Silence

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SHŪSAKU ENDŌ

Shūsaku Endō was born in 1923 in Tokyo. Though his family lived in Manchuria for 10 years, following his mother's divorce, Endō and his mother returned to Japan and lived in Kobe with his aunt. Shortly after the return to Tokyo, Endō became a Catholic, as did his mother. Endō attended university in 1943, though his academic career was disrupted by Japan's entrance into World War II where he was enlisted in a munitions factory; poor health exempted him from becoming a soldier. He finished his B.A. in French Literature in 1949 and then moved on to the University of Lyons, where he studied Catholic fiction. During his study in France, Endō contracted pleurisy (a lung condition). However, Endō finished his second degree in 1953 and published his first novel *Shiroihito* in 1955, winning a Japanese literature prize for young writers, and married and had a son soon after. Endō published another award-winning novel, *Wonderful Fool*, in 1958, but in 1959 severe tuberculosis and a second case of pleurisy hospitalized for the following two years, resulting in several surgeries, the loss of one lung, and a newfound sympathy for suffering characters in his writing. Endō published his pinnacle novel *Silence* in 1966, and his characters' long struggles in this book were undoubtedly influenced by his own years of pain. The publication of his crowing work resulted not only in critical success, but also invitations from the Portuguese Ambassador to Japan and a medal from the Vatican. Endō continued to write several more award-winning novels, the most notable of which is *Samurai*, published in 1980, which depicts the conflict between the East and the West much the same as in *Silence*. Endō received multiple honorary doctorates from around the world, and in 1995 the Japanese government conferred the honor of the Order of Culture onto him. Endō died from complications of a brain hemorrhage the following year.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The description of historical events in *Silence* follows the actual history of Japan very closely. In 1549, Jesuit (a sect of Roman Catholicism) missionaries introduced Christianity into Japan under St. Francis Xavier's leadership. For the next 30 years, Portuguese missionaries entered Japan at a steady rate and spread the Christian Gospel with immense speed and success, baptizing an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 Japanese Christians. Although persecution initially began under a feudal lord named Toyotomi Hideyoshi, it was not until the military ruler Tokugawa Ieyasu united all of Japan under his singular rule in 1600 that persecution of Christians really began to escalate. In 1614, Tokugawa formally outlawed Christianity and ordered that all foreign missionaries must leave Japan, instituting the practice of ritual shows of apostasy to ensure that Japanese citizens were not secretly practicing the illegal religion. The government placed high bounties on Christians' head and devised numerous methods of torture to convince people to betray their faith. Although many Jesuits operated in secret for two decades, they were eventually rooted out. Among these priests was an actual Jesuit leader named Cristóvão Ferreira, who apostatized after being tortured, stunning the Jesuit missionary community. Although Tokugawa initiated a brutal persecution campaign against Christianity, the Tokugawa Period of Japan—also known as the Edo Period—that he instituted is widely regarded as a 250-year period of relative peace and prosperity for the country, maintained by strict social rules and an isolationist stance toward any form of foreign interference.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Shūsaku Endō sits amid the notable ranks of Japan's literary "Third Generation," referring to the third generation of significant writers that helped re-establish Japan as a cultural force in the wake of World War II. Notable Third Generation contemporaries include fellow Japanese Catholic writer Ayako Sono, author of *Bruised Reed*, an examination of a Catholic father's life and work; and Yasuoko Shōtarō, author of *A Melancholy Pleasure* and the famed short story *Prized Possessions*, an allegory on the oppositional forces at play in Japan as it sought to rebuild itself in the postwar phase. However, more than Endō's position as a Third Generation writer, it is his unusual position as a Japanese Catholic that allows him to speak from such a distinctive perspective. Endō's subsequent novel, *Samurai*, deals with the same intersection of Western-rooted Catholicism and Eastern Japanese culture that appears in *Silence*, though with a markedly lighter tone. Slightly more modern Japanese Catholic authors include playwright Chikao Tanaka, author of "The Head of Mary" which details the redemption of Nagasaki's underclass as it struggles in the wake of the nuclear bomb, and novelist Toshio Shimao, whose work (such as *The Sting of Death*) uses his own personal experience to contemplate the spiritual effects of human sin and depravity. Although not a Japanese author, Endō is sometimes referred to as the Graham Greene of Japan, since Greene, author of *End of the Affair* and *The Power and the Glory*, shared Endō's penchant for depicting the Catholic faith in unusual and difficult lights, often to the consternation of their Catholic readers.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Silence
- **When Written:** 1965
- **Where Written:** Machida, Japan
- **When Published:** 1966 (Japanese); 1969 (English)
- **Literary Period:** Third Generation
- **Genre:** Historical Fiction
- **Setting:** 17th-century Japan
- **Climax:** Father Rodrigues apostatizes, but as he does so, hears Christ speak and offer his solidarity in suffering.
- **Antagonist:** Inoue
- **Point of View:** Third person, first person

EXTRA CREDIT

Silver Screen. *Silence* has been adapted twice for film, first in 1971 and again in 2016. The latest version, directed by Martin Scorsese, is a widely-acclaimed critical success.

PLOT SUMMARY

In 17tg-century Portugal, the Roman Catholic Church learns that Father Ferreira, a highly-respected missionary who has worked in Japan for over 20 years, has somehow been made to commit apostasy, renouncing Christianity by stamping his foot on a picture of Jesus Christ. The Church is both confused and disturbed by this news, and several of Ferreira's former students (he was a seminary professor before going to Japan) launch an expedition into Japan to continue Ferreira's former evangelistic work and discover the truth about his apostasy, even though the Japanese government brutally oppresses Christianity.

Fathers Rodrigues and Garrpe, former students of Ferreira, are Portuguese priests in their late 20s. The pair travel from Portugal to China, hoping to find a covert way to reach Japan. While there they are joined by Kichijiro, a pitiful and drunken man about their age whom they suspect is a Christian, though he adamantly denies it. A Portuguese superior of the Church warns them of a magistrate named Inoue, a particularly cruel and devilish persecutor, but nevertheless helps Rodrigues and Garrpe commission a Chinese ship and crew. They smuggle themselves and Kichijiro onto the shores of Japan, landing in the mountains near Nagasaki.

Kichijiro helps the priests find an isolated Christian village called Tomogi, though the Japanese peasants have not had a priest for six years. The villagers shelter the priests, hiding them in a charcoal hut atop a nearby mountain, where the priests wait silently during the day and then minister to the villagers at night, only one or two at a time. Despite their attempts to remain hidden, Kichijiro—whom the priests discover is a Christian who apostatized years before—spreads word to other villages that there are foreign priests in Japan once again. Villagers from a neighboring island beg the priests to visit, so Rodrigues travels there alone. When he returns, officials of the Japanese government are in Tomogi, having been informed that there are practicing Christians present, though they don't yet know of the priests. Three men—including Kichijiro—are chosen to travel to Nagasaki with the officials, and apostatize before the magistrate's office to prove that their village is not Christian. Although Rodrigues advises them to apostatize, only Kichijiro does so, and the other two men are returned to the village where they are tortured for several days until they die of exhaustion in front of the villagers. The priests are disturbed, feeling as if they have brought suffering upon the villagers, and when news arrives that the officials are preparing to search the mountains as well, Rodrigues and Garrpe decide they must flee. They split up, hoping that at least one priest may survive and minister to Japan. As Rodrigues flees, he wonders why God does not speak or intervene when his followers suffer.

Rodrigues wanders into the hill country, believing that he will be safer there, and soon runs into Kichijiro, who fled Tomogi after he apostatized. Kichijiro asks the priest for absolution for his sin, but even as he does so sells Rodrigues out to Japanese officials, who capture the priest and take him to a newly-built prison. Other Christians are imprisoned there as well, and the guards surprisingly allow the priest to visit them twice a day to pray, hear confession, and perform his priestly duties. Thus, prison feels both restful and productive to the priest; he no longer has to hide and is allowed to fulfill his function. After Rodrigues has been imprisoned for some time, the magistrate Inoue and several of his samurai arrive to cross-examine him. Rodrigues is surprised to learn that Inoue, whom he had pictured as devilish and conniving, is in fact a kind-faced, gentle old man who is not intimidating or cruel-looking in the slightest. Inoue and the samurai converse amiably with the priest, expressing their opinion that Japan has no use for Christianity, and Christianity in turn is not well-suited to Japan. When the cross-examination is over, Inoue asks the priest to simply think over what he has said and takes his leave. Kichijiro arrives at the prison and volunteers himself for arrest, but when threatened with death, apostatizes again and is released.

Several days later, the guards—at Inoue's request—bring the priest to an overlook from which he can see the seaside. As the Rodrigues watches, he sees the Christians from the prison gathered along with Garrpe, who he has not seen since they both fled Tomogi. Rodrigues is too far away for Garrpe to see or hear him, but Rodrigues watches as the prisoners are wrapped with straw mats that confine their arms and legs and loaded into a boat that takes them off-shore over the deep water. As an official explains to Rodrigues, Garrpe is being asked to apostatize, and if he does not, the Japanese Christians—though they themselves have apostatized—will be pushed into the **sea** and drowned. Rodrigues begs Garrpe in his heart to apostatize,

but Garrpe does not. As the Christians are pushed into the ocean, Garrpe tries to swim out to meet them and willingly drowns himself. Rodrigues is horrified, and the official that is with him tells him that their blood is on his hands, since he is a priest. Rodrigues is again haunted by God's silence.

Rodrigues becomes numb and ceases eating or speaking, staring only at the wall as he thinks about God's refusal to intervene and the futility of all the deaths he has seen. While he is in this state, he is brought into Nagasaki to meet Ferreira, whom he learns has been living there with a Japanese wife and children for the past year. Ferreira seems defeated, but explains to Rodrigues why he came to believe, after 20 years of missionary work, that Christianity can never truly exist in Japan. Japan's Eastern culture is simply too incompatible with Western Christianity, and the religion either withers away or becomes something else entirely. Ferreira is visibly pained, even broken. Still, his arguments are confusing and overwhelming for Rodrigues. But when he still will not apostatize, the priest is taken to the magistrate's house where he is locked in a small, dark cell, and forced to listen to the sound of Christians being tortured in the courtyard.

After being left alone there for several hours, listening to the sounds of suffering, Ferreira again visits Rodrigues and explains that the only way to end the suffering of the Japanese Christians is for Rodrigues to humiliate himself, destroy his pride, and apostatize, exclaiming that Christ himself would apostatize out of love for the suffering. Rodrigues, broken, finally agrees. As he holds his foot above the image of Christ, preparing himself to betray his faith, he hears Christ speak to him, telling him that it is okay to trample on him, since Christ came to earth to be trampled on by men and will be present with the priest in his suffering. Still pained but emboldened by Christ's words, Rodrigues apostatizes.

Rodrigues is given a home and a wife in Nagasaki, as Ferreira was. He is employed by the Japanese government to help block Christians from smuggling religious items into the country. The Catholic Church in Portugal has learned of his betrayal and expelled him, taking away his right to minister as a priest. Although he is treated well by Inoue and the Japanese officials, his spirit is crushed. However, when Kichijiro arrives on his doorstep once more asking to confess and receive the priest's absolution, Rodrigues agrees, deciding that although he is rejected by his former brethren, he is not rejected by God, who was not silent but suffered alongside him, and to whose presence the priest's entire life gives testimony.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Sebastien Rodrigues – Father Rodrigues is the protagonist of the story. He is a Portuguese Catholic missionary who travels to Japan to be a priest for the Japanese Christians and discover the truth about his former mentor, Father Ferreira, who is rumored to have apostatized and renounced his faith. When Rodrigues travels to Japan with Kichijiro and Father Garrpe, he is bold and passionate about his faith in Jesus Christ, often reflecting on **Christ's face** which he finds as beautiful as one finds their beloved. However, the suffering of the Japanese Christians and the fierce persecution they face challenges his faith in God, especially as he sees many faithful Christians ingloriously killed and is confused by God's silence in the face of their suffering. Although Rodrigues once pictured suffering for Christ and martyrdom as the most glorious end to one's life (revealing how his devotion to God is mixed with his desire for personal glory), his experience fleeing the Japanese officials, being betrayed by Kichijiro, and being imprisoned destroys that illusion. As Rodrigues wrestles with God's silence and struggles to counter the magistrate Inoue's arguments about Christianity's compatibility with and benefit for Japan, his faith wavers. After meeting Ferreira, who is a true apostate and believes that Christianity can never take root in Japan, and realizing that the Japanese Christians will be tortured until he apostatizes, Rodrigues ultimately chooses to step on Christ's image, feeling that Christ affirms his choice and suffers alongside him in his pain. Although Rodrigues becomes an agent of the Japanese government helping them to combat Christianity, and although he is expelled from the Church, he maintains a private devotion to Christ and faith in God. This suggests that although Rodrigues has betrayed the institution of Christianity, he has not ultimately betrayed Christ himself.

Francisco Garrpe – Father Garrpe, a Portuguese missionary priest, accompanies Rodrigues to Japan in order to be a priest for Japanese Christians and find out what happen to Father Ferreira, their former mentor. Garrpe hides with Rodrigues in the village of Tomogi, where they meet the first Japanese Christians. The two priests are close friends, and Garrpe's support and good-humor emboldens Rodrigues in their first weeks in Japan. Although Garrpe is separated from Rodrigues when they flee Tomogi and thus absent from most of the story, his own faithful strength provides somewhat of a foil for Rodrigues's eventual weakness. When several Christians are about to taken to Nagasaki to be persecuted for their faith, Rodrigues encourages them to apostatize to spare themselves and their village from suffering, but Garrpe obviously disagrees. Unlike Rodrigues, who physically suffers little himself, Garrpe drowns himself in the **sea**—this way, although his refusal to apostatize resulted in the death of several Japanese Christians, at least he can die with them and try to reach their sinking bodies. Garrpe's death is one of the final events that breaks Rodrigues's spirit, thus leading him to eventually apostatize himself, even though Garrpe certainly would've spurned Rodrigues for his weakness in doing so.

Christovao Ferreira / Sawano Chuan – Father Ferreira is a

former Portuguese missionary priest who led the Christian movement for 20 years in Japan before the harsh persecution of Christians began in the country. Although once a revered member of the Catholic Church, Ferreira apostatizes before Inoue before the story begins, and learning the reason for his apostasy becomes one of the primary motivations of Rodrigues and Garrpe's mission to Japan. Rodrigues does not meet Ferreira until the end of the story, but when he does, discovers that Ferreira is indeed an apostate and lives in Nagasaki as a Japanese man with a Japanese wife and family, and has been enlisted by Inoue to convince Rodrigues to apostatize. When Rodrigues sees him, Ferreira looks to him like a whipped, broken animal, and he observes that Ferreira goes to great lengths to justify his present work translating scientific texts by claiming that it serves the Japanese people. Ferreira explains to Rodrigues that after 20 years of missionary work, he finally realized that Christianity, as a Western religion, is simply incompatible with the Eastern culture of Japan. The Japanese people have no concept of transcendent beings and so cannot conceive of God or Jesus Christ in the way that Christianity defines them. Ferreira believes that the version of Christianity that did grow in Japan was so distorted as to not be Christianity at all. Although Rodrigues is not entirely convinced by Ferreira's argument, Ferreira ultimately convinces the priest to apostatize by showing him that his own arrogant refusal to release his convictions brings suffering on the Japanese people—the same people Rodrigues is meant to help.

Kichijiro – Kichijiro is the first Japanese person who Rodrigues and Garrpe meet. He is characterized as a drunk, a coward, and a repeat apostate. Although Kichijiro tries to deny his Christianity when he meets the priests in China, both men immediately suspect that he is a member of their faith. As they discover after reaching Japan with him, Kichijiro apostatized years before, when his family was tortured and executed for their faith. Throughout the story, Kichijiro not only apostatizes several more times, but betrays Rodrigues and other Christians to the Japanese officials either for money or to save himself, taking on a role similar to the biblical Judas Iscariot within the narrative. In spite of his constant betrayal, Kichijiro follows Rodrigues all throughout his flight, imprisonment, and even after his eventual apostasy. Kichijiro begs for the priest's forgiveness and seeking absolution, even voluntarily offering himself for imprisonment so that he can be close to Rodrigues. Rodrigues wavers between feeling sympathy, resentment, and hatred for the treacherous Kichijiro, which causes him to often reflect on Christ's relationship to Judas—whether Christ loved the man he knew would betray him, and whether Judas was only a puppet, given the worst role in a grander narrative. By the end of Rodrigues's imprisonment, as he realizes that he will apostatize and become as much like Judas as Kichijiro, he also realizes that Kichijiro has doggedly pursued him around Japan, and although a traitor, is ironically also his most loyal friend. When Kichijiro asks the apostate Rodrigues to hear his confession as a priest, this confirms to Rodrigues that he can still serve God, even as a reject of the Church and betrayer of the faith.

Inoue – Inoue is the antagonist of the story, the Japanese magistrate over Nagasaki, and the "architect of Christian persecution." Although Rodrigues hears of Inoue long before meeting him and expects him to be evil incarnate, Inoue is surprisingly personable, kind, and meek, even though he inflicts brutal suffering and torture upon Japanese Christians. Inoue opposes Christianity's presence in Japan, even though he himself was once baptized a Christian, because he feels it does not offer Japan anything new and in return grants too much of a foothold to England, Holland, Spain, and Portugal. Additionally, like Ferreira—who he drove to apostatize before the story begins—Inoue believes that Christianity is incompatible with the way the Japanese view the world, particularly in its dogmatic defense of universal truths and transcendent deities. The magistrate states his lack of hatred for Christianity, but admits to opposing to it on purely pragmatic grounds. This demonstrates that religious persecution, even when brutal and violent, may be a practical matter rather than an ideological one, and those who enact it may be regular individuals rather than hateful monstrosities. Although Inoue manages to make Rodrigues apostatize, the priest's maintenance of his personal faith suggests that he is not entirely the victor in their struggle.

The Interpreter – The interpreter appears several times throughout Rodrigues's arrest and imprisonment, translating for the priest when his Japanese fails him. The interpreter, like Inoue, was baptized a Christian and even studied in a seminary. Unlike Inoue, however, the interpreter harbors an intense animosity towards Christianity—due in large part to an experience with a racist Portuguese priest—though not towards Rodrigues himself, as demonstrated by his often-sympathetic handling of Rodrigues's mental anguish. The interpreter often flips between despising Christians (especially foreign priests, whom he blames for the Japanese Christians' suffering), and gentleness. After Rodrigues apostatizes and serves the Japanese government, the interpreter acts as if the humiliating occasion never happened to spare Rodrigues any further shame. During the logical arguments against Christianity posed by Inoue, the interpreter often chimes in, providing a more vitriolic opposition against the religion.

Mokichi – Mokichi is a young man, one of the few named Christians in Tomogi, the first village Rodrigues and Garrpe visit. When Japanese officials descend on Tomogi and demand volunteers to be cross-examined, Mokichi volunteers. During the examination, though he tries to apostatize as Rodrigues told him to, Mokichi cannot bear it, and is revealed to be a Christian. He is thus tortured in executed in front of his village alongside Ichizo.

