the Concordat between the Nazis and the Vatican as a reason for the lack of action on behalf of the Catholic Church. Although it played a part, the persecution of Jews did little to interest the Catholic leadership in Germany. Taking its lead from the Vatican there was virtually no protest by the German hierarchy against the anti-Semitism of the regime.[97]If the German Bishops had confronted the Holocaust publicly and nationally, the possibility of undermining Hitler's death apparatus might have existed.[98]It is not to say that the German Bishops would have single

handily brought down the Nazi regime and stopped the murder of millions from happening, but it may have sparked an edge of doubt in ordinary German consciousness that mindlessly supporting the Nazi regime was not right. Although the Pope did not appeal on behalf of the Jews of Europe, he did try and stop the brutal invasion of Poland by the Germans. On August 31st 1939, the Pope appealed for peace:" His Holiness therefore, in the name of God, beseeches the German and Polish Governments to do all that is in their power to avoid any incident and to abstain from taking any step that might aggravate the present tension." [99] The Pope took an active role in trying to stop the Nazis from imposing German rule and values on to Poland. Although it is not out of concern for the Jews, more so the Polish people, if his appeal had been successful it might have stopped the immediate ghettoization and extermination of Polish Jews, Polish elites, cultural and spiritual leaders. However, the Pope's appeal was not successful as is conveyed through the Polish Government's reply to Pius XII:" The Polish Government profoundly regrets that His Holiness' noble appeal did not restrain Germany from launching a brutal attack on Polish territory the following day." [100] In 1939, the mass murder of the Jews had not yet begun. The Vatican felt that it could hinder the growing violent tensions and the Third Reich from taking over Europe. However, it would be completely different to question the Nazi ideology, including genocide, as this could have inflicted a severe backlash against the Church. If Germany was unwilling to listen to the appeals of the Vatican in relation to the expansion of the Third Reich, it was highly unlikely to listen to its appeals to stop the murder of the Jews. This is highlighted further by the pact of silence then portrayed through the Churches of Poland and the Vatican, to the Nazi

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persecution of Polish culture and identity. According to Michael Phayer, even the Gestapo, in conversations with the Volksdeutsch were surprised that the Pope had not spoken out. Pius XII's silence led Polish Catholics to believe that the Vatican was either in collaboration with Hitler or that it was totally unconcerned about their suffering.[101]Not only did Pius' role as a bystander alienate the Jews but it alienated his own people. According to a census taken in 1940, the number of Jews in Slovakia was approximately 89, 000. Following the wartime persecutions and post-war escape to Israel only 10, 000 remained.[102]Slovakia owed a lot to the war and the Nazis as they became an independent state. The government and the Church of Slovakia were intertwined, with Monsignor Tiso at the head of both. Many historians argue that the Slovak government had no choice but to collaborate with Berlin under the pressure of circumstance and if they had come into direct conflict with Germany, it would have led to the complete subordination of the country and the destruction of the separatist movement.[103]However, this argument does not account for the undeniable pro-German and anti-Semitic attitudes of the ' regime'. The willingness of Monsignor Tiso and his ministers to support the Nazi plans for the ' Final Solution of the Jewish Question' is evidence of the Roman Catholic Church's willingness to condone the murder of millions and as part of the wider ' conspiracy of silence.'[104]Slovakia's Churches, like so many of the other European countries were only concerned with baptised Jews.[105]Overall, in both the Rwandan genocide and the Holocaust, although the respective Churches comfortably assumed the role of the bystander, it would not have changed the course of events if they had chosen to be more vocal in opposition to genocide. In both instances, the perpetrating forces were so ideologically driven, had popular support and

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well equipped that it would have taken a lot more than the opposition of the Church to bring them to a halt. It is undeniable that if they had raised opposition, then more civilians may have shown more humanity and conscience. Hindsight is a great tool, but we have to ask ourselves if we were there, would we have expected the Churches to do more than they did and would we have voiced opposition to the violent genocidal regimes of both Rwanda and Germany?

Conclusion

The Church's role in the genocides of the twentieth century is a vast, complex and controversial topic. Its traditional role as an institution of moral and humanitarian values is extremely tested in the midst of genocide. Overall, the Church's role within the genocides of the twentieth century proved pivotal in aiding the perpetrators rather than fulfilling their moral duty to help those in need. As has been stated, there were instances from the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide, of extreme bravery on behalf of the Church and the preservation of the moral traditions of Christianity. The exploration of the Church as a perpetrator in the genocides of the twentieth century allows analysis at either end of the perpetrator spectrum. Members of the Church, who actively participated in the mobilisation, organisation and perpetration of the genocide, highlight the statement that the Church, overall, played a larger role in the advancement of genocide. However, the other end of the spectrum provided insight into those Church members who upheld their Christian and moral values and tried to, and often succeeded, in saving some victims of genocide. This area of analysis is vital in the assessment of the Church's role in genocide, as without perpetration, genocide would not exist. The Church has proven to be an unlikely perpetrator in the genocides of the twentieth century. Religious institutions were also used by the 'political

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perpetrators' of genocide, in order to achieve the annihilation of the victim group through more than just their murder. The use of the religious institutions as places of genocide was a common attribute between the three genocides. The murder of the victims of genocide in their places of worship not only provided a concentrated killing centre but ensured the smearing of religious identity in both the collective victim group and for individuals. Not only did the perpetrators of genocide use the religious institutions as places of genocide, they also ensured the desecration of many of them, in all of the genocides, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of 'total' genocide. This act ensured the morale and spirituality of a group to be severed and further expanded the notion of genocide. The Church unknowingly provided a new dimension to genocide. The Church's role as a bystander in genocide also needed to be discussed. The only Church that proved not to fit into the perceived bystander status of the Church in the genocides of the twentieth century was that of the Armenian Church. Their tireless effort to ensure foreign aid to their people is remarkable in comparison to the Church's efforts in both the Holocaust and Rwanda. The Vatican and more importantly, Pius XII's silence in the systematic extermination of the Jewish population of Europe proves to highlight the facilitating role of the Church in genocide. Pius set an example to many of the Churches of Europe who followed his lead. If he had voiced more opposition, more would have followed. The opposition of the Church in the Holocaust would not have been enough to stop Hitler and his genocidal regime but it would have served to keep the Church's traditional morality together; rather than in pieces. The same can be said for the Churches of Rwanda. Their authoritarian voice may have allowed for more Rwandans not to take arms against the Tutsi, but they

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chose to use their authority to ensure the extermination of the minority ‘race’. This dissertation has aimed to cover some of the main issues relating to the Church’s role in the genocides of the twentieth century; however there are many other aspects which could be explored. This study could be further improved through the exploration of religions other than Christianity, such as Islam. It could also use the comparison of other genocides of the twentieth century. For example Darfur, Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia, would allow for further temporal and geographical comparison and analysis in the reactions and actions of religious institutions towards genocide.