Ichizo – Ichizo is an older man, the brother of Omatsu, who is

one of the few named Christians in Tomogi, the first village Rodrigues and Garrpe see. When Japanese officials descend on Tomogi and demand volunteers to be cross-examined, Ichizo also volunteers. During the examination, though he tries to apostatize as Rodrigues told him to, he cannot bear it and is revealed to be a Christian, and is thus tortured in executed in front of his village alongside Mokichi.

The One-Eyed Man – The one-eyed man is a Japanese Christian whom Rodrigues meets, along with Monica, after he is arrested. The one-eyed man is placed in the same prison as Rodrigues. One afternoon, after refusing to apostatize by stepping on the fumie, a Japanese official casually makes conversation with the one-eyed man before swiftly and unexpectedly decapitating him. After the one-eyed man's head falls to the ground, separated from his body, Rodrigues is disturbed by the afternoon's stillness and God's silence, as if one of his followers had not been struck dead.

Valignano – Valignano is a Superior of the Church whom Rodrigues and Garrpe meet in China. Valignano is the overseer of the missionaries in Japan, all of whom have either been expelled or killed, and thus initially refuses to allow the two young priests to undertake a new mission. However, after they convince him, Valignano arranges a Chinese ship to smuggle them to Japan's coast and warns them of Inoue, the "terror of Christians."

MINOR CHARACTERS

Monica – Monica (her baptized name) is a Japanese Christian whom Rodrigues meets immediately after he is betrayed by Kichijiro. Monica is placed in the same prison as Rodrigues, but is only there for a few days before she is killed and thrown in the **sea** after Garrpe refuses to apostatize.

Juan de Santa Marta – Juan de Santa Marta is a Portuguese priest who travels with Rodrigues and Garrpe to China and intended to go with them to Japan as well, but he is struck with malaria and forced to remain behind.

Omatsu – Omatsu is a Japanese Christian from Tomogi and Ichizo's elder sister. She is forced to watch Ichizo slowly die for being a Christian.

TERMS

Apostasy – Apostasy is the act of renouncing Christianity, regarded by the Catholic Church as the ultimate, unpardonable sin. Within the novel, apostasy is always committed by stepping one's foot onto Christ's image on a fumie.

Fumie – A fumie is metal engraving of Jesus Christ's face fixed onto a plank of wood. The Japanese government makes its own fumies specifically so its citizens and prisoners can step on it to declare their apostasy and renounce Christianity.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

APOSTASY

Shūsaku Endō's *Silence* tells the harrowing story of a Portuguese missionary priest in 17th-century Japan named Father Rodrigues, who must decide to either let Japanese Christians suffer for his own sake, or to apostatize—that is, to symbolically renounce Christianity by placing one's foot on a metal etching of Jesus Christ called a fumie. Although in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, apostasy is a betrayal of Jesus Christ (whom Christians regard as God) and the worst possible crime a Christian can commit, Rodrigues is forced to choose between his loyalty to the Church and the lives of the Japanese people. Rodrigues's moral journey suggests that, although apostasy is a symbolic betrayal of institution of Christianity, it is not a morally straightforward act, and is not necessarily a betrayal of Jesus Christ himself.

The Roman Catholic Church regards apostasy as the greatest crime against God, punishable by expulsion, suggesting that it is at the very least a betrayal of the organized institution of Christianity. When the Church hears that Father Ferreira—a highly-regarded Portuguese priest who has led Christians in Japan for 30 years—has apostatized in Japan, many of the priests cannot believe that such a great man could be led to "grovel before the infidel," language which itself suggests a great deal of institutional pride. This is confirmed by the fact that Rodrigues and his friend, Father Garrpe, plan their missionary voyage to Japan not only to spread their Gospel in the country, but also to "atone for the apostasy of Ferreira which had so wounded the honor of the church." This again suggests that the Roman Catholic Church takes its reputation, reflected in the work of its priests, very seriously. Near the end of the story, when Ferreira appeals to Rodrigues to apostatize, he tells Rodrigues, "You dread to be the dregs of the Church, like me," once more recognizing that Rodrigues's relationship to the Church and Christianity as a religious institution is at stake, and to apostatize would be to betray that institution and mar its honor.

However, the moral dilemma Rodrigues faces between the Japanese Christians' suffering and his own loyalty to the Church suggests that, in some cases, there may be crimes greater than apostasy, and circumstances in which apostasy is even necessary. The Japanese officials know that the martyrdom (dying for a religious cause) of the missionaries only encourages the local Christians' devotion, and decide that they

will not kill Rodrigues. Instead, they will break him, forcing him to denounce Christianity by torturing and killing Japanese Christian peasants until Rodrigues willingly apostatizes. Even those Japanese Christians who have themselves apostatized are not spared torture so long as Rodrigues refuses to do the same, meaning that the consequence of Rodrigues's loyalty to Christ and the Church is the horrible suffering of the Japanese Christians who have no chance to end their own suffering. To continually refuse to apostatize while more and more Japanese Christians are tortured and killed seems an indefensible and even criminal bargain, suggesting that apostasy is not always the most immoral choice for Christians depending on the context of the situation. The novel therefore suggests that apostasy is not the ultimate crime a Christian can commit. Reflecting on Kichijiro, a weak man who apostatizes numerous times throughout his life, Rodrigues admits that in a less difficult and torturous time, Kichijiro could have lived his life as a simple, happy, Christian man like any other, never tested by such suffering or driven to apostasy while watching others be killed. Rodrigues's recognition that Kichijiro is less a shameful Christian than a man born into an era too difficult for him suggests that although apostasy is a terrible crime and a betrayal of Christianity, one's circumstances may be more to blame than a weakness in their faith.

Although Rodrigues apostatizes and betrays the church to end the suffering of the Japanese Christians, he feels as if Christ speaks to him and secretly maintains his devotion to God, suggesting that although apostasy may be a betrayal of the church and the Christian institution, it is not necessarily a betrayal of Christ himself. In the moment that Rodrigues is about to apostatize and trample the bronze image of **Christ's face** with his foot, he hears Christ's image speak to him, saying "Trample! It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world." Christ's affirmation of Rodrigues's apostasy suggests that it is not an utter betrayal of Christ himself, and the priest places his foot upon Christ's face, apostatizing and renouncing the Church to his great shame. Rodrigues is forced to become a Japanese agent, helping the government block Christian relics from being smuggled into Japan, and he knows the Church has expelled him and taken away his authority to act as a priest. Yet Rodrigues still maintains his private devotion to God and even secretly administers the priestly rites to Kichijiro. Reflecting on his defeat, Rodrigues prays, "I fell. But, Lord, you alone know that I did not renounce my faith [...] I know that my Lord is different from the God that is preached in the churches." Rodrigues's continued faith in God and devotion to Christ, even after the Church condemns him, makes the argument that though apostasy certainly betrays the *institution* of Christianity—the Church, the hierarchy, the organization—it is not necessarily a betrayal of Jesus Christ himself. A person who has apostatized, then, may still keep their faith.

Rodrigues is forced into making a horrifying decision between his lifelong loyalty to his Christian brethren and ending the suffering of the Japanese peasants he came to serve. Although a betrayal of his life's work and often criticized by readers of the story, Rodrigues's decision to apostatize but maintain a private commitment to God seems the only reasonable choice he can make.

RELIGIOUS ARROGANCE

Although Rodrigues makes his missionary voyage to Japan out of a self-sacrificing desire to serve Japanese Christians, his actions and thoughts betray a notable and damning pride and selfish attitude that is intertwined with his desire to serve. Rodrigues's character reveals the arrogance often present within the proselytizing missionary and suggests that even the most seemingly devout people can also be self-serving to a fault. Through Rodrigues, Endō argues that such arrogance is a great danger to others, especially those people whom the missionary hopes to help.

Although Rodrigues's initial belief in the Gospel and evangelism is pure and unwavering, it is interspersed with his own pride, demonstrating that dedication to service and unrecognized arrogance may exist within the same individual. Rodrigues's love for Jesus Christ compels him to share that love with the persecuted Japanese people, even though it means he will never return to Portugal and will most likely experience suffering and even death, as have the many missionaries who have preceded him in Japan. Such a conviction suggests a level of selflessness, as his desire to serve God is stronger than his desire to protect himself. However, in spite of Rodrigues's desire to serve and his disregard for his own safety, he clearly harbors a heightened view of himself. Although Rodrigues feels compassion for the Japanese peasants, he also feels revulsion at their squalor and their smell. As he lives amongst them and shares in their poverty, Rodrigues often observes that the Japanese peasants live "like beasts," but notably never refers to himself as such even when he shares their lifestyle, suggesting an innate sense of his own superiority over them. Rather, as a priest and the lone purveyor of Christianity to such apparently wretched people, Rodrigues regards his life and role as "deeply meaningful."

Further intertwining his arrogance with his religious service, Rodrigues constantly parallels his own suffering with Christ's suffering, seemingly equating himself with Christ in his own mind. When Rodrigues is reviled by a crowd of people, he pictures Christ reviled; when Rodrigues is on trial before the magistrate Inoue, he imagines Christ standing before Pilate; when he sees his own Haggard reflection in a pool of water, he pictures it as **Christ's face** staring back at him. Imagining himself as Christ denotes a staggering level of self-importance—a literal savior complex, though robed in self-sacrificing religious conviction. This is particularly ironic, since it is the Japanese peasants who suffer the most pain and

torture (like Christ) because of his refusal to apostatize, while Rodrigues himself experiences comparatively little physical pain. Even towards Ferreira, who has now apostatized and disgraced the Church, Rodrigues feels "the pity that a superior person feels for the wretched," which is again hypocritical, since Rodrigues himself will eventually apostatize as well.

Although Rodrigues is laboring for "the conversion of Japan and the glory of God," his arrogance leads him to have glorious expectations of his own martyrdom and sacrifice, suggesting that he (and other missionaries like him) strives after his own glory as well. Although Rodrigues expects he may be killed in Japan, the glorious death he pictures for himself is a childish fantasy: "I had long read about martyrdom in the lives of the saints—how the souls of the martyrs had gone home to Heaven, how they had been filled with glory in Paradise, how the angels had blown trumpets. This is the splendid martyrdom I had seen in my dreams." Rodrigues's dreams of a glorious death suggest that not only is he arrogant, but he also seeks his own glory as much as God's glory through his missionary work. Rodrigues's boldness seems at least partially motivated by the hope of leaving a legacy and being remembered well, indicating that he his religious purity is stained by his self-aggrandizing arrogance.

Rodrigues's arrogance and glorious expectations ultimately lead to the Japanese peasants' inglorious suffering, suggesting that such religious arrogance, though intertwined with a noble conviction to love and to serve, is a danger to everyone else. Rodrigues's noble of vision of martyrdom is defeated when he sees the Japanese peasants executed for their faith. Rather than glorious, the deaths are agonizing, slow, and seem to leave no mark upon the world, no glory in their wake. After watching several men drowned for their faith, he reflects, "And the **sea** which killed them surges on uncannily—in silence." There seems to be no redemption for them, or for Rodrigues himself, only pointless suffering and death. Although Rodrigues encourages several Japanese peasants to apostatize in order to save themselves, his arrogance as a priest prevents him from apostatizing for a long time, even though it causes the torture and deaths of several Japanese Christians, since it would make him a shameful and traitorous figure in the Church's eyes. Ferreira and the Japanese officials scold Rodrigues for bringing suffering on others over his own ego, saying, "You make yourself more important than them. You are preoccupied with your own salvation." As Ferreira recognizes Rodrigues's arrogance, since he was once similarly prideful and caught in the exact same position. Rodrigues's arrogance, though intertwined with his Christian convictions and love for Christ, ultimately endangers the people around him and causes more suffering than if Rodrigues had the humility to immediately shame and disgrace himself—as Christ did—and spare the suffering of others, even though it denies him a glorious martyr's death condemns him to live out his days as a traitor to the Church.

The Christian missionaries' pride in *Silence* is both relatable—for all people hope to leave a legacy of some kind—as well as deeply destructive, demonstrating how even a priest's hidden sins and self-interest may rise to the surface and bring ruin to others.

FAITH

Rodrigues, a Portuguese missionary in Japan, is haunted by God's refusal to speak or intervene when persecuted Christians suffer. Through an arduous journey of doubt and despair, Rodrigues still remains faithful to God as his source of peace, strength, and support. He discovers—and the novel thus argues—that God witnesses all human suffering even when he will not intervene, and that even in God's silence, the endurance of his followers are proof of his presence and legitimacy.

At the outset of the story, Rodrigues and Garrpe's faith embolden them to face suffering and death, suggesting that such faith in God's presence can be a bastion of strength and support for Christians. Although Christianity was, for a time, allowed in Japan, the Roman Catholic Church has received word that in two decades, nearly all of their missionaries have been arrested and either exiled or tortured and martyred in horrific fashion: boiled and burned alive, beheaded, drowned, or hung upside down in "the pit" to suffer days of agony before death. With full knowledge of these events, Rodrigues and Garrpe hold no illusions about their chance of survival in Japan as priests. It is more than likely that they will be caught, tortured, and killed. Even so, both men's' faith in God's provision and guidance gives them the courage to make their journey to Japan. When a traveling companion falls ill and they must leave him behind, Rodrigues reflects, "God bestows upon man a better fate than human knowledge could possibly think of or devise." During their first weeks in Japan, while hiding amongst a small, covertly Christian village, Garrpe and Rodrigues the likelihood that they will be caught and tortured, and whether they will have the strength to remain loyal to Christianity. Both men agree that the only option is to rely upon "God's grace" and trust that he will give them strength. Garrpe and Rodrigues's boldness in the face of unknown dangers and likely pain demonstrates the strength of their faith and the bastion of support a belief in an all-powerful, providential God can be for Christians, emboldening them to take risks they might otherwise never have the courage to face.

However, in spite of Rodrigues's faith, God is silent and refuses to intervene while he suffers. Japanese Christians are tortured to death, causing Rodrigues to doubt whether God exists at all, suggesting that God's failure to speak or act against human suffering makes belief faith in God difficult to maintain. As the Japanese officials oppress the Christian villagers, Rodrigues, and Garrpe, Rodrigues realizes that he does not feel the

assurance his faith once offered. After several Japanese villagers are tortured and executed, the villagers begin to ask Rodrigues, "Why has Our Lord imposed this suffering on poor Japanese peasants?" Rodrigues is haunted by the same question himself, wondering why, after 20 years of blood-soaked persecution, "in the face of this terrible and merciless sacrifice offered up to Him, God has remained silent." He is particularly bothered when, after a Japanese official casually beheads a Christian in front of Rodrigues, the world seems the same, unchanged except for one less life and the spurt of blood across the dirt. There is no justice for the martyr, no recognition from God that this man sacrificed his life for him. Rodrigues and the Japanese peasants' confusion at God's silence suggests that, as they understand it, if God were truly present, he would intervene on behalf of those who suffer—especially for their religious devotion. God's apparent silence causes Rodrigues to doubt his very existence, which the priest has never done before in his life. After seeing two executed Christians' bodies "swallowed" by the **sea**, Rodrigues reflects that "like the sea, God was silent" raising the possibility that perhaps God is not there at all. However, this though terrifies him and he will not allow himself to entertain it too far, since, "If God does not exist, how can man endure the monotony of the sea [representing the drudgery of life] and its cruel lack of emotion?" For Rodrigues, if God does not exist, then the pain and struggle of the peasants in missionaries is naught but an "absurd drama." For Rodrigues, as for many, God's silence in the midst of evil and suffering seems an unanswerable question. The seeming lack of God's direct intervention suggests that, possibly, God's silence means he is absent altogether, or at least apathetic to human suffering.

Ultimately, Rodrigues realizes that even when God is silent, Christ suffers alongside him and speaks through his own life, suggesting that the endurance of God's followers through tremendous suffering testifies to His existence. When Rodrigues is about to apostatize and hovers his foot over the image of **Christ's face**, he imagines that Christ, as God, finally breaks his silence to reassure him that he understands pain Rodrigues feels at the act, saying, "It was to share men's pain that I carried my cross." Although this does not take away the shame that Rodrigues suffers, Christ's affirmation reveals to Rodrigues that even when it seemed God was silent, he was suffering alongside him, having known such pain himself when he was crucified. Although Rodrigues is ultimately forced to work as an agent of the Japanese government, left in a defeated position for the rest of his life, he feels that in all the suffering he saw and experienced, "Our Lord was not silent. Even if he had been silent, my life until this day would have spoken of him," suggesting that even when God is or seems silent, the perseverance and devotion of his followers is evidence of his presence.

Although Rodrigues never meets God in the manner he hopes—in a shower of glory or protection—his persistent faith demonstrates that belief in God's presence and sovereignty may still be held as a source of inner peace and support, even in the face of suffering, hardship, and failure.

WESTERN RELIGION VS. EASTERN CULTURE

Rodrigues and Garrpe believe that the Christian message is so potent and essential that the entire world should hear it, ultimately leading them to Japan. However, the priests are met with little success and much suffering, and by the end of the story, Rodrigues finds himself questioning whether there is any place for Christianity to exist inside of Japan. Though himself a Roman Catholic, Endō's novel makes the controversial suggestion that Western Christianity is incompatible with the Eastern culture of Japan, doomed to either wither away or be transformed into something else entirely.

Particularly for the oppressed Japanese peasantry, Christianity offers a vital hope and recognition of their humanity, demonstrating that the Western religion does have some utility and value for Eastern people. The peasants live on land owned by feudal lords, who tax them so heavily that they can barely scratch out a living for themselves. They exist at a level just above starvation and live in constant fear of their lords' samurai enforcers. For such oppressed and dejected people, the attention that they receive from the missionaries and the promise of a loving deity offers "this group of people a human warmth they never previously knew." Beyond human warmth, Christianity's promise of paradise after death represents a relief from the peasants' lifelong bondage. As Rodrigues observes, "These people who work and live and die like beasts find for the first time in our teaching a path in which they can cast away the fetters that bind them. The Buddhist bonzes simply treat them like cattle." Christianity, he believes, offers hopeless Japanese peasants a promise of a better future, a relief from the suffering of their present lives. For the peasants, who lead lives of suffering, Christianity thus represents a desirable source of hope, love, and the promise of relief from their suffering and a better life after death. In this manner, as Rodrigues so firmly believes, Christianity arguably has both utility and value for the Japanese peasants that their own Buddhism, which supports the oppressive social order, does not offer them.

However, although valuable, Endō suggests through Ferreira and the Japanese officials that Western Christianity is inherently fraught with Western ideals that are incompatible with Japan's Eastern culture. As Rodrigues argues, the idea that truth is universal (true for everyone on Earth) is a fundamental tenet of Western Christianity. However, when Rodrigues posits this idea, a Japanese official flatly disagrees. He counters that even if Christianity is true for Portugal, it may not be for Japan,

suggesting that just as certain trees can only grow in certain soils, religions too may only thrive in one culture or another. Although Ferreira once led the missionary movement in Japan that produced 400,000 Christians, the former priest tells Rodrigues that he now realizes they were not practicing Christianity at all, particularly because Japanese people have no concept of God or anything that transcends their physical space. Rodrigues himself sees this emphasis on the physical world in the Japanese Christians' obsession with crucifixes and relics, which concerns him. Ferreira recounts that rather than worshipping God as a transcendent being—who is spiritual, without physical presence—the Japanese Christians misunderstood the missionaries and worshipped the sun in the sky as God. In the same way that Buddha, though revered, is only a man, the Japanese Christians have no concept of Jesus Christ as a divine being either, picturing him only as a "beautiful, exalted man." As Ferreira sees it, "The Japanese till this day have never had the concept of God; and they never will." Because of their inability to even conceive of a divine presence, Ferreira suggests that the Christianity that once thrived in Japan—and has now largely died out—was not Christianity at all, and certainly not as the Portuguese believe it. Rather, he likens it to a butterfly caught in a spider's web, drained of all its bodily fluids: the external shell remains, but the essence is completely changed.

The novel thus controversially suggests that Western Christianity must either adapt into something different that can function within an Eastern cultural context, or else leave countries such as Japan to their own devices and religious traditions. Both the Japanese officials and Ferreira liken Japan to a swamp and Christianity to a sapling planted there. The sapling might last for a few years but its roots will soon rot and the tree will die; it is planted in soil that does not suit it, arguing that Christianity is simply rooted in beliefs and assumptions that Japan does not share with the West. However, as Rodrigues weakly points out, there is the slight possibility that Christianity may take root in Japan, though it seems this could only happen if it were radically adapted and altered, which would be difficult given the missionaries' dogmatic stance. The suggestion that Western Christianity is incompatible with Japan's Eastern beliefs—which strongly contradicts the idea of Christianity being universally true for all people—is particularly poignant given that Endō himself is a Japanese Roman Catholic. That he writes from the experience of an individual caught between opposing cultural and religious forces suggests that the difficult conflict of the novel between Christianity and Japan reflects his own internal conflicts between his ethnic heritage and his religious beliefs.

Endō's novel is neither overwhelmingly critical nor optimistic of Christianity's attempts to take root in Japan, but instead highlights the clash of culture and worldview that makes such a prospect, though perhaps desirable on its surface, seem nearly impossible.

PERSECUTION

Rodrigues, a Portuguese priest illegally working in Japan, initially imagines that the Japanese persecute Christianity out of a sense of religious animosity or hatred—and must themselves be monstrous or evil people. But he discovers that the Japanese officials are ordinary men, the same as himself, and that their motivation for eradicating Christianity are primarily political. Through this realization, Endō suggests that religious persecution, though still brutal, may be as much a pragmatic issue as an ideological one.

Rodrigues, Garrpe, and the Roman Catholic Church imagine that the Japanese magistrate Inoue, the "architect of Christian persecution," is a demon or a devil, demonstrating their initial belief that the forces that oppose Christianity must necessarily be evil and hateful. Before Rodrigues and Garrpe arrive in Japan, one of their superiors tries to dissuade them from going, telling them of the newly-appointed Inoue, the "terror for the Christians" who makes his brutal predecessors seem paltry in comparison with his own "savagery" and cunning. Inoue has built his reputation on his ability to break even stalwart Christians who were once immune to torture and threats of death. Rodrigues and Garrpe memorize Inoue's name, and he becomes a devilish figure in their imaginations. During the first persecutions that Rodrigues witnesses, Christian villagers are commanded to apostatize and "spit on the crucifix and declare that the Blessed Virgin [Mary] was a whore." If they will not, other villagers will be seized, forced under the same trial, and even executed, though if they will disgrace Christianity, the officials will leave their people alone for a time. When Rodrigues realizes that such a grotesque scheme was devised by Inoue, it confirms the man—whom he has never met—as an evil, hellish figure in Rodrigues's mind, suggesting that his persecution is enacted out of a sheer hatred of Christianity and Jesus Christ himself.

However, Inoue, though his policies are brutal, is oddly kind and even compassionate, which contradicts Rodrigues' expectations of a devilish figure and suggests that those who persecute others may themselves be rather ordinary people, not evil incarnate as was once believed. When Rodrigues is captured by the Japanese government, he is interviewed by several officials, one of whom is a portly old man with large ears and a gentle manner who discusses Christianity with him and reassures the defensive priest that the officials will not punish any missionaries "without reason." When Rodrigues learns that this mild man is Inoue, he is taken aback, feeling that this "understanding, seemingly good, meek man" has "utterly betrayed all his expectations." Rather than the devil Rodrigues imagined Inoue to be, he instead finds him to be a decent man, suggesting that even those who enact religious persecution

may themselves be ordinary, even kind, people. The contradictory nature of Inoue's policies and his character are even reflected in the manner in which he oppresses Christians. Several times, after torturing peasants to push them to apostatize, Inoue's men order for a doctor to care for their torture injuries and fires to be built so the victims can warm themselves. When Christians are pained by the idea of apostatizing and placing their foot upon **Christ's face**, Inoue and his men reassure them, "I'm not telling you to trample with sincerity and conviction. This is only a formality. Just putting your foot on the thing won't hurt your convictions," hoping to ease their conscience so they can end their own suffering. They let imprisoned Christians continue their prayers, sacraments, and even allow for Christian burials of the executed, rather than burning the bodies as Buddhists do. While Inoue and his agents certainly oppress Christians, their motivation does not seem to be devilish animosity or sadistic glee, further suggesting that they themselves are not the embodiment of evil Rodrigues once supposed.

Inoue's conversations with Rodrigues suggest that the ruthless persecution of Christianity he orchestrates is not based in religious animosity, but national interests, which demonstrates that religious persecution may not be a matter of good versus evil or even one religion versus another, but rather an understandable fight to maintain one's own culture and sovereignty. Inoue gently explains that he has "never thought of Christianity as an evil religion" but opposes the leverage its presence gives Holland, England, Spain and Portugal in Japan, since foreign missionaries tend to try to turn the Japanese people against the priests from other countries and expand their own countries' influence. When Inoue slyly draws the parallel of one husband (Japan) plagued by four jealous mistresses (Holland, England, Spain and Portugal), Rodrigues agrees that perhaps the man would be better off alone before he realizes he has just agreed with Inoue's argument. Inoue thus considers Christianity's aggressive missionary work as "the forcing of love upon someone" or the unwanted but "persistent love of an ugly woman," casting Christianity as a force which doggedly thrusts itself at Japan, even when Japan does not want it. Inoue's arguments imply that, rather than fearing the spread of a religion, he fears the loss of Japan's sovereignty and identity, that it may be threatened by the foreign influence established by the missionaries. In light of the colonization of various other countries by European powers, often beginning with the arrival of Christian missionaries, Inoue's fear seems very reasonable. Although the story's protagonist, Rodrigues, is Christian and its antagonist (Inoue) is Buddhist, Endō depicts the oppressive conflict between them as political, rather than religious, and draws the reader to be sympathetic to both parties, creating a difficult but well-nuanced dilemma that questions both the righteousness of evangelization and the evilness of religious persecution. However, by emphasizing Inoue's brutality, Endō delivers no simple answers.

As a Japanese Christian, Endō seems sympathetic to both sides of the conflict in his novel, caught between his desire to see Christianity carried onward as well as his desire to protect Japan's cultural heritage and national sovereignty, resulting in a far more balanced depiction of religious persecution and Christian suffrage than is usually seen.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE SEA

The sea is often used to symbolize Rodrigues's perception of God, particularly in its silence, its "unchanging expressions" and the destruction it can wreak. When God fails to speak to Rodrigues in midst of his suffering or intervene to protect the tormented Christian martyrs in Tomogi, Rodrigues remarks, "like the sea, God was silent." Although Rodrigues believes that God brought he and Garrpe to Japan (bearing them across the sea), he is confused and disturbed by God's apparent apathy towards their struggle, just as the sea itself seems unmoved and disinterested. When Mokichi and Ichizo are tortured and their remains swallowed up by the sea, the implication is that God, in his refusal to intervene or put an end to their suffering, bears some level of responsibility for it. In the same way, when Garrpe himself drowns while trying to reach the drowning Christians who were executed for his sake, Garrpe is killed by his devotion to a God who seemingly would not reach out to help him or save his people. In this sense, the sea represents Rodrigues's perception of God as all-powerful, senselessly destructive, and ultimately apathetic toward human beings.

CHRIST'S FACE

Rodrigues's changing perception of Christ's face represents his perception of Christ as both a persecuted human figure and as his Lord. When Rodrigues is naïve, convinced of the purity of his mission to Japan and yet unhindered by doubt or despair, he imagines that Christ's face is the most beautiful face ever beheld, as beautiful as a lover's face gazing at their beloved. However, as Rodrigues suffers and witnesses suffering, as his faith becomes less idealistic, his perception of Christ shifts to viewing Christ primarily as one who is alone, one who feels fear and even despair, abandoned by God; consequently, he pictures Christ face not as beautiful but as distant and concerned, sweating blood with fear. When Rodrigues is about to commit apostasy and trample on the fumie, Christ speaks to him as one who entered the world to

suffer, who brought himself low to be trampled on by men and bear their pain alongside him. Thus, the image of Christ's face that Rodrigues sees in the fumie is hollowed, dirty, and worn-out from being trampled on by so many feet over the years. Although Christ is no less meaningful to Rodrigues, he imagines his face not as beautiful but as aged and worn as the subject of abuse and betrayal, a parallel to Rodrigues's own persecution and ongoing struggle with faith as a Portuguese Catholic missionary in Japan.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Picador edition of *Silence* published in 2016.

Prologue Quotes

"Their plan was to make their way into Japan in the throes of persecution in order to carry on an underground missionary apostolate and to atone for the apostasy of Ferreira which had so wounded the honor of the Church.

Related Characters: Juan de Santa Marta, Francisco Garrpe, Sebastien Rodrigues, Christovao Ferreira / Sawano Chuan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

The priests formulate their mission into Japan after word reaches the Portuguese Catholic Church that Father Ferreira, a great leader in the missionary movement, has apostatized. Significantly, there is no mention of saving or rescuing Ferreira, only covering for the shame the Church feels over his betrayal. The priests' desire to "atone" for the embarrassment that Ferreira has brought upon the Church reveals that the Church has a great deal of institutional pride; it values its reputation highly and seeks to defend it. Such institutional pride, even arrogance, informs the religious arrogance that Father Rodrigues personally carries within himself, which mars the purity of his self-sacrificing mission. Although it appears to be a personal defect—and though it is not particularly evident in Father Garrpe—this observation suggests that such pride and arrogance, such a desire to leave a glorious legacy and be remembered well, is in fact endemic to the institution of the Church as a whole, and thus likely plagues every priest in some form.

Chapter 1 Quotes

"In that stricken land the Christians have lost their priests and are like a flock of sheep without a shepherd. Someone must go to give them courage and to ensure that the tiny flame of faith does not die out."

Related Characters: Juan de Santa Marta (speaker), Francisco Garrpe, Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Page Number: 12

Explanation and Analysis

As the three priests make their case to their superiors for entry into Japan, Santa Marta observes that there are no priests in Japan, and the Christians must therefore be lost. This belief that the Portuguese priests are all that stand between the Japanese Christians and the loss of their faith once again suggests a great deal of self-importance and arrogance in the priests' minds, even though it is mixed with notions of service and self-sacrifice. Perhaps more sinister, however, is the notion that the Japanese Christians cannot possibly endure without the guidance of Western priests, which establishes a form of racial dependence on the foreign Europeans, and which undoubtedly gives rise to feelings of superiority for the Portuguese. Under a Catholic system, where priests mediate between God and the everyday Christians, such a dependence seems almost unavoidable. However, such an issue could easily be solved by training Japanese priests as well, which would allow the Japanese Christians to be independent of their need for Portugal, but would consequently also reduce the leverage and influence of Portuguese missionaries. In light of the novel as a whole, it is not hard to believe that the Portuguese Church would be resist giving up such power and influence—there is even a brief mention of a Portuguese priest who refuses to allow any Japanese individual hold office as a priest or Christian leader, which speaks to both religious arrogance and greater systemic issues of prejudice within the Church.

"Every day we keep praying that [Santa Marta's] health may be restored as soon as possible. But he makes no progress. Yet God bestows upon man a better fate than human knowledge could possibly think of or devise [...] Perhaps God in his omnipotence will make all things well.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker),

Francisco Garrpe, Juan de Santa Marta

Related Themes:

Page Number: 18

Explanation and Analysis

While the priests are in China, making preparations, Santa Marta falls ill with malaria, and Rodrigues and Garrpe put their faith in God's provision and trust that He is in control. Santa Marta plays very little role in the story overall, existing mainly in these early chapters to give Rodrigues the opportunity to profess his faith in God's all-powerful benevolence. As he states, at this point in the story, Rodrigues's trust in God is unflinching, and even when things do not go well, he assumes that God is carefully orchestrating all events for the greatest possible good. Such faith is important to note, as it establishes the baseline from which Rodrigues's character will develop as his concept of God's control and benevolence change, particularly as seemingly meaningless suffering shakes his faith. In this passage, before his faith is truly tested by the cruelty of the world and God's refusal to intervene, Rodrigues's faith seems optimistic to the point of naiveté, which makes his later development all the more powerful and tragic, though it ultimately seems a maturation of his faith.

❝ You know well that the early Christians thought of Christ as a shepherd [...] And then in the Eastern Church one finds the long nose, the curly hair, the black bear. All this was creating an oriental Christ. As for the medieval artists, many of them painted a face of Christ resplendent with the authority of a king.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

Before their departure to Japan, Rodrigues reflects on the various portrayals of Christ's face across cultures and history. Though the image of Christ's face functions as a symbol to represent Rodrigues's changing perception of the person of Christ, Rodrigues's early recognition that various cultures have viewed Christ in a variety of ways foreshadows his eventual realization that Christ exists differently in Japan than in Portugal, seeming an object of silent suffering rather than resplendent and beautiful as Rodrigues had once believed. Although Christ's face still appears beautiful and entrancing to the priest, his reflection that Christ has been perceived as variously a humble shepherd or a powerful king alludes to the fact that Christ seems to be different things to different people, and has certainly been utilized for different—even conflicting—goals. Christ as a shepherd suggests that he is a gentle keeper and leader of his followers; Christ as a powerful king suggests that he is not only a ruler but a conqueror, perhaps even invader. To the outsider, then, Christ and Christianity may not be a universal bastion of hope and glory, but a threatening figure, an object of fear.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ Never have I felt so deeply how meaningful is the life of a priest. These Japanese Christians are like a ship lost in a storm without a chart. I see them without a single priest or brother to encourage and console, gradually losing hope and wandering bewildered in the darkness.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker), Francisco Garrpe

Related Themes:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

After Rodrigues and Garrpe have been hiding in Tomogi for some time, operating as priests only under the cover of nightfall, Rodrigues feels that his life is more meaningful and significant than it has ever been. Rodrigues's felt significance suggests that, along with the self-sacrificing desire to serve, he is also compelled by the desire to live a meaningful life of purpose and value. While this in itself is not a terrible thing, it leads the priest to an inflated sense of self-importance and thus arrogance. Rodrigues envisions himself as immensely important to Japan, like a ship captain responsible for the souls of all of the villagers. By contrast, Rodrigues often observes that the villagers live "like beasts" and that their lives seem mundane and nearly futile. The disparity between Rodrigues's concept of himself and his perception of the Japanese Christians reveals a terribly inflated ego and sense of self-importance, even at the expense of the people around him whom he is supposed to help. While this arrogance is intertwined with his desire to serve the Japanese Christians, even at the cost of suffering

and death, it is also rooted in his desire to live a meaningful, purposeful life, even if that sense of meaningfulness leads him to regard himself as more important and significant than the people he hopes to serve.

These people who work and live and die like beasts find for the first time in our teaching a path in which they can cast away the fetters that bind them. The Buddhist bonzes [monks] simply treat them like cattle. For a long time they have lived in resignation to such a fate.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 44

Explanation and Analysis

Rodrigues reflects upon the value of Christianity for the Japanese peasants, arguing that it provides a beacon of hope amidst a hopeless existence. Although, yet again, Rodrigues displays his sense of arrogant superiority and his disregard for the Japanese peasants, he does make a noteworthy point. Under Japan's feudal system, the peasants suffer and are utterly disregarded by their governors. Though Christianity ultimately increases their physical suffering on Earth, it provides a hope in future liberation in the afterlife, a hope that is not offered by Buddhism. The argument that Christianity offers something to the Japanese peasants that Buddhism does not is ultimately an argument of utility; regardless of its truth, Christianity offers a benefit to Japan. This argument for Christianity's utility is important to establish early on, since the latter half of the novel will pitch several arguments against Christianity's value for Japan. By presenting both sides of the argument in turn, the author offers a nuanced—though inconclusive—conversation around whether such a Western religion as Christianity has any place in an Eastern culture such as Japan, or whether it is ultimately an unwelcome, foreign disturbance and a tool for European countries to establish presence and leverage in a sovereign nation.

Chapter 4 Quotes

This was the splendid martyrdom I had often seen in my dreams. But the martyrdom of the Japanese Christians I now describe to you was no such glorious thing. What a miserable painful business it was! The rain falls unceasingly on the sea. And the sea which willed them surges on uncannily—in silence.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker), Ichizo, Mokichi

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 62

Explanation and Analysis

Rodrigues watches Ichizo and Mokichi be tortured to death, as they are slowly drowned over a period of several days and their ashes tossed into the sea. During this horrific episode, Rodrigues reflects that these martyrs' deaths do not meet his glorious expectations of what martyrdom ought to look like. Rodrigues has long fantasized about being martyred, imagining it as the most glorious end for a Christian to meet, which ultimately rises once more from his own sense of arrogance and self-importance. Mokichi and Ichizo's deaths, however, begin to challenge such fantasies of glory, marking an important milestone in Rodrigues's character development. Rather than glorious, Rodrigues begins to recognize death and torture—even for the sake of faith—for what they are: inglorious, grotesque, and miserable. Although this realization feels cynical on one hand, it also represents Rodrigues's maturation. He is forced to let go of his childish fantasies and reckon with the world's cruelty as it truly is.

The sea often represents God to Rodrigues, reflecting his view of God's presence, his silence, or his fury. It is thus significant that it is the sea which kills the two Japanese Christians, and not the active hand or sword of a Japanese official. The sea killed Mokichi and Ichizo with seeming difference, not malice or anguish, suggesting that God seems indifferent to Rodrigues, unmoved by the sacrifice two men have just made on his behalf.

I called out to the young man at the oars, asking him for water; but he made no answer. I began to understand that ever since that martyrdom, the people of Tomogi regarded me as a foreigner who had brought disaster to them all—a terrible burden to them.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 65

Explanation and Analysis

While Rodrigues is fleeing Tomogi, he realizes that he has become a danger to the Japanese Christians, rather than a blessing. The ethical dilemma of whether it is right for the priests to remain in Japan, even though their presence is a danger to the Japanese Christians, becomes a central conflict of the story. Particularly, this ethical conflict challenges Rodrigues's arrogant notion of himself as a meaningful figure, a sort of savior to Japan. On the one hand, Rodrigues is one of the last few foreign priests alive in Japan, although many Japanese Christians wish to have access to such a priest. On the other hand, Rodrigues's presence seems to have caused at least as much pain and death to those Christians as it has been a benefit. Even for Rodrigues, who tends to regard himself as more valuable than an individual Japanese peasant, the ethical conflict forces him to decide if his loyalty to Christianity and his presence in Japan is worth the suffering and deaths of numerous Japanese people. And if so, how many? Such an ethical conflict lays the priests' arrogance bare, even as it poses ethical questions that seem nearly unanswerable.

> No! No! I shook my head. If God does not exist, how can man endure the monotony of the sea and its cruel lack of emotion? […] From the deepest core of my being yet another voice made itself heard in a whisper. Supposing God does not exist…
>
> This was a frightening fancy. If he does not exist, how absurd the whole thing becomes.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker)

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 72

Explanation and Analysis

As Rodrigues continues his flight from the Japanese officials, God's pervasive silence in the face of suffering causes the priest to question His very existence. Rodrigues's confusion as to how God could be silent even after so many people have suffered and died for Him touches upon the ancient question of evil itself: if God is all-powerful, why does He allow evil things to happen? And yet, if God does not exist, the dilemma of evil and suffering does not seem easier to contend with, but worse. If God exists but lets his people suffer, although He may seem cruel or unloving, at least the suffering may arguably have some purpose, even if hidden or negligible. If God does not exist at all, although it would relieve the dilemma of God's indifference, all of the suffering and bloodshed suffered by hundreds of thousands of Christians in Japan (not to mention throughout the history of the world) is utterly meaningless, a masochistic nightmare of voluntary suffering for suffering's sake alone. Either conclusion seems horrific, nearly untenable, but at least by maintaining his own belief in God to some degree, the priest does not lose the single thing that has directed his life and shaped his identity.

> This story was well known. Its moral was that a priest does not exist to become a martyr; he must preserve his life in order that the flame of faith may not utterly die when the church is persecuted.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker), Kichijiro

Page Number: 77

Explanation and Analysis

Rodrigues is deciding whether or not to expose himself to a newfound village—if they are Christian, they will accept him; if they are not, they will likely kill or capture him. He recounts the story of a priest in hiding who voluntarily gave himself up for execution, but in doing so endangered the lives of other Christians. The argument that a priest should survive if possible is an important recognition for Rodrigues, who dreams of a glorious martyrdom for himself. Beyond speaking to the priest's own arrogance, however, it also foreshadows Rodrigues's future choice of whether he will apostatize. Rodrigues will come to face the choice of apostatizing to save his own life and the lives of many Japanese Christians, or remaining loyal unto death, even though that also means the death of many Japanese peasants. When Rodrigues eventually apostatizes rather than choosing death, he preserves himself as the "last priest" in Japan, maintaining his own secret devotion to God and even offering absolution to Kichijiro in the final scene. Although Rodrigues's decision shames and haunts him, he does ultimately preserve the Christian faith in Japan, even if it is just between himself and Kichijiro.

If it is not blasphemous to say so, I have the feeling that Judas was no more than an unfortunate puppet for the glory of the drama which was the life and death of Christ.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker), Kichijiro

Related Themes:

Page Number: 80

Explanation and Analysis

Suspecting that Kichijiro has betrayed him in the past and will do so again, Rodrigues reflects on their relationship through the lens of Jesus Christ's relationship with Judas Iscariot, His betrayer. Even early on, when Rodrigues's eventual apostasy is a long way off, the priest already sympathizes with Judas's painful role within the Gospel story, seeming to be a powerless player, doomed from the beginning. Rodrigues's contemplation of Judas's powerlessness is apt on two levels. Kichijiro, whom the priest recognizes is a weak man, will betray him again out of his weakness before the Japanese officials, creating an explicit parallel to Judas's betrayal of Christ. Ironically, however, and unforeseen by Rodrigues, he too will apostatize and commit the same act of betrayal, making a Judas-figure of himself as well. Thus, when Rodrigues considers the cowardice and treachery of Kichijiro in light of Judas's role in the Gospel, this is also an unwitting reflection on his own future act of betrayal. It may be that Rodrigues senses this on some subconscious level, and his sympathy towards both Judas and Kichijiro also becomes sympathy for his own powerlessness and ultimate weakness.

Chapter 5 Quotes

All those Christians and missionaries who had been tortured and punished—had they heard the gentle voice of persuasion prior to their suffering?

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Page Number: 89

Explanation and Analysis

After Japanese officials capture Rodrigues in the forest, he finds that rather than fear, he feels a strange tranquility about the whole thing; the Japanese officials do not seem furious or evil, but rather gently try to convince the captured Christians to apostatize. Once again, Rodrigues's expectations of suffering for Christ and the type of people who would inflict such religious persecution are unmet. While one might expect such capture to be a fearful or exciting event and one's persecutors to be ferocious, Rodrigues's captors are regular people who speak gently. The ordinary, almost placid nature of Rodrigues's captors suggests that those who inflict religious persecution may not be monstrous or hateful, but driven by pragmatic goals rather than ideological animosity. Rather than paint the antagonists as monstrous or evil individuals, the author pointedly chooses to depict them as ordinary, often kind people, once again highlighting the nuance of the conflict between Christianity and Buddhist Japan. He refuses to typecast it so easily as a conflict between good and evil as is often found in religious stories.

Chapter 6 Quotes

"Father, we are not disputing about the right and wrong of your doctrine. In Spain and Portugal and such countries it may be true. The reason that we have outlawed Christianity in Japan is that, after deep and earnest consideration, we find its teachings of no value for the Japan of today."

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Page Number: 116

Explanation and Analysis

During Rodrigues's first trial, one of the unnamed Japanese officials expresses that their opposition to Christianity is not primarily religious, but practical. They do not see any value for Japan in the religion. In this introduction to the argument against Christianity in Japan, the official's remarks touch on two major points. First, the idea that such a religion could be "true" in Spain and Portugal, but not Japan, conflicts with Western Christianity's presupposed belief that truth is universal: if a thing is true in one country, it must be true in all countries. This conflict of fundamental ideas of truth alludes to the possibility that Western Christianity is utterly incompatible with Japan's Eastern culture; they each rest upon different propositions and views of reality. Second, the presence of Western Christianity in Japan, which comes at the cost of foreign missionaries and thus foreign influence, provides no discernable benefit to Japan's welfare as a country. It is worth noting, however, that this claim of Christianity being without benefit come from a wealthy official, who does not

share the oppressed lifestyle of the Japanese peasants—amongst whom Christianity is widespread—and thus has no need for the hope of a future paradise that it offers.

Stupefied, [Rodrigues] gazed at the old man [Inoue] who, naïve as a child, returned his gaze still rubbing his hands. How could he have recognized one who so utterly betrayed all his expectations? The man whom Valignano had called a devil, who had made the missionaries apostatize one by one—until now he had envisaged the face of this man as pale and crafty. But here before his very eyes sat this understanding, seemingly good, meek man.

Related Characters: Valignano , Inoue, Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

During his first cross-examination, Rodrigues is shocked to discover that Inoue is not a monstrous embodiment of evil as he had once supposed, but a portly old man with big ears and a gentle voice. The image of Inoue Rodrigues had formed in his head is typical of the way that human beings tend to vilify or demonize their opponents particularly when such an opponent has a reputation for brutality and oversees a fierce religious persecution campaign. However, by depicting Inoue as a kind, almost grandfatherly figure, the author denies the notion that one who persecutes others must be wholly evil, monstrous, or hateful. Inoue's mixture of gentle meekness mixed with brutality bears the same nuanced complexity of Rodrigues's mixture of self-sacrificing virtue and religious arrogance. More importantly, Inoue's sympathetic nature helps the reader to understand that religious persecution, though terrible and brutal just the same, does not necessarily arise from animosity or hatred, but may be based on more practical motivations. By extension, one's opposition to Christianity may not necessarily be religious, but may in fact have more to do with culture of national interests than in ideological supremacy.

On the day of my death, too, will the world go relentlessly on its way, indifferent just as now? After I am murdered, will the cicadas sing and the flies whirl their wings inducing sleep? Do I want to be as heroic as that? And yet, am I looking for the true hidden martyrdom or just for a glorious death? Is that I want to be honored, to be prayed to, to be called a saint?

Related Characters: The One-Eyed Man, Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Page Number: 128

Explanation and Analysis

After Rodrigues sees the one-eyed man suddenly beheaded by a Japanese official, he is disturbed not only by the casual murder, but also how unchanged the world seems by his death. Rodrigues's moment of self-awareness is revealing, indicating that his desire to suffer for the faith and be martyred is motivated at least in part by his desire for self-glorification, rather than God's glory. This once again illustrates the manner in which self-serving arrogance may be intertwined with the desire to serve God and live a virtuous, purposeful life. At the same time, Rodrigues's recognition that the world is unaffected by the one-eyed man's death implies that he is suddenly fearfully aware of his own powerlessness and insignificance. Where once he had believed a martyr's death must leave some significance behind, some mark upon the world, Rodrigues is struck by the sudden and poignant awareness that he is insignificant. To Rodrigues, it seems that the world at large—and presumably God, by extension—is not concerned with whether he lives or dies. Awareness of the world's ambivalence and one's own powerlessness is a frightening realization for any individual, and for the priest only makes God seem more distant and apathetic.

Chapter 7 Quotes

"You look upon missionary work as the forcing of love upon someone?"

"Yes, that's what it is—from our standpoint."

Related Characters: Inoue, Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 131

Explanation and Analysis

While Rodrigues and Inoue discuss the ethics of Christian missionary work, Inoue equates the missionary's proselytism to the "persistent love of an ugly woman," or unwanted affection thrust upon another person. Inoue's challenge against evangelism or proselytism is a challenge to one of the fundamental principles of Christianity: that it must be spread to everyone. Rodrigues's surprise at this assertion suggests that he has taken such proselytism for granted as a task one must naturally perform, which again highlights a marked difference between Eastern and Western culture. As Rodrigues previously states, Western culture tends to think of truth as a universal ideal. If a religion, for instance, is true in one culture, then it must be true in every culture. Eastern culture, as explained by Inoue and the other officials, does not hold this same ideal. Thus, from a Western perspective, Rodrigues is only trying to give the truth to all people, since in his mind all people should be beholden to a single truth, which he believes is Christianity. Inoue, from his Eastern perspective, sees this as unnecessary, since what is true for Portugal does not need to be true for Japan. From an Eastern perspective then, Western Christianity's emphasis on proselytism and missionary work does not seem benevolent and loving, and but needlessly invasive.

> He had come to this country to lay down his life for other men, but instead of that, the Japanese were laying down their lives one by one for him.

Related Characters: Francisco Garrpe, Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Page Number: 142

Explanation and Analysis

Rodrigues watches from a distance as Garrpe, by refusing to apostatize, condemns several Japanese Christians to their deaths, even though they themselves already apostatized. Rodrigues is horrified—not only to see Japanese Christians die, but also to realize that he is in the same position. Beyond being a horrifying proposition in itself, Rodrigues causing the deaths of other people for the sake of his faith completely subverts his desire to experience noble suffering and even a martyr's death for the sake of the Japanese Christians. In his arrogance, Rodrigues visualizes himself as Christ, and aspires to be as close to Christ as he possibly can. However, the most defining aspect of Christ's life is that He gave it up for other people, that He voluntarily suffered and died as an act of love. By refusing Rodrigues the opportunity to die for others and instead forcing others to die on Rodrigues's behalf, the Japanese officials destroy any concept Rodrigues once held of noble suffering or a martyr's glory. The priest does not resemble Christ, but a gross inversion of Christ's suffering and sacrifice.

> Yes, crouching on the ashen earth of Gethsemane that had imbibed all the heat of the day, alone and separated from his sleeping disciples, a man had said: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." And his sweat became like drops of blood. This was the face that was no before [Rodrigues's] eyes. Hundreds and hundreds of times it had appeared in his dreams; but why was that only now did the suffering, perspiring face seem so far away? Yet tonight he focused all his attention on the emaciated expression on those cheeks."

Related Characters: Francisco Garrpe, Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 147

Explanation and Analysis

Rodrigues, haunted by the image of Garrpe and the Japanese Christians sinking beneath the waves, imagines Christ's face once again, but this time it seems worn, frightened, and sorrowful. This depiction of Christ's face marks a major transition for Rodrigues, who spends most of the novel imagining Christ's face as the most beautiful face that has ever existed. The transformation of Christ's face into one of suffering and fear reflects Rodrigues's perception of Christ, as well as of himself. He no longer longs for his own glorious death; he recognizes it as a vain and self-serving goal. Thus, he no longer sees Christ as the glorious martyr or the beautiful figure he himself aspires to be, but as a man who is alone, afraid, and in pain. It is telling that in this visualization of Christ the man, which seems if anything more realistic and less idealized, Rodrigues sees him from far away. This suggests that the priest's love and feeling of nearness with Christ was founded in part on his own desire for glory and grandeur. Now that those hopes have fallen apart, the Christ who suffers painfully, shamefully, and realistically feels distant and less relatable,

since it is not an ideal that Rodrigues has ever aspired to match.

"[Ferreira's] translating books of astronomy and medicine; he's helping the sick; he's working for other people. Think of this too: as the old bonze [monk] keeps reminding Chuan, the path of mercy means simply that you abandon self. Nobody should worry about getting others into his religious sect."

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues, Christovao Ferreira / Sawano Chuan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 156

Explanation and Analysis

When Rodrigues finally meets Ferreira, he discovers that Ferreira truly is an apostate, living in Nagasaki and translating texts for the Japanese government. An accompanying monk helps the disgraced former-priest make his case. The assertion that Ferreira is of more use as a Japanese apostate than he was as a Portuguese missionary adds yet another element to the discussion around whether Christianity ought to have any place in Japan, positing that all the labors of the priests could perhaps be better spent elsewhere. Although Rodrigues never agrees to this proposition, the fact that it is included once again displays the author's commitment to developing a nuanced discussion around the issue. Moreover, by arguing that true mercy only requires one to abandon the self and not to adhere to one religion over another—though this contradicts the Western concept of truth—the monk essentially argues that the utility of Buddhism and Christianity are effectively the same. Both religions direct their followers to become selfless in order to serve others, either because of their devotion to God or their religious meditations. If this is the case, then there is no particular need for Christianity in Japan, since Buddhism can accomplish the same goal.

Chapter 8 Quotes

This guard did not possess any aristocratic cruelty; rather was it the cruelty of a low-class fellow toward beasts and animals weaker than himself. [Rodrigues] had seen such fellows in the countryside in Portugal, and he knew them well. This fellow had not the slightest idea of the suffering that would be inflicted on others because of his conduct. It was this kind of fellow who had killed that man whose face was the best and most beautiful than ever one could dream of.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 176

Explanation and Analysis

After meeting with Ferreira and being returned to prison, Rodrigues knows that he his favorable treatment will end and he will soon be tortured or killed. Even so, he looks at one of the guards outside of his cell and reflects on the man's nature. In his recognition that the guard does not understand the suffering he inflicts, Rodrigues effectively absolves the man of guilt in his own mind, even if that man should cause him pain. Although the priest has struggled against his own arrogance throughout the novel, the humility of such a stance suggests that, through his experience of suffering and imprisonment, some aspects of his character are developing positively as well. Even down to the individual guards, Rodrigues recognizes that just because such a man may bring pain and persecution to others, that does not mean that his heart is beset with cruelty or malice. He is more than likely an ordinary man acting within his place in the world. The fact that Rodrigues recognizes that even those who tortured and murdered Christ were likely the same sort of men—simple and unaware of what they truly did—suggests that his sense of compassion towards even those who inflict pain or murder Christians has grown, understanding as he does that they are acting in the way they believe that they should.

"You make yourself more important than them. You are preoccupied with your own salvation. If you say that you will apostatize, those people will be taken out of the pit. This will be saved from suffering. And you refuse to do so. It's because you dread to betray the Church. You dread to be the dregs of the Church, like me."

Related Characters: Christovao Ferreira / Sawano Chuan (speaker), Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Page Number: 181

Explanation and Analysis

Ferreira makes his final appeal to Rodrigues to apostatize. Outside of Rodrigues's cell, both men can hear the moans of Japanese Christians being tortured for Rodrigues's refusal to apostatize. Ferreira's condemnation of Rodrigues's faithfulness reveals that, although Rodrigues is trying to be loyal to Christ, his refusal to break is also rooted in his own arrogance. Rodrigues does not want to smear his own name. He does not want to be despised rather than venerated, nor does he want to betray his God. even if it means that other people must suffer and die. The religious arrogance that has plagued Rodrigues throughout the novel finally shows its destructive potential by convincing Rodrigues that his own salvation or spiritual state matters more than the suffering of the Japanese Christians he'd meant to serve. This dilemma powerfully suggests that in spite of all Rodrigues's religious virtue and self-sacrificing ideals, the arrogance intertwined with his religious beliefs is ultimately a great danger to the people around him, making him a greater liability than he is a blessing. The stubborn faithfulness that rises out of that arrogance thus seems vain and harmful, rather than admirable or saintly.

❝ [Rodrigues] will now trample what he has considered the most beautiful thing in his life, on what he has believed most pure, on what is filled with the ideals and the dreams of man. How his foot aches! And then the Christ in bronze speaks to the priest: "Trample! Trample! I more than anyone know of the pain in your foot. Trample! It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It was to share men's pain that I carried my cross."

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Page Number: 183

Explanation and Analysis

Rodrigues, broken by the tortured Christians' moaning, finally agrees to apostatize to put an end to their pain. For Rodrigues, this moment represents a betrayal of everything he has ever believed, every ideal he has ever about serving God. However, Christ speaking from the fumie suggests that even such a betrayal is covered by God's grace. Although it is certainly a betrayal of the Catholic Church and institutional Christianity, it does not remove one from the reach of Christ's mercy and power. Although this is something of a radical notion and contradicts the orthodox view of apostasy, the idea that Christ's mercy can even absolve the crime of apostasy seems to take a larger view of God's scope and power than arguing that to apostatize is to utterly and permanently reject God, as the mainline Church believes. As Rodrigues's own journey shows, there may be instances where one does not apostatize from a hatred towards God or even a lack of gratitude, but merely as the result of overwhelming circumstances that are beyond one's control. If God is truly powerful and loving, Rodrigues's life suggests that such a God should be able to redeem an individual from such painful circumstances as well.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ Yet the face was different from that on which the priest had gazed so often in Portugal, in Rome, in Goa and in Macao. It was not a Christ whose face was filled with majesty and glory; neither was it a face made beautiful by endurance of pain; nor was it a face filled with the strength of a will that has repelled temptation. The face of the man who lay at his feet was sunken and utterly exhausted.

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 187

Explanation and Analysis

Rodrigues, now living in a house in Nagasaki as an agent of the Japanese government, thinks back to image of Christ's face on the fumie that he stepped on to symbolize his apostasy. He reflects on how different Christ's face was in that moment than in any other moment of his life. Throughout the novel, Christ's face functions to reflect Rodrigues's perception of Christ as a man, and as his Lord. This perception changes as Rodrigues faces adversity, and in this final reflection the entire scope of Rodrigues's changing perceptions of Christ's face is listed. When Rodrigues was naïve, Christ's face seemed beautiful and exultant, the image of power and glory that was unstoppable, uncontainable, unmarked by suffering. As

Rodrigues experiences his own suffering and witnesses much more, he begins to perceive Christ as one who is beautiful not for his majesty, but for his perseverance of suffering and pain, finding that he can relate more to this concept of Christ. Now that Rodrigues's faith has essentially been defeated, though the core of the belief still remains, the last picture of Christ's face is pointedly still alive, but "sunken and utterly exhausted." This reflects that although Christianity has tried to take root in Japan and its followers have struggled through blood and sweat to establish the religion, they have ultimately been defeated, forced into hiding, or crushed into oblivion, unable to thrive.

Chapter 10 Quotes

"Lord, I resented your silence."

"I was not silent. I suffered beside you."

"But you told Judas to go away: What thou dost do quickly. What happened to Judas?"

"I did not say that. Just as I told you to step on the plaque, so I told Judas to do what he was going to do. For Judas was in anguish as you are now."

Related Characters: Sebastien Rodrigues (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 203

Explanation and Analysis

While Rodrigues lives in Nagasaki and continues to reflect on his apostasy betrayal of the Church, he remembers Christ speaking to him from the fumie, and imagines that he hears God's voice yet again and converses with him. That Rodrigues hears God speak at all is a major step in his own journey of faith, since God has seemed silent through so many months of endless suffering. The proposition that God is not silent, but suffering alongside his followers, is a powerful idea—particularly for those who feel they have known nothing but suffering for their entire lives. This concept of a God who suffers in solidarity with his people sets Christianity apart from Buddhism, in spite of the overlapping altruism and self-sacrifice that exist in both religions. The presence of such a suffering God, who will even willingly suffer betrayal from his followers to ease their pain, explains in part why so many of Japan's poorest people flocked to Christianity and were willing to suffer and die for it, even if they did not understand it in the way that the Portuguese missionaries intended.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PROLOGUE

The Roman Catholic Church receives word that Father Christovao Ferreira was tortured in "the pit" and made to apostatize (renounce his faith) in Nagasaki, Japan. Ferreira was a highly-regarded Portuguese missionary, having led the Christian movement in Japan for over 20 years, so his betrayal to the faith shocks the Church. Christians and missionaries have been fiercely persecuted in Japan for several decades, however, since 1587 when it was outlawed. At this time, the government initiated a campaign of capture, torture, and death against the missionaries. In 1614, the reigning shogun (governor) ordered that all foreign missionaries must leave Japan. Seventy did, packed into boats and shipped to China or the Philippines, but 37 priests (including Ferreira) stayed in hiding to continue their work in Japan.

The prologue immediately establishes the dark tone of the novel and introduces nearly of the story's major themes: apostasy, faith, persecution, and the clash between a Western religion and an Eastern culture. The noted strength and commitment of Ferreira's faith—20 years of service in Japan, plus decades of service prior—lays to rest the overly-simplified notion that only those with weak faith could ever apostatize, while the strong remain faithful until death. This provides an early indication that the story will deal with the dilemma of faith and loyalty in a complex manner.

The Church possesses a letter Ferreira wrote in 1632 from Nagasaki, describing the courage of the Japanese Christians and the torture they endured. The Japanese government, intent on making Christians apostatize, tortured men and women alike pouring boiling water on them for hours at a time, though none apostatized. The Japanese agents were careful not to let any of them die, not wanting to make martyrs and heroes of them, and even sent a doctor to tend to their wounds. Even so, Ferreira writes that the courageous suffering of the Christians only spread the Christian message, "contrary to the intentions of the tyrant."

The Japanese government's brutality is immediately apparent, establishing the high stakes and suffering involved in such a religious conflict. However, even in this early moment, their brutality is mixed with a strange level of care for those they torture, since they also provide doctors to tend to the wounds they have just inflicted. This again indicates the complexity of the religious and political conflict the novel will tackle.

The Church struggles to understand how such a great leader as Ferreira could have been defeated. In 1637, three Portuguese young men, Ferreira's former students, begin preparing a trip into Japan. They plan to carry on the underground missionary work, as well as to investigate Ferreira's apostasy and "atone" for the humiliation it had brought not only Portugal, but all of Europe. They prepare themselves for the **sea** voyage, which will take them from Lisbon to India, and then on to Japan over a period of months. They learn anything they can about Japan itself, which to them seems a country on the edge of the world. In their reading on Japan, the three young men learn that under the current shogun, the government tortures as many as 70 people a day, and they must be ready to face suffering and even death.

The notion that the three young priests will risk suffering in death to atone for Ferreira's failure (and hopefully restore and defend the honor of the Catholic Church) suggests that the Church's reputation is just as important to it as the work that it undertakes. This implies a religious arrogance at an institutional level, which would thus logically filter down to the individual priests who make up that institution. Although the Church's goal to convert Japan is altruistic on its surface, and likely comprised at least partially of good intentions, there is also a notably self-serving element.

The three young priests are Sebastian Rodrigues, Juan de Santa Marta, and Francisco Garrpe, men in their late 20s who had entered the religious life together at 17 and studied theology under Ferreira. News of Ferreira's apostasy confuses them, since they'd always known him to be a "radiant" Christian, and they are intent on discovering the truth of what happened. The three set sail from Lisbon in 1938, but their voyage is plagued by disease, storms, and near-shipwreck, so they do not arrive in Goa, India for five months.

Although still only in the prologue, the young priests already suffer substantially, facing illness, danger, and even threat of death. Although only briefly mentioned, this early suffering and danger establishes the priests as bold and strong-willed, intent on carrying out their mission regardless of the risks.

In Goa, the three priests are able to find more recent news of Japan, including an "insurrection" of 35,000 Christians in the Shimabara region, which was violently put down by the government. Every Christian involved was slaughtered, and the region was decimated, with hardly any survivors in its midst. Suspecting that Portugal had some involvement in the insurrection, the Japanese government forbids all Portuguese ships and citizens from entering Japan. Feeling desperate, the priests travel on to Macao, China, where the Portuguese Christian Mission has its base of operations, and where they hope they might smuggle themselves into Japan somehow.

Once again, the slaughter of 35,000 of its own citizens casts the feudal Japanese government in a harsh, if not damning light. The fact that the Christians put forth a massive insurrection against their government suggests that although they are religiously-bonded, there is also a social and societal element to their resistance. This further indicates that the conflict of Christianity in Japan, though essentially religious, also reaches into the political and social spheres as well.

In Macao, the three priests meet Valignano, overseer of the Mission, who tells them that any missionary work in Japan is strictly forbidden, not the least because of a newly-appointed magistrate named Inoue, the Lord of Chikugo, the same magistrate who cross-examined Ferreira as a Christian and hung him in the pit. The story is picked up in Sebastien Rodrigues's letters, starting around the time they meet Valignano.

Inoue is immediately established as a villainous figure, since all that Rodrigues and the reader initially know of him is that he tortured a major character in the story, though this will later be seen as a shallow mischaracterization. This is important in exploring the nuance of persecution throughout the novel, and eventually demonstrating that religious persecutors may not always be so devilish as one may imagine.

CHAPTER 1

The narrative shifts to be told in the form of letters written by Sebastian Rodrigues. Juan de Santa Marta has fallen ill with malaria, though Rodrigues and Garrpe remain in good health and work at a missionary college in Macao. Valignano still refuses to send missionaries into Japan, even though there are many Japanese Christians who must be lost without priests to guide them. Valignano has heard no word from Ferreira since 1633, and so does not know if he is alive, sick in a cell, or has "won a glorious martyrdom," though he does not mention the possibility of apostasy. Moreover, this new man Inoue is a "terror of the Christians" and "cunning as a serpent." He surpasses his predecessors both in savagery and guile, able to break many Christians (who once seemed immune to torture and threats of death) by forcing them to apostatize. Inoue was once a Christian himself, but obviously no longer. The priests memorize his name.

Rodrigues's refusal to acknowledge that Ferreira, the great teacher leader, and missionary, may have apostatized and renounced the faith suggests once again a strong religious arrogance, both individually and institutionally. In Rodrigues's mind, such faith as Ferreira's had should have made him powerful, immune to such a failure. The idea of winning "a glorious martyrdom" also suggests a self-aggrandizing view of suffering for one's faith, as if it is a badge of honor, a hopeful achievement of all missionaries. Once again, naming Inoue the "terror of the Christians" establishes him as one-dimensional villain in the priests' minds, rather than a person with complex ideas and motivations.

After much pleading, Valignano finally relents and lets the priests make their journey "for the conversion of Japan and the glory of God." While searching for a Chinese ship that might smuggle the priests to Japan, they meet their first Japanese person, a drunk named Kichijiro who is about their age. Garrpe asks Kichijiro if he is Christian, but Kichijiro seems uncomfortable and denies it. He does, however, tell them of what he saw during the insurrection—a local governor tied 24 Christians to poles at the edge of the **sea**, so that each time the tide came in, they had to struggle to keep their heads above the waves and not drown. Each of them died after a week or so, when their bodies gave out in agony and exhaustion.

Kichijiro is immediately established as a wretched figure and seems, in his weakness, as if he will not play a major role in the story. However, other than Rodrigues, Kichijiro is actually the most present throughout the narrative, remaining alongside Rodrigues until the bitter end. Kichijiro's character models what an entirely permissive attitude towards apostasy might look like.

The three priests tell Kichijiro they have money for a ship and crew to go to Japan, and offer return him to his home country (he was found adrift at **sea** and taken to China by a passing Portuguese vessel) since it will be useful to have a guide once they reach Japan. Valignano arranges a Chinese crew and vessel to take them to Japan, though Santa Marta becomes so ill that he must stay behind.

Santa Marta plays little role other than allowing Rodrigues to make a few statements about God's providence and his confidence that all things work together in God's plan. These statements establish an important baseline for Rodrigues's faith in God, from which it will be challenged and shaped.

Kichijiro will join them, and as the priests watch the Japanese man work alongside the Chinese crew, they surmise "what a cunning fellow he is. And his cunning comes from weakness of character." When the Chinese captain is watching, Kichijiro works hard, but when he is not, Kichijiro idles, until the crew beats him and he grovels before them on his knees "in the most ugly way you could imagine." Kichijiro contrasts with every description Rodrigues and Garrpe have heard of the Japanese thus far as stalwart and noble people. Rodrigues, amused, reflects that Christ, too, entrusted his life to such untrustworthy people.

Kichijiro is depicted as as weak and pitiful as it seems possible for a man to be, even though it is this very weakness which makes him a survivor. Such a shameful characterization is significant, since Rodrigues, though he is arrogant now, will eventually see a parallel between himself and Kichijiro. However, Kichijiro's apparent weakness currently contrasts with Rodrigues's arrogance, especially in the manner in which he often equates himself with Christ.

As Rodrigues waits for preparations to be finished—which takes several weeks—he reflects on **Jesus Christ's face**. The Bible pointedly gives no description; early Christians envisioned him as a shepherd; the "eastern Church" depicts him with a long nose and curly black hair, an "oriental Christ"; medieval painters envisioned him as a powerful king. Rodrigues prefers the painting in the Borgo San Sepulchro, where Christ has a crucifix in hand, tomb under foot, and is encouraging his followers to "feed my lambs." Rodrigues reflects that he is as enamored by that face "jut like a man fascinated by the face of his beloved." Only a few days out from their final voyage, Rodrigues and Garrpe know that Santa Marta is still too weak to accompany them, but trust that God is "secretly preparing" the path for his own life.

Christ's face is a repeated symbolic image throughout the story, reflecting the state of Rodrigues's faith as its own condition changes. To begin, Rodrigues pictures Christ's face to be as beautiful as a lover's, reflecting that his faith is strong. He is very much enamored with the Gospel, and the beauty and purity of their mission. Rodrigues's conviction that despite Santa Marta's failure to go to Japan, God prepares some other path for him reflects his own strong belief in God's providence and control, which will also be challenged and changed over the course of the story.

CHAPTER 2

Eight days into their **sea** voyage, the priests' ship is caught in a terrible storm. Rather than helping the sailors control the sails, Kichijiro hides amongst the baggage and vomits on himself, and the sailors' and the priests' contempt of the Japanese man grows. However, in his fearful mumbling, Garrpe and Rodrigues hear him say "gratia" and "Santa Maria," both Christian words. Though it seems impossible that Kichijiro is a Christian—"Faith could not turn a man into such a coward"—they suspect he may be, though he still denies it. Days after the storm, a sailor spots land. They are in Japan.

The revelation that Kichijiro may be a Christian seems to bother Rodrigues, since in his mind faith ought to make a man strong, not weak. This, too, reflects an arrogance and sense of denial. He seems to believe that Christ and faith must necessarily make one noble and brave. Rather, the fact that Kichijiro utters Christian phrases in the depths of his fear suggest that it is not strength which roots his faith, but weakness and fear.

Careful to remain hidden, the ship makes its way into a cove between two mountains. At midnight, Kichijiro, Rodrigues, and Garrpe wade ashore. The priests hide while Kichijiro leaves to survey the area, though the priests fear that "like Judas, he had gone to betray us." However, after several hours, Kichijiro and several peasants arrive who address the priests with the Portuguese "padre," proving that they are indeed Christians, children of the Portuguese missionary movement. The men hide the priests in a charcoal hut, high on a mountain overlooking their fishing village of Tomogi, situated some distance from Nagasaki.

Rodrigues's fear that Kichijiro will betray them not only foreshadows Kichijiro's numerous acts of betrayal, but explicitly establishes Kichijiro as a parallel to the biblical figure Judas Iscariot. This is important to Rodrigues's development, since he will spend much time pondering Christ's relationship to Judas, his betrayer, before ultimately making such a betrayal himself.

The priests give the men wooden crucifixes, which the Japanese press to their foreheads in reverent adoration. One of the young men, Mokichi, tells the priests that they have been without priest or religious guidance for six years, since the two Jesuit missionaries who kept secret contact with them died. They do not know if there are other Christian villages, since villages do not have good relationships amongst themselves and if any are discovered as Christians, they will be killed. However, the villagers of Tomogi have carried on the religious practices as best they can without a priest, electing ministers and prayer leaders from amongst themselves. Mokichi ask Rodrigues if that is permissible. Rodrigues assures them that, under the circumstances, they have done right.

The villagers' veneration of wooden crucifixes, which are only physical artifacts and hold no power in themselves, foreshadows Ferreira's eventual argument that the Japanese have no concept of a transcendent reality beyond their physical world, and thus worship what is around them in the natural world. Even so, the villagers' maintenance of their covert Christian faith for six years without a priest suggests that regardless of their distortion, their convictions are incredibly strong.

Rodrigues is thrilled with the Japanese Christians' struggle to keep their faith alive, and wants to spread word to other villages that priests are amongst them once more, "crucifix in hand," though it is dangerous to do so. By night, Rodrigues and Garrpe quietly administer the sacraments and rites to Japanese villagers in their charcoal hut—only one or two at a time, so as not to draw suspicion—and by day, they hide, silent as can be lest any passerby suspect that the hut is not abandoned as it seems.

Rodrigues's vision of himself as symbol of renewed faith and the return of Christianity to Japan is somewhat merited, on one hand—there have been no priests in the region for years. On the other, it once again belies a supreme religious arrogance. Rodrigues's mention of "crucifix in hand" recalls his vision of the painting of Christ, suggesting that he views himself either as an extension of Christ or a second Christ.

CHAPTER 3

Japan is in its rainy season, and the priests' nerves are stretched to their limit by the fearful hiding each day. Even so, Rodrigues feels that his vocation as a priest has never seemed so critically important. Tomogi itself is situated between sharp mountains and the **sea**, where they scratch out a meager existence growing potatoes. They are taxed so heavily that they barely survive, and Rodrigues imagines that Christianity flourished in Japan because it offered such suffering people "human warmth" that they'd never received before.

The Japanese peasants undeniably suffer under their current conditions, and the fact that they have sustained Christianity for so long in the face of such persecution suggests (as Rodrigues notes) that the religion does offer a critical utility and value to them. This value is important to remember as the idea that Christianity may be incompatible with Japan is explored, since it negates the argument that there is absolutely no benefit to the religion.

Although the priests struggle to distinguish between the villagers and have not met many of them, significant members along with Mokichi are Ichizo, a man in his 50s, and Omatsu, his elder sister who carries fried potatoes and water up the mountain on her back to feed to the priests. Although there has been no Mass without the priests, the villagers have set up a holy picture in one of their huts that they pray before, designed to be quickly concealed in case government officials descend upon them. Rodrigues wants to send someone to Nagasaki to ask of Father Ferreira, but Garrpe insists it is too dangerous both for them and the villagers, since their fates are bound together. If Kichijiro could be convinced, since he has no ties or dependents, that may work, but the man is an untrustworthy coward.

The priests' inability to distinguish between Japanese individuals does carry a somewhat racist connotation, suggesting that the priests see the villagers as a monolith rather than individuals. More strongly, however, it emphasizes the foreignness of Japan to the priests: they are in a land and a culture that is entirely alien and unknown to them. The fact that the villagers have set up their religious elements to be quickly concealed indicates that they are accustomed to swift and unexpected raids from Japanese officials; their persecution is a fact of life.

One afternoon, in a break from the rain, Rodrigues and Garrpe venture out of the hut to ease their nerves and shake the lice off themselves. As they are enjoying the sun, Garrpe realizes that two men are watching them from the forest, though the men do not approach them and leave before long. The priests are disturbed, as is Ichizo when they tell him that evening, and the old man and his companion immediately tear up the floorboards of the hut and dig a hole for the priests to hide in if the charcoal hut should ever be approached.

The tension of the priests' daily lives, being endangered even by stepping outdoors, emphasizes the danger that surrounds them and the extreme level of persecution both they and the villagers face. That the priests and the villagers take on such danger willingly once again suggests an undeniable strength and intensity in their religious convictions.

Five days later, in the middle of the night, Rodrigues hears someone pushing at their door and whispering "padre." The priest is stricken with fear, but the visitors announce themselves as villagers from an island community called Gotō, a two-days' journey away. They have heard there are new priests, and they want to give their first confession in many years. Both men are "faint with exhaustion" and one of them has a bloody, lacerated foot from his climb up the mountain. They have not eaten in days. It was they who spotted the priests in the mid-afternoon light, five days prior.

Once again, the visiting villagers' religious conviction and hunger for the priests' leadership is evident in the amount of suffering they willingly endure just to see the priests themselves. Although on the one hand, such conviction is admirable, on the other it begs the question of whether there is not a dangerous level of emphasis placed upon the priests themselves, as opposed to their underlying message.

The villagers tell the priests that Kichijiro told them priests had returned to Japan. Rodrigues and Garrpe learn that Kichijiro is in fact a Christian, though he apostatized by stepping on an image of Christ eight years before, while the rest of his family voluntarily accepted their torture and death. The villagers want the priests to come to Gotō to minister, and the priests decide—to the consternation of the villagers in Tomogi—that Rodrigues will take a boat to the island while Garrpe will stay and tend to Tomogi. As Rodrigues travels by night, wondering if he will be betrayed, he meets Kichijiro once again.

Kichijiro is further confirmed both as a Christian and a coward. Kichijiro's apostasy while the rest of his family voluntarily died for their faith makes him seem both more pitiable and more wretched. Here is a man who watched his whole family die and is haunted by that act, and yet did not have the strength to die with them, even though the people who presumably mattered most to him would no longer live in the world.

Rodrigues uses a broken farmhouse in Gotō as a chapel, and the villagers cram themselves into it, pleading constantly for his listening ear. Rodrigues recognizes their "thirst" for a priest and appreciates it, though he is disgusted by their smell and squalor. The villagers regard Kichijiro as a hero for bringing the priest, and though he struts around, he also is repentant for his past apostasy and makes long confessions before the priest. Villagers come from the surrounding mountains and islands as well; in one day, Rodrigues baptizes over 30 people. Such large gatherings are dangerous, likely to draw the government's attention, but Rodrigues is swept by the sight of Christians gathering before him just as the crowds gathered before Jesus Christ while he preached his Sermon on the Mount. There is little word of Ferreira, though two men saw him near Nagasaki before the persecution began.

Rodrigues's desire to serve conflicts with his disgust at the squalor and stench of those same people he hopes to help. This conflict of self-superiority—since Rodrigues is not similarly disgusted with himself, though he lives just as the Japanese do—and altruistic impulse demonstrates the complexity of religious arrogance. One may be possessed by both a self-sacrificing impulse and a self-aggrandizing impulse at the same time. The presence of such egoism certainly taints the nobleness of Rodrigues's mission, even though his voluntary suffering is still a noteworthy act.

Rodrigues teaches the Christians to maintain their faith like those in Tomogi did, and the peasants clamor for any crucifix, relic, or religious item the priest can give them, which makes him uneasy. Nevertheless, he returns to Tomogi after some days, reflecting on the journey about how well their expedition in Japan has gone so far. However, when he lands on the shore in the dark of night, Mokichi meets him and tells him he must flee. Guards are in the village; they don't know about the priests yet, but they know there are practicing Christians.

Once again, the Japanese Christians' desire for physical items reflects their cultural leaning toward the tangible world and inability to conceive of a transcendent reality (according to Ferreira). Although the crucifix is meant to be only a symbol of the God they are meant to revere, the villagers seem to worship the items themselves, giving some weight to Ferreira's future argument that Western Christianity is incompatible with Japan's Eastern culture.

CHAPTER 4

Although the guards interrogate the villagers, the Christians manage to conceal any evidence of their faith and are left alone. Rodrigues is entirely satisfied with life. Even Kichijiro, who accompanied him back to Tomogi, gets along. Though the man is vain, obnoxious, and still a drunk, Rodrigues finds that he still "just can't hate him." However, the plight of the Japanese peasants is brutal. They rarely get to eat rice, very few have any animals, and they subsist in squalor on potatoes, few vegetables, or roots. They are "slaves of the samurai" who in turn are servants of the land-owning feudal lords, who wield absolute power over their subjects, even more than a king.

Rodrigues's inability to truly hate Kichijiro may stem from the fact that he recognizes some element of himself in Kichijiro's weakness and vanity, even if Rodrigues is not fully cognizant of it yet. The oppressive nature of the peasants' lives under a Buddhist government again suggests that, on some level, Buddhism and the prevailing power structure fails them and Christianity thus has something to offer in its hope and promise of heaven and eventual relief from suffering.

One afternoon, a fierce samurai and his men storm the village, announcing that an informer has reported Christians living among them. After the priests bury their possessions beneath the charcoal hut, they descend the mountain and watch the affair through the trees. The samurai can find no evidence of Christianity, but announces that unless the villagers admit to practicing the forbidden religion, they will take a hostage, and then another in three days' time. The samurai's men drag away the village's elder, an old and frail man.

The religious persecution depicted in the story is particularly insidious in that it links the suffering of each individual to the people around them. It may be one thing to die for one's own convictions, but to watch other people suffer and die for the sake of someone else's convictions is especially morbid and haunting, making the dilemma of apostasy far less clear-cut or morally black-and-white.

The priests feel as if they should leave to spare the villagers any further suffering. The villagers are themselves divided between protecting the priests or sending them away. As promised, another samurai arrives, but this one is older and very gentle, trying to persuade rather than threaten. He tells the villagers that they have nothing to fear from him if they have committed no crime, but all the same he needs three hostages to return with him to Nagasaki and would like volunteers. The villagers decide that Kichijiro should go—to his horror—since he is a stranger with no family for which to care. Mokichi and Ichizo volunteer as well.

This passage introduces the moral dilemma of whether it is right for the priests to allow the villagers to suffer on their behalf, even if the villagers do so willingly. This moral dilemma becomes the central conflict of the novel, driving the other themes of apostasy, faith, and religious compatibility. Significantly, the author never finds a clear answer. While the story is a widely-regarded classic among many, this ambivalence causes it to be rejected by many readers who dislike the moral ambiguity and the difficult questions it raises.

The night before they must go to Nagasaki, the three men ask the priests what they should do if they are told to apostatize and place their foot upon the fumie (a bronze etching of Christ made by the government specifically for Christians to apostatize with). In a rush of pity and passion, Rodrigues shouts that they must apostatize and save themselves, but Garrpe looks at him "reproachfully" and he feels he should not have said it. Kichijiro asks why God should place such a burden upon them when they have committed no sin, but the priests cannot answer.

Rodrigues's advice that the villagers should apostatize not only foreshadows his own eventual apostasy, but also reveals the difference between himself and Garrpe. Garrpe is faithful until the end, even when it means others' suffering and death, while Rodrigues is ultimately broken by others' suffering. Also, Kichijiro's question introduces the question of God's justice and why He should be silent while His followers suffer.

Rodrigues is haunted by Kichijiro's question. On the one hand, he feels that God must have some good purpose in mind. Yet so much blood has already been spilled by the Japanese Christians for the sake of their faith. and "in the face of this terrible and merciless sacrifice offered up to him, God has remained silent." Meanwhile at the magistrate's office, Kichijiro, Ichizo, and Mokichi stamp on the fumie. However, their interrogator notes that their faces seem pained, so he orders them to also spit on the crucifix and slander the Virgin Mary. Kichijiro does so, painfully, and is released and disappears, but Mokichi and Ichizo cannot bring themselves to do so, and are imprisoned for 10 days.

Rodrigues's conflict between God's providence and His silence while Christians suffer makes its first true appearance. This inner conflict will grow over the course of the story and present yet another difficult and ambiguous moral dilemma. There is an irony in the fact that, although Mokichi and Ichizo attempt to apostatize, their strong conviction becomes a weakness that they cannot overcome, while Kichijiro's weak conviction gives him the strength to fully and shamefully apostatize and escape.

Officials ride into the village and announce that Mokichi and Ichizo will be executed by the "water punishment," meaning that they will be tied to poles and left to be buffeted by the tide at the edge of the **sea** for many days. A procession of officials arrives two days later with Mokichi and Ichizo tightly bound. As workers prepare the poles, an official orders a fire built so the prisoners can warm themselves against the rain, and even offers them each a cup of sake alcohol. Ichizo and Mokichi are fastened to the poles—made from tree trunks—and left standing buffeted by the water and waiting for death. The villagers watch on, and Omatsu weeps loudly for her brother's pain.

Once again, the Japanese officials' persecution carries a strange mixture of brutality and compassion. Although they are torturing two men to death, they also show enough concern to keep the condemned men warm and give them drinks to ease their nerves. This oddly-placed compassion suggests that the Japanese officials' persecution is not motivated by animosity or hatred of Christians, implying that there may be a more pragmatic reason for such brutality.

Days pass, and amidst the waves the villagers can hear Mokichi singing a Christian hymn: "We're on our way to the temple of Paradise." As time wears on, the dying men eventually grow silent except for a faint moaning, almost like an animal. Rodrigues observes that the dying men cannot be discerned from the stakes they are tied to, adhering to them as if they were all the same object. When the men die, the officials burn their bodies and throw the ashes into the **sea** to prevent any Christians from venerating their remains. Rodrigues often looks to the sea, reflecting that although they were martyred, there is no glory in Mokichi and Ichizo's death, only a slow and terrible silence.

The sea is often employed as an image to reflect Rodrigues's perception of God. When Mokichi and Ichizo are slowly worn down by the sea and their bodies are eventually swallowed by the sea, it reflects Rodrigues's feeling that rather than intervening to protect them, God, in his silence, has some part in destroying the two men. Rather than even granting them a glorious martyrdom, God allowed his followers to suffer a slow, agonizing, inglorious death.

The priests hear rumor that the Japanese officials intend to search the mountains next, and Rodrigues and Garrpe decide they must separate and flee so that at least one priest will hopefully remain in Japan. Without even the time to say goodbye, they each clamber in boats in the dark of night and head in opposite directions. Rodrigues shakes uncontrollably, feeling real fear that overwhelms his faith for the first time. The priest tries to ask the young man rowing his boat where they are going, but realizes that the man wants nothing to do with him; the priests have become a burden, even a curse upon the Japanese peasants. As they row between mountains and pull into shore, Rodrigues reflects on how different Japan use to be for Portuguese missionaries: they used to be met with warm welcome, food, and drink as often as they pleased.

This certainly is not the first time Rodrigues has been in mortal danger—they were nearly shipwrecked, caught in terrible storms, and have been in danger of arrest and torture from the beginning. It is, however, the first time Rodrigues has faced any such dangers alone. The fact that Rodrigues feels real, overwhelming fear for the first time after immediately leaving Garrpe demonstrates how much more suffering and danger one can face with the support of a friend. In the midst of this fear, Rodrigues's thought for the luxuries priests used to enjoy suggests that he longs for such material comforts and safety.

Rodrigues wades ashore, and the rowers hastily leave. Alone, the priest wanders up the path into a darkened village, expecting to be met by Christian villagers. Instead, the village is ransacked, looking as if it has been recently destroyed. Cups and bowls have been smashed across the street, huts have been caved in, and the village empty except for a few stray cats. Rodrigues feels no fear, but the question, "Why? Why this?" echoes through his head. Looking for food, he is only able to find a bowl of water, but fatigue takes him and he falls asleep in one of the broken huts.

The narrative implies that the village has been ransacked by Japanese officials as punishment for practicing Christianity. Yet again, the suffering of Japanese Christians does not meet the glorious expectations that Rodrigues once had, but rather seems meaningless, even nihilistic. This further challenges his faith in God's providence and justice.

In the morning, Rodrigues finds a few grains of dry rice and a few cucumbers that he wraps in cloth before wandering up into the hills, unsure of where he will go but assuming that it is safer than traveling the seaside. Wandering on, the priest finds the ashes of a small fire, still warm to the touch. Someone has passed this way not long before. The priest yearns for human company, though he knows it is dangerous, but decides if Christ gave in to such a temptation—leaving the mountains to call his disciples—than so shall he. As he walks, to distract himself from fear, the priest draws on his childhood love of botany to distinguish as many trees as he knows from the forest around him, though many of the species are unique to Japan.

The notion of Christ giving in to any temptation would likely be seen as blasphemous by other Christians, since Christ is generally held as the epitome of moral strength and purity. Rodrigues's notion of Christ giving in to physical discomfort suggests that his own suffering is beginning to take its toll on his willpower, causing him to unconsciously begin rationalizing his own human weaknesses and failings without sacrificing his notion that he is Christ-like, thus preserving his ego.

Stopping at a puddle of rainwater, Rodrigues peers at his own haggard reflection. Seeing his face in the water, it makes him think of **Christ's face** as well, imagining that "no doubt it was more beautiful than anything [the artists] envisaged." The priest continues walking, listening to the sounds of the forest and noticing the **sea**'s present silence, which draws his mind to God's silence in the face of such suffering as he's seen. Briefly, Rodrigues wonders if this means that God does not exist, but the thought frightens him far too much to dwell on. If God does not exist, then Rodrigues's life and all this pain are wrapped in a terrible absurdity. "If I consented to this thought, then my whole past to this very day was washed away in silence."

Once again, Rodrigues seeing Christ's face in his own watery reflection suggests a supreme self-importance, as if he himself is a savior to Japan. Although his beautiful conception of Christ's face suggests that Rodrigues is still enamored with his savior, the sea's silence also implies that the priest does not feel God's presence, nor hear His voice. However, with his entire life and identity built upon the existence of God and the truthfulness of Christianity, entertaining such doubts for long is akin to existential suicide.

Rain suddenly falls very heavily, driving Rodrigues into a copse of trees, where he finds a small wooden hut, perhaps used by villagers for cutting wood. The rain ceases as quickly as it began and the priest enters the hut, finding a still-smoldering fire which he uses to dry his clothes. Whoever made it must be very close, and travelling slow, so it will be easy to catch up to him.

Rodrigues's eagerness to catch up to another human being, who is as likely to be Buddhist as Christian and thus a threat, suggests that his desire for human company and physical comfort are beginning to overtake his desire to survive and carry on his missionary work in Japan.

Traveling onward, Rodrigues comes upon an overlook from where he can see the placid **sea** and several fishing boats and even a village. His heart races and he considers immediately running down to them, though he has no way of knowing if it is a Christian village. There are no crosses or steeples, but that is not unusual, since many churches were established in Buddhist temples. This caused many to believe that Christianity was only a revised form of Buddhism.

The Japanese Christians' confusion between Buddhism and Christianity foreshadows the eventual argument that the Japanese never truly understood what Christianity was. This suggests that Christianity—especially as practiced and preached by Europeans—is incompatible with Japan's Eastern culture and cannot grow there.

Suddenly convinced—without any evidence—that the villagers are desperate for a priest, that this community is the parish God prepared especially for him, Rodrigues descends the hillside. However, a voice from the brush freezes the priest in his tracks. It is Kichijiro yet again, telling him that he knows of a different Christian village, and the priest realizes that this is the man he has been following.

Rodrigues sudden and unwarranted conviction that this is a Christian village that God has prepared for him suggests a level of unreality and delusion in his faith, though this delusion could arguably result simply from the disorientation of wandering alone through the wilderness.

Conflicted, Rodrigues does not want to abandon this village before him. He suspects Kichijiro of being a traitor and a puppet, but also believes that his survival is of utmost importance; he may be the only priest left in the entire country. Rodrigues walks back up the hill and Kichijiro follows, asking where he is going and proclaiming that the price on a priest's head is 300 pieces of silver. With "a bitter laugh," Rodrigues remarks that then he is worth 10 times what Christ was worth to Judas. Kichijiro continues to follow him. When they both stop, the Japanese man builds a fire and offers the priest some dried fish, which Rodrigues devours.

Yet again, Kichijiro is explicitly named as Judas and Rodrigues is, by contrast, Christ. Rodrigues's picturing of himself not only as Christ, but worth 10 times the price of Christ, once again demonstrates a staggering level of self-importance and religious arrogance. This demonstrates how one may simultaneously be serving and even self-sacrificing, as well as proud and self-important. In spite of Rodrigues's convictions and distrust of Kichijiro, however, he quickly and easily gives in to his physical hunger.

Night falls, and Kichijiro keeps up their little fire. Rodrigues eventually falls asleep. Although he expects Kichijiro to betray him, each time he awakes in the night, the man is still there, keeping the fire. The next day as they walk, the priest distracts himself from his parched throat by wondering why Kichijiro did not betray him yet, thinking of Christ, who told Judas before he betrayed him, "What thou dost, do quickly." For all his life, the priest never understood what Jesus felt towards Judas, why he allowed the man to betray him. Was it anger or love? Was Judas damned or saved? Though Rodrigues heard many answers during his time in seminary, none satisfied him. He cannot help feeling that Judas was only an "unfortunate puppet" to bring about the crucifixion of Christ.

This passage begins Rodrigues's contemplation of Christ's relationship to Judas, and the level of control Judas had over his own destiny. Although the priest considers this relationship in the light of his own relationship to Judas, the development of his thought here is particularly significant since he will himself become a Judas Iscariot figure when he eventually apostatizes. Rodrigues's fatalistic view of Judas—that he never truly had a choice of whether to betray or not to betray—foreshadows his own feeling of powerlessness that will lead him to apostatize in spite of his convictions.

As they travel the next day, Rodrigues's thirst becomes desperate, and he begs Kichijiro to find a river so he may drink. Kichijiro again disappears, and the priest wonders if he will betray him, but the man returns with a pitcher of water and news that there is a nearby Christian village and a foreign priest. Sensing that the priest expected betrayal, Kichijiro grovels, whines, and exclaims that he is not strong like Mokichi, but a weak man. Rodrigues pities him and thinks that in an easier time, without such suffering, Kichijiro may have lived his entire life as a good and faithful Christian like any other, untested by such pain. Kichijiro kneels and Rodrigues begins to bless him, but as he is doing so armed guards rush upon them and seize the priest. One of the guards spitefully throws a handful of silver coins into Kichijiro's face, even as he begs Rodrigues' forgiveness.

Kichijiro's motivations are confusing and obviously conflicted, as he both begs for the priest's—and thus God's—forgiveness even as he betrays him. The priest's recognition that in an easier time, Kichijiro could have lived his entire life as a good Christian man, reveals his slowly-changing attitude towards apostasy, suggesting that apostates may not be horrible Christians after all, but merely unfortunates caught by suffering greater than they could resist. The silver coins again confirm Kichijiro as an explicit Judas figure, and the spiteful manner with which the guard throws them suggests that even the Japanese officials despise Kichijiro's weakness, even though it serves their purposes.

CHAPTER 5

The narrative changes from Rodrigues's first-person letters to a third-person narrator. Rodrigues (now referred to almost exclusively as "the priest") is dragged down the road and through a village until he is deposited with a small group of Japanese Christians, shackled and sitting upon the ground. Rather than fear, the priest feels almost happy and a sense of well-being, now that his flight is over. Among them are a one-eyed man and a woman who introduces herself as Monica (her Christian name indicating that she was once baptized) who offers the priest a cucumber concealed in her shirt. Monica talks hopefully of heaven and the relief that it will be, and the priest finds himself suddenly angry at what he feels is a naïve concept of paradise, but he holds his tongue. He asks her if she knows of Ferreira, but Monica shakes her head nervously.

Rodrigues being referred to as "the priest," rather than by name, reflects his position as representation of Christianity and the priesthood in opposition to the Japanese establishment. The priest's relief at being imprisoned, rather than wandering through the wilderness alone, suggests that this present situation meets his expectations (since he hopes to suffer and be martyred) much better than aimlessly walking through the forest. Additionally, his sudden irritation at the Japanese peasants' idea of heaven reveals both a sense of his own superiority as well as an increasingly petulant nature.

The same old samurai who took Mokichi, Kichijiro, and Ichizo from Tomogi arrives, commenting casually on the weather to his prisoners. In the afternoon light, Rodrigues realizes how the samurai's plump old face reminds him of the Buddha statues he'd seen. The heat and the soft buzzing of flies make the priest feel sedate, rather than anxious or threatened as he expected such an event to feel like. The samurai explains that this seems like an unnecessary bother, and that it is certainly not out of hate that they have arrested the Christians, especially since the peasants are hard-working tax-payers. The samurai bids the other prisoners to move on with the guards, but with a flash of "hatred and rancor" in his eyes, commands the priest to stay.

The samurai, who embodies Buddhist persecution of Christianity—as signified by his Buddha-like appearance—stands in opposition to the priest, who embodies Christianity. And yet he is oddly friendly, even chatty. This, along with the priest's sedate feeling, defies expectations of what such persecution ought to be like, since it is neither glorious nor intense, neither filled with violence nor passion. However, the flash of hatred in the man's eyes suggests at least some level of animosity towards foreign priests, if not local Christians.

As the other prisoners leave, Rodrigues prays that God will not add to their suffering. The samurai tells him that peasants are foolish and easily swayed, but priests are another matter. If Rodrigues will not apostatize, the samurai will make the peasants suffer. They close Rodrigues in a small hut and leave him for a long while, where he wonders after the other Christians and prays the rosary on his fingers. After some time, an interpreter enters, speaking an oddly-accented but proficient Portuguese.

Yet again, the Japanese officials show a general—and surprising—disregard for Christianity itself, but direct their ire towards the foreign priests, suggesting that their religious persecution is not motivated by animosity toward another religion, but perhaps toward the influx of foreign leaders or some other more pragmatic objection.

The interpreter is scornful of Christians, even though he himself was once baptized and studied in seminary, and goes to great length to emphasize the fact that he himself is not one. The interpreter converses with Rodrigues, logically but ferociously attacking Christianity from all angles and trying to goad the priest into a full religious debate. But the priest calmly desists as often as he can, knowing that such a debate is futile, meant to crush an opponent rather than exchange ideas. Outside, a cock crows, and the interpreter, frustrated that the priest will not meet his rage, declares that if the priest does not apostatize, the peasants will be hung upside-down in the pit.

Unlike the samurai, the interpreter harbors a personal animosity towards Christianity. His attitude demonstrates that although much of the persecution is motivated by political or pragmatic goals, there are certainly still individuals who harbor a religious animosity, likely for personal reasons. Faced with such vindictiveness, the priest's decision not to engage seems wise.

The interpreter tells Rodrigues that he will meet Inoue before long, and lists all the priests who apostatized after Inoue cross-examined them, one of whom is Father Ferreira. The priest tries to pretend he does not know Ferreira, but the interpreter sees the pain in his face and tells him that Ferreira now lives in Nagasaki as a Japanese man with a Japanese wife, and is respected by the Buddhist government. After the interpreter leaves, the priest is shaken, wondering how he can possibly hold fast if even so great a man as Ferreira was broken. The priest prays to God for strength, but also begs God to break his silence.

Rodrigues is forced to recognize not only the truth of Ferreira's apostasy, but also that he has renounced his status as a Portuguese man to become a citizen of Japan. Ferreira's loss, even betrayal, of his former identity thus seems complete—he is neither Christian nor Portuguese any longer, meaning that he has turned his back upon everything that once connected him to Rodrigues.

Later in the day, a guard fetches Rodrigues from the hut to bring him down to the village wharf. As they walk, the priest considers escape, but is dissuaded by the kind manner of the guard and the knowledge that others will be punished if he flees. The guards take him through the village, whose people look downward with sadness, and to the beach, where he is put aboard a boat. As the boat leaves the shore, the priest hears a single voice yelling and a lone, scraggly figure trying to run after the boat: Kichijiro. But the traitor cannot reach the boat in time, and the priest feels only resentment towards him.

The downcast eyes of the villagers suggest that it is indeed a Christian village. This is tragic, since had Rodrigues entered the village he may have found shelter instead of being betrayed by Kichijiro. On the other hand, this village has been spared suffering on his account. Yet again, the kindness of the guard suggests that the Japanese officials generally lack personal animosity towards Christians, even though they persecute them.

As the boat moves through the **sea**, Rodrigues again wonders at how differently his capture has been from what he envisioned the capture of a saint to be. He wonders again if this means his faith is failing. One of the boatmen tells him they are going to what was once a Christian village, though nothing now remains of it; it was burnt to the ground. Again, the priest prays for strength and asks God why He's abandoned His people. "So he prayed. But the sea remained cold, and the darkness maintained its stubborn silence." After an afternoon and night of rowing, they reach their destination, met by a crowd of spectators—many of whom are silent and fearful, even ashamed—and a samurai at the next wharf. Rodrigues is unloaded from the boat, set on a horse, and led through throngs of jeering spectators up the road towards Nagasaki.

The priest's visions of a noble struggle and glorious martyrdom yet again go unfulfilled, suggesting that suffering and death, even for faith, are not noble enterprises as the priest supposed, but arduous and banal. The condition of the sea yet again symbolizes the priest's perception of God; as the sea remains cold, distant, and unspeaking, so Rodrigues feels that God is silent and unhelpful as well, prompting a further crisis of faith. The jeering crowds that Rodrigues must endure pointedly parallel the crowds that mocked Christ as he was led to his death.

As Rodrigues is carried down the road, he sees a hobbling man leaning on a stick and slowly following after him, realizing quickly that it is Kichijiro once again. The priest cannot fathom why the man pursues him still. They reach a small town and the priests' captors dine with the local samurai while he is tied to a tree like a dog. While he is sitting, head hanging, a beggar places a few grains of rice in a bowl before him. The priest looks up, meets the beggar's eyes, and realizes that he is Kichijiro. In his mind, the priest recites Christ's words to Judas: "What thou dost, do quickly." When he is placed astride a horse again and carried through more mocking crowds and past the town, Kichijiro follows behind at a distance.

Although Kichijiro is a Judas figure, betraying Rodrigues multiple times over and apostatizing whenever he is asked to, he is also the priest's only friend and displays a confusing level of faithfulness to him. Kichijiro's relationship to the priest thus parallels the priest's eventual relationship to God, whom he will betray in a moment of weakness, feeling as if he is trapped. Yet the priest will remain loyal to God and seek his forgiveness for the rest of his life. However, in this moment, the priest does not yet recognize the similarity between Kichijiro and himself.

CHAPTER 6

Rodrigues is carried onward towards Nagasaki until their entire procession stops to rest, and the samurais discuss amongst themselves. Another band from Nagasaki arrives, and the priest's former captors hand him over. Under their escort, the priest arrives at small prison built into the hillside, apparently newly-constructed; he is the only occupant until other prisoners are brought days later. Time passes uneventfully; he is fed twice a day, and thinks and prays as he waits. Oddly, the priest is struck by the tranquility of at all, and realizes that this is the first time since arriving in Japan that he has truly felt at rest and at peace. He thinks that perhaps this strange tranquility is a sign that he will soon die.

Rodrigues's imprisonment is marked by a distinctive lack of physical suffering, which subverts his own expectations, and potentially the reader's expectations, of what it means to be persecuted. Although the priest interprets this new tranquility to mean his end is coming, the tranquility instead foreshadows the tranquility the priest will feel after he apostatizes, when he is no longer under threat or pressure to break.

Nine days later, the captors move Rodrigues into a different cell near the guardhouse, and through the wall he can hear the guards struggling to bring new prisoners into the compound. As they draw near, the priest hears the new prisoners praying the Lord's Prayer. The priest petitions God to finally break His silence. The following day, the guards put the new prisoners to labor and allow the priest to visit them. He realizes the prisoners are the one-eyed man and Monica, whom he'd met when he was captured. The guards allow the priest to visit the other prisoners morning and evening from then on—knowing the prisoners will be more docile with a priest present—so that he can pray with them and hear confession. Rodrigues notes that for the first time in Japan, he is able to fulfill his priestly duties.

Once again, the guards' willingness to allow Rodrigues to function as a priest in prison—where the religion cannot spread—reveals a general lack of antagonism or animosity to Christianity itself or the people who practice it. Although one could argue that the Japanese officials are attempting to lull the priest into a false sense of security, what seems more likely is that since the religion cannot be spread, since the influence of foreign missionaries is now contained, the Japanese officials are largely indifferent to its practice. This suggests that their opposition to Christianity is more pragmatic than ideological.

One day, the prison guard delivers a set of red cotton robes for Rodrigues to wear, the same clothing that the Buddhist monks wear. The priest initially refuses even though his own clothes are tattered, but the guard tells him to hurry because new officials are arriving to meet him and the priest obliges, though some part of him feels humiliated for acquiescing to the request of the Japanese magistrates. Rodrigues, prepared for his cross-examination, kneels in the courtyard and a group of samurais and officials arrive. Five of them are seated, and Rodrigues is placed before them, positioned so that his apostasy will be clearly audible to the Christian peasants. In the middle of the five, a kind and portly old man with large ears is seated, gazing sympathetically at the priest.

Rodrigues's donning of the Buddhist garb represents a change of uniforms, which foreshadows his gradual change of identity away from the Christian priesthood. His initial resistance to wearing the clothes followed by his quick, but slightly humiliated acquiescence reflects Rodrigues's own waning will to fight and resist the forces at play.

The examination begins, and an interpreter and one of the samurais explain that they are not refuting the doctrine of Christianity, only arguing that it has no value for Japan. Rodrigues posits that if something is true, it is universally true, but his examiners disagree, saying that Christianity might be true in Spain and Portugal, but not here.

Starting with this examination, the author begins to seriously explore the question of whether Western Christianity is at all compatible with an Eastern culture. Rodrigues's wrong assumption that all people believe in a universal truth suggests that many of the presuppositions made by Western Christianity are simply not held by the Japanese.

Rodrigues asks why they are having this conversation, since certainly he will be punished regardless of his answers. When the man with large ears gently tells the priest they will not punish him without reason, the priest remarks that they must not speak on behalf of Inoue, since Inoue certainly would punish. The officials laugh and reveal that the man with big ears is himself Inoue, Lord of Chikugo, which confuses the priest, since he had thought that Inoue would look like a devil, not the kind, meek man before him. The examination concludes for the day and a guard leads the priest back to his cell. He is confused, but satisfied that he did nothing cowardly or treacherous in front of the Christian peasants.

In addition to the priest's religious and ideological presuppositions being challenged, so too is his belief that Inoue, the "architect of Christian persecution" must necessarily be an evil and devilish man. That Inoue is rather meek and kind suggests that despite what one may believe, religious persecutors are not necessarily monstrous people in and of themselves, merely ordinary people who hold different ideals. Even though this is the case, however, it is worth remembering that under Inoue's leadership, thousands of people are tortured and killed.

Three days after arriving, the guards make several prisoners dig three holes in the middle of the courtyard. One of the prisoners dies from exhaustion, and the guards allow Rodrigues to pray over him and give him a Christian burial. The priest finds it strange that the guards allow him to operate in his vocation. The following afternoon, Kichijiro arrives at the prison, yelling to the priest for forgiveness and yelling to the guards that they must arrest him, for he is Christian. The priest tries to ignore him, but when he visits the other prisoners in the evening, Kichijiro is in their cell with them. Kichijiro again begs his forgiveness. Though the priest thinks of **Christ's face** and considers that Christ died for pitiful men such as Kichijiro, he cannot forgive the treacherous man, and is filled with shame.

The priest's shameful realization that he cannot live up to Christ's example and forgive his betrayer, Kichijiro, marks an important milestone in the priest's character development. Where once his arrogance drove him to view himself like Christ, Rodrigues is beginning to become aware of his own limitations as a human being. Although this does not mark the end of the priest's arrogance by any means, it is a critical step towards coming to terms with his own human weakness. Once again, the guards allowance for Rodrigues to pray over the dying men subverts the priest's and the reader's expectation of a persecutor.

"The day of the fumie arrive[s]." All of the prisoners except for Rodrigues—who watches through the barred window of his cell—stand in a line in the courtyard, a fumie sitting on the ground before each of them. The officials and the guards gently, even personably, attempt to convince the peasants to apostatize, reassuring them that all they want to see is a symbolic renunciation. Then, the peasants will still be free to believe whatever they want. When none apostatize, the officials and guards seem unbothered and unsurprised. They herd the prisoners back to their cells, except for the one-eyed man, with whom one of the officials wants to speak.

The officials' attempts to ease the Christians' consciences yet again subverts expectations of a persecutor, suggesting that their persecution is not motivated by religious animosity or ideological hatred but a pragmatic goal. The author, himself both a Christian and a Japanese man, characterizes the antagonist persecutors with far more nuance than is normally afforded to such a role.

After the one-eyed man speaks amiably with the official for a few minutes, the official draws his sword and decapitates the Christian with no warning. The official shouts that such is the fate of any person who values their belief more than their life. A guard brings Kichijiro, sniveling, out into the yard, and Kichijiro promptly steps on the fumie and is told to leave the camp. Rodrigues is struck by it all, but especially by the ease and silence of death. A man died and the world did not change. God did not move, as if nothing happened at all. With sorrow, the priest asks himself whether what he once sought was a "true, hidden martyrdom" or merely a "glorious death" and the honor it confers.

In spite of the officials' apparent kindness, the one-eyed man's casual execution suggests that, at least in part, such kindness is also a calculated move to encourage the other Christians to apostatize. More striking than the beheading, however, is the simplicity of it all, the lack of grandeur and glory. The realization that a man could be martyred and the world remains the same prompts another critical development for Rodrigues, causing him to question his own desire for martyrdom for the first time and begin to see the arrogance of it.

CHAPTER 7

Five days later, Rodrigues meets Inoue once again. The magistrate explains to the priest that though he does not think Christianity is evil, Japan is harassed by the four Christian countries (England, Holland, Spain, and Portugal) trying to proselytize and gain leverage within it, like one man with four persistent, jealous mistresses. When the priest answers that the man should content himself with only one "wife," Christianity, Inoue answers that the Japanese do not like having love forced upon them and do not see any value in Christianity from which that they can benefit. Finally, the magistrate rises to leave, but asks the priest to think over what he has told him.

The pointed argument against Christianity's presence in Japan is logical and easy to sympathize with, made all the more poignant since it is written by an author who is both Christian and Japanese himself. The depicted conflict around whether Christianity is suitable or valuable to Japan likely reflects the author's own internal struggle over these two conflicting aspects of his own identity, which he has written about at length elsewhere.

During the night, Rodrigues considers the parallels between Christ and himself: both had been chased and arrested, both had been sold out by one close to them. However, the priest realizes that he has never known such physical suffering as Christ did—he's never even been hit since living in the prison. The lack of this physical suffering disturbs him, especially since he'd expected it for so long. He wonders if it is one of Inoue's plots, that perhaps he will be softened by good treatment and then suddenly tortured. In any case, the priest feels as if the physical safety and relative comfort weaken his resolve to resist and suffer for the faith.

Inoue's tactic of softening Rodrigues by offering him physical comforts—relative to what he had when living in Tomogi, for instance—seems a parallel of the manner in which Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, offering him power, wealth, and safety rather than threatening him or causing physical pain. However, the discontent the priest feels at not being able to suffer in the same way Christ did on the cross suggests that his egoistic desire for glorious suffering and martyrdom still plagues him.

Ten days later, the guards march the other prisoners out of the courtyard for forced labor. They do not return in the evening. The following morning, guards take Rodrigues out of his cell at "the wish of the magistrate" and bring him to an overlook outside of Nagasaki, where a stool is waiting for him from which he can see the peninsula, the beach and the **sea**. As the priest sits, the first interpreter he'd met after his capture arrives and tells him that Inoue, though he himself won't be there, has arranged for the priest to meet someone. The priest assumes this will be Ferreira, but looking down towards the trees near the water, he sees Garrpe, led by armed guards and accompanied by Monica and the other prisoners.

Despite his general kindness and decency, this particular scheme is a reminder that Inoue, though dynamic and even relatable, is still a devious man who inflicts massive amounts of pain and suffering. Though he is not the uncomplicated devil that Rodrigues once imagined, he is still an exceptionally cruel figure in his own right. This, again, reflects the complex and dynamic nature of human beings, which is capable of both notable kindness and compassion, as well as staggering cruelty.

Guards lead Garrpe and the Christian prisoners to a spot on the sand where several straw mats await them. Leaving Garrpe free, the guards wrap the straw mats around their other prisoners so that their arms and legs are entrapped and only their head exposed atop the roll. As Rodrigues watches the scene, the interpreter explains that all three prisoners have already apostatized the day before, but unless Garrpe does so as well, they will not be spared. The priest is incensed that even the apostatized will be executed, but the interpreter explains that the magistrate is only after the priests. With horror, the priest realizes that Garrpe came to Japan to give his life for the Japanese, but instead it is the Japanese who will die for his sake. In his heart, he yearns for Garrpe to apostatize. God is silent.

The fact that the Japanese Christians have already apostatized but will still be executed Garrpe's convictions complicates the traditional concept of martyrdom, entirely eliminating the villagers' choice in whether they be killed or not. While it is one thing to die on behalf of one's own beliefs, it is another thing entirely to bring about the deaths of others because of one's unyielding convictions. As Rodrigues notes, the Japanese people now die for the priests, which seems the opposite of Christ's self-sacrificing example. Setting up the apostasy dilemma in such a way forces the reader to seriously consider both options rather than writing apostasy off as an unforgivable sin in every circumstance.

The guards climb into a waiting boat and drag the prisoners with them, rowing out to the deep. Rodrigues begs God to intervene. Garrpe, shouting, "Lord, hear our prayer," plunges himself into the **sea** and attempts to swim after them, but quickly disappears beneath the waves. Laughing, the guards on the boat push the prisoners wrapped in straw into the sea as well, where they sink straight downward. The interpreter remarks that it is a horrible business, what happens here, but then turns on the priest and exclaims that all that blood is on the missionaries' hands. As a final insult, the interpreter remarks that Garrpe at least showed bravery, but Rodrigues himself is "weak-willed," unworthy of the title "father."

Garrpe's character contrasts notably with Rodrigues's, particularly in the fact that, although other prisoners are killed for Garrpe's faith, he at least has the strength to swim out and die with them. Although this is an imperfect solution, it demonstrates far more resolve than Rodrigues has yet shown, since he has not yet even attempted to escape. It is significant again that the sea kills the Christians and Garrpe. These unceremonious deaths reflect how in God's refusal to intervene, it seems to Rodrigues that He should bear the blame.

Days pass, and Rodrigues passes them by staring at the wall of his prison cell, mumbling to himself as the interpreter's insults and Inoue's arguments echo in his mind. The priest was unable to save the Christians, and unlike Garrpe did not even have the strength or opportunity to die with them. The priest had hoped to lay down his life for the Japanese Christians, and now they are laying theirs down for him. No, he tells himself, they chose their own death for the sake of their faith, but "this answer no longer had the power to heal wounds." As the days pass, the priest overhears an official remark that "everything is proceeding to the Lord of Chikugo's plan."

The phrase "the Lord of Chikugo's plan" darkly reiterates the fact that Rodrigues's Lord refuses to intervene, end suffering, or even speak, while the Lord of Chikugo operates and pulls all the strings. Within Rodrigues's present world of suffering, it seems that Inoue occupies the place of God, which explains the manner in which his faith is slowly disintegrating, as demonstrated that he can no longer find peace in God's wisdom or power.

One day, the interpreter enters Rodrigues's cell and tells him that he will go to meet someone today, someone whom the priest himself probably wants to talk to. A palanquin arrives to carry the priest into Nagasaki with the blinds drawn, so that sight of him will not cause a stir. The palanquin-carriers remark that he is "big and fat." As they walk, Rodrigues hears the sounds of the city and smells the animals, people, and foods. He finds himself wishing to simply be a normal person, to live as a man among men. He wants to give up all the hiding in the mountains—the fear, terror, and fatigue of it all. But still, he knows that he became a priest "to aim at one thing, and one thing alone."

The palanquin-carriers' remark reveals that, well-fed as he is in prison, the priest has become more and more separated from the world and lives of the Japanese Christians, who exist on the edge of starvation. Furthermore, the mere fact that he is carried in a palanquin shows that the Japanese officials can weaken him with favorable treatment, even if Rodrigues himself does not recognize it. His desire to live a normal life imply that his religious convictions are further weakening; he is letting go of both his glorious visions and his desire to serve God.

The palanquin arrives at its destination and a guard leads Rodrigues up a flight of stairs into a large building flanked by corridors. When the priest hears footsteps approaching from the corridor, he begins to tremble, finally realizing who he is meant to meet. A Buddhist monk enters followed closely by Ferreira, wearing a black kimono. The monk, though much smaller, walks proudly while Ferreira looks like a beaten animal. He only glances at Rodrigues before sitting on the floor. He does not speak. Rodrigues wishes he could tell Ferreira that he does not judge nor condemn him, but feels he cannot.

Ferreira is visibly defeated and ashamed of his situation, which suggests that whatever arguments he may make against Christianity in Japan, they are heavily influenced by the fact that Inoue and Japan have ideologically conquered him. The black kimono, garb of the Japanese aristocracy, reflects Ferreira's changed identity, much in the same way that Rodrigues' red Buddhist robes foreshadow his own.

Rodrigues begs Ferreira to speak. Slowly and painfully, they make conversation. Ferreira reveals that he has been living in Nagasaki for the past year, helping to translate books on astronomy and medicine to spread such knowledge in Japan as well. He carefully points out multiple times that he is making himself of use to Japan, that his work is a help to the Japanese people, and Rodrigues understands that the man is imprinted with the need to serve others from his decades as a priest. But when Rodrigues asks Ferreira if he is happy, Ferreira has no real answer.

Although Ferreira's work truly does sound beneficial to the Japanese, his repeated insistence that he is helping people suggests that he is still trying to justify his apostasy and new identity, both to Rodrigues and to himself. This further implies that Ferreira is still conflicted by what he has done, and is ashamed by his apostasy, regardless of how potent his reasons for it were.

The Buddhist monk accompanying Ferreira remarks that Sawano Chuan—Ferreira's given Japanese name—is also writing a book of his own, a refutation of Christianity in Japan. Ferreira looks ashamed, and Rodrigues can see that he'd hoped it would not be mentioned. A tear forms in Ferreira's eye. To Rodrigues, the transformation that seems to have been forced upon Ferreira seems extraordinarily cruel and torturous, worse than any other devisable punishment.

Ferreira's new Japanese name further suggests that his former identity as a Portuguese priest has been wiped out, conquered by Inoue. Yet again, however, Ferreira's apparent shame over this suggests that, whatever incompatibility he may see between Christianity and Japan, the painful loss of his faith still haunts him.

The interpreter asks Ferreira to proceed to the point of the meeting, and Ferreira's stature seems to shrink before Rodrigues. Ferreira announces that his task is to convince Rodrigues to apostatize. The former priest shows the younger a small scar behind each ear, and explains that it is the mark left by the pit, one of Inoue's inventions. When one hangs upside down in the pit, ropes bind their arms and legs and a small incision behind each ear ensures that too much blood does not gather in one's head, killing them. Instead, the sufferer slowly bleeds for days. That the kind face of Inoue could invent such a wretched scheme confuses Rodrigues.

Rodrigues, as well as the reader, is forced to face the disturbing combination of Inoue's kindness and cruelty . However, Inoue's conflicting combination of traits forms a parallel to Rodrigues's own conflicted person. Though he is self-sacrificing and committed to Christ, he is also unwittingly arrogant. In this way, Inoue and Rodrigues's characters seem to parallel each other, both pointing to the moral complexity of human beings, their characteristics, and the things that motivate them.

The interpreter encourages Rodrigues to think over his decision; after all, even the work that Sawano Chuan now does is a service to the Japanese people. He has learned to abandon the self, rather than seek the conversion of others or his own glorious death.

That Ferreira has found a new way to serve people in Buddhism rather than Christianity suggests that the religions have some overlap between them, particularly in their practice of self-denial.

Gently, Ferreira whispers that after 20 years of missionary work, he has discovered that Christianity cannot grow in Japan, referring to Japan as "a swamp" that rots "the sapling of Christianity." Rodrigues counters that Christianity grew at one time, but Ferreira insists that it was not truly Christianity; the Japanese Christians do not even worship the same God. Rather than worship a transcendent being, the Japanese Christians praised the sun in the sky. They have no concept of a transcendent being or deity, they only praise what exists in the world. The external form might have resembled Christianity, but the essential elements were all lost, even when 400,000 Japanese called themselves Christians.

It seems that the author uses Ferreira and his arguments to most poignantly express his own thoughts on the conflict between Western Christianity's ideals and the Eastern culture of Japan. As a Japanese Roman Catholic, Endō is uniquely qualified to explore such an argument which would be impossible for a more dogmatic writer or someone isolated to only one view of the world. Such a conflict suggests that Christianity may simply be incompatible with Japanese thought, or at the very least would need to be radically altered.

This notion horrifies Rodrigues, not the least because if Ferreira is right, then all the martyrs died for nothing. Ferreira, however, is firm, going on to say that they have no concept of a transcendent deity and thus can't even understand Christ, picturing Him instead as only a beautiful and good human being, not as God. When Ferreira finally realized this, "the mission lost its meaning." Rodrigues, overwhelmed, seethes that the man sitting before him is not the Ferreira who trained him in seminary. Ferreira remarks that the priest is right; the magistrate gave him the name of Sawano Chuan, and the man's house, wife, and children as well, since the original Sawano Chuan was executed.

The belief that Jesus Christ is both a human being and transcendent deity is fundamental to orthodox Western Christianity. Such sects that believe Christ was only a man—as Ferreira argues the Japanese do—are regarded by the Catholic Church as heretics, meaning that they are not truly Christians at all. If Ferreira's argument about Japanese Christians inability to conceive of Christ as God is true, then the Portuguese Church would certainly not regard them as Christians, suggesting that Western Christianity truly is incompatible with Japan.

The conversation ends and the palanquin-carriers bear Rodrigues back to his prison cell. On the journey, Rodrigues notes that he could escape at this point—he is hardly guarded—but he no longer has the spirit. The priest is haunted by Ferreira's words, by the idea that Christianity may simply be incompatible with Japan. Yet he feels that Ferreira may be only justifying his own weakness, and the martyrs' conviction seems to speak to the truth of Christianity. Sitting alone in his cell, the priest is overwhelmed by loneliness until he considers that Ferreira's own loneliness and despair are far worse than his, and "he felt for the first time some self-respect and satisfaction—he was able to quietly laugh."

The priest's lack of interest in even escaping suggests that his spirit is broken and his willpower is failing. Though Garrpe is now dead, Rodrigues no longer has the drive to survive so that Japan can even one remaining priest. Furthermore, Rodrigues's satisfaction that at least Ferreira suffers worse than he does suggests his moral strength fails as well. Such glee at another's mental anguish seems decidedly unlike Christ, whom Rodrigues was formerly so preoccupied with imitating.

CHAPTER 8

The next day, the interpreter sternly tries one last time to reason with Rodrigues, but the priest tells him he'd rather be tortured than apostatize. The priest is not so much brave as numb; physical pain seems distant and obsolete. As the priest expects, the guards no longer feed him or treat him well, and the following day a guard tightly binds his hands. The mistreatment, long expected, causes the priest to feel a sense of "elation." He is put on a donkey's back and paraded through the streets of Nagasaki to be jeered and mocked.

Rodrigues's sense of elation at being painfully bound and mistreated shows that the brief amount of physical pain finally meets his expectations of what it means to suffer for Christ. As he formerly theorized, physical pain seems to increase his willpower to resist rather than decrease it, suggesting that Inoue's tactic of defeating him through gentleness is well-conceived.

Rodrigues thinks of Christ riding a donkey through Jerusalem and decides that he will wear a smile the entire time, no matter what abuse he endures. When Kichijiro emerges from the crowd, the priest realizes that in spite of his several treacheries, the coward is also his most faithful friend. The priest nods to Kichijiro, trying to signal his forgiveness and consolation, but Kichijiro, ashamed, disappears into the crowd. After traveling and being jeered at for many miles, the priest's smile hardens into scorn and he closes his eyes to block out the mockery, wondering as he does what expression Christ wore when the crowd at Pilate's house called for His death.

Rodrigues's determination to smile as he imagines Christ did and his inability to maintain that smile demonstrates both his arrogance and the weakness of his willpower at this point. It seems possible that his newfound forgiveness for Kichijiro rises from the priest's growing awareness that they are not so different, and that he himself is only hours away from betraying his faith, just as Kichijiro has done so many times.

The interpreter walks beside Rodrigues's horse and leads him to Inoue's house, telling him that Inoue has determined that the priest will apostatize this very evening. The priest believes this means he will finally be tortured, and he takes solace in the fact that when he dies, he will be united with Mokichi, Ichizo, Garrpe, Christ, and all the other Christian martyrs. The interpreter again asks the priest to apostatize, reassuring him that they are only words, they do not have to mean anything. When the priest refuses, the interpreter looks saddened.

The interpreter's sadness at Rodrigues's refusal to willingly apostatize suggests that, in spite of his previously seen animosity towards Christianity, even he does not wish Rodrigues to experience the pain and shame of being broken as Ferreira was. For Rodrigues, however, the thought of finally experiencing the physical pain he expected seems almost a relief; the end is in sight.

Rodrigues is locked in a small cell at the magistrate's house without windows or light. The floor is covered with urine. Although he cannot see, the priest, feeling with his hands across the walls, discovers that a former occupant of the room (most likely another priest) has carved the Christian phrase *Laudate Eum* into the wall. As Rodrigues waits for hours in the utter darkness, he thinks again of **Christ's face**, which this time seems nearer, and the face gazes at him sorrowfully and speaks, "When you suffer, I suffer with you. To the end I am close with you."

Laudate Eum *is Latin for "Praise Him," a common refrain in Catholic liturgy. It is is significant that when Christ finally speaks, breaking his silence, his face is sorrowful, not beautiful, suggesting that though Rodrigues's faith remains, it is no longer as romanticized as it once was. Rather, Rodrigues recognizes that Christ exists to suffer as His followers suffer, and understands the pain that he himself will experience.*

Somewhere, on the other side of the prison walls, Rodrigues can hear what seems to be snoring; and it strikes him as ironic that one man sleeps while he waits for his death. Terror intermittently takes hold of him and then releases him. Through the wall, the priest can hear multiple voices and an argument, and the voice of Kichijiro shouting, "Father, forgive me! I have come to make my confession and receive absolution. Forgive me!" Kichijiro keeps shouting, and the priest puts his fingers in his ears to block out the voice, but even as he does so he mouths the words of absolution for the treacherous man, reflecting bitterly once again on the quandary of Judas and how Christ could love a man—if he loved him at all—whom he knew would betray him.

Kichijiro's arrival, and Rodrigues's almost unwitting prayer of absolution for the man, again suggest that the priest senses how close his own apostasy truly is. By pondering about whether Christ loves Judas, the priest not only reflects on his relationship to Kichijiro, but also wonders whether Christ loves him in spite of his inevitable failure, and if so, why that should be. This suggests a massive shift in the priest's self-perception: although Rodrigues primarily viewed himself as a Christ-figure, he is on the verge of seeing himself as Judas instead.

The snoring sound continues, growing so present in Rodrigues's mind that he sits on the floor and begins to laugh at the strange quality of it, both human and animal-sounding. The disturbance it causes the priest on what he presumes is the night of his death builds in his mind until he is in a rage and beats his fists on the wall of his cell. The interpreter and Ferreira open the door of the cell and ask what the matter is. When the priest tells him he is only bothered by the snoring, Ferreira tells him it is not snoring, but "the moaning of Christians hanging in the pit."

There is a horrific irony to Rodrigues's laughter and anger at the sound of Christians moaning in the pit. Although the people making those sounds are in utter agony, the priest yet again exhibits his own vanity and self-importance by being enraged at the disturbance they cause upon his mind, emphasizing the priest's arrogance yet again, in spite of his aspirations to imitate Christ.

Ferreira enters the cell alone and speaks with Rodrigues. It was Ferreira who carved the letters on the wall during his own imprisonment. Rodrigues still considers Ferreira a traitor, until Ferreira reveals that he himself hung in the pit for three days and did not apostatize, nor utter a word against God. But when Ferreira was left in the cell, listening to other people suffer on his behalf, when he found he could not praise God in the midst of the suffering he heard, when he prayed for God to end it and God did nothing, he broke. Rodrigues tries to resist his arguments, but his mind thinks back to all the Christians he watched die in the midst of God's silence.

Ferreira's own crisis of faith in the midst of God's silence directly parallels Rodrigues's own struggle to remain faithful. Although Rodrigues imagined that Ferreira was a traitor to the faith, he finds himself following the exact same path, suggesting both to him and the reader that any person would likely do the same if they were in such a situation, regardless of whether their faith was strong like Garrpe's or weak like Kichijiro's. Remaining faithful in the face of so much unanswered suffering seems an impossible task.

Ferreira argues that by making others suffer on his behalf, Rodrigues regards himself as "more important than them." He is concerned with saving himself rather than others, afraid to become the "dregs of the Church." If Christ were in their position, he argues, Christ would certainly apostatize to save the sufferers. Rodrigues tries to deny him, but his resolve is crumbling. Understanding this from personal experience, Ferreira lays his hand on Rodrigues's shoulder and tells him, "You are now going to perform the most painful act of love that has ever been performed."

Ferreira reveals the inherent arrogance of Rodrigues, and even of Garrpe's refusal to apostatize. By pointing at that such refusal to apostatize may be seen as arrogance and vanity rather than faithfulness to God, the narrative raises the possibility that inflicting suffering upon other human beings is a graver sin than symbolically rejecting Christ. However, the author refrains from settling too heavily on either side of the argument, allowing the moral ambiguity to remain.

Ferreira leads Rodrigues slowly, painfully out of the cell and to the interpreter, who is waiting for them with a fumie. Looking down at the metal image, the priest sees "the ugly **face of Christ**," and prays to God, expressing his pain at trampling on this face, the most beautiful and hallowed thing in the priest's life. As his foot hovers above the fumie, dawn begins to break, the light touching upon the priest's frail neck and shoulders. His foot seems filled with pain. The metal face of Christ speaks, "Trample! Trample! I more than anyone know the pain in your foot. Trample! It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It was to share men's pain that I carried my cross." The priest steps onto the fumie. "Dawn broke. And far in the distance the cock crew."

Now that Rodrigues's spirit and faith are defeated, Christ's face seems ugly, not because the priest hate his Lord, but because Christ truly becomes a symbol of terrible suffering rather than a beautiful beacon of hope. Although Rodrigues hears Christ speak to him and affirm his betrayal, the author leaves even this moment ambiguous since it is possible that Rodrigues only imagines the voice. The cock crowing in the distance is a reference to the Apostle Peter's betrayal of Christ, though significantly, Peter too was able to find absolution for his betrayal and spend the rest of his life serving Christ.

CHAPTER 9

It is summer, and Rodrigues lives in Nagasaki under house arrest, forbidden to leave except when the magistrate gives permission. He spends long hours sitting at the window, and the street children often call him Apostate Paul. The priest knows that news of his apostasy has likely reached his brethren in Portugal, and that he has thus been expelled from the Church and stripped of his rights as a priest. Often he wakes in the night, haunted by his betrayal. One part of him believes that it was ultimately done in love—though how could his superiors at the mission ever understand this? Another part of him wonders if that isn't just a justification for shameful weakness. Rodrigues can still clearly see the image of the fumie in his mind. This image of **Christ's face** was not beautiful, strong, or clear, but "utterly exhausted" and worn down by being trampled constantly.

Rodrigues's new nickname "Apostate Paul" is a vicious play on the biblical figure of Paul, one of the heroes of the Christian faith and authors of the New Testament. Rodrigues's expulsion from the Church and the loss of his rights as a priest signal not only a loss of his vocation, but of his entire identity as a priest and Christian missionary. Rather than seeing Christ as beautiful as he once did, Rodrigues's memory of Christ's face on the fumie looking "utterly exhausted" suggests that Rodrigues no longer perceives Christ as the most beautiful person imaginable, but as one who suffers long and painful ordeals.

In spite of his shame, Rodrigues is treated well. Almost daily he is given work to do, most often examining foreign goods making their way into the country to determine if they are secretly Christian or not. He sees Ferreira rarely, only monthly, and they are not allowed to meet on their own. This is just as well, because the two men have come to hate each other, filled by contempt by the mere sight of each other. Rodrigues does not hate his former mentor for orchestrating his downfall, but rather because when he looks at Ferreira he sees his own shame and defeat staring back at him: a sad, defeated former missionary, dressed in Japanese clothing and bowing to the power of the state.

The nickname Apostate Paul proves particularly ironic. In the Bible, Paul persecuted Christians until a life-changing event made him a Christian leader. Rodrigues, by contrast, begins as a Christian leader until his own pivotal moment turns him into an agent of the Japanese government, complicit in the persecution of Christianity. The shame and contempt for Ferreira that Rodrigues feels suggest that, although his apostasy may have seemed the only path available, his conscience has certainly not been able to justify it.

CHAPTER 10

Notes from the diary of a Dutch Clerk in Nagasaki, 1644: Amidst shipping notes, the clerk reports that both Sawano Chuan (Ferreira) and Rodrigues have given testimony that certain smuggled artifacts are Christian, resulting in the torture and deaths of several families, even though both apostates asked the court for mercy upon the convicted. Sawano Chuan informs the government that missionaries intend to smuggle themselves and religious relics through Dutch trading vessels, which causes a stern crack-down and rigorous inspections all of ships and cargo.

The clerk's notes provide confirmation that not only do Ferreira and Rodrigues serve the Japanese government, they are also complicit in the torture and execution of Christians as a result. This raises the stakes around the dilemma of apostasy, since not only have they personally renounced Christianity, but they also inflict additional pain on Japanese Christians. Since this is what they'd both hoped to end, it calls the reader to question whether such apostasy was worth it.

1645: The clerk is curious about the two apostates living in Nagasaki, and tries to find more information about them. Sawano Chuan proves most effective in searching out Christian artifacts and translating information about the Dutch and Portuguese for the Japanese government. The clerk "almost wish[es] death on that rascal who ignores God."

The clerk's vitriol toward Ferreira—though not Rodrigues—suggests that Ferreira has embraced his new position as an enemy of Christianity, which is both ironic and tragic since he was once one of its great leaders.

January 1946: As part of the new year, every household in Japan is visited by a government representative armed with fumie for each member of the household to step on, as a ritual sign of their rejection of Christianity.

The Japanese government's demand of ritual apostasy indicates that Christianity is regarded as a chief opponent to their national sovereignty and stability. This further reinforces the notion that Japan's persecution of Christians is more politically than ideologically motivated.

The narration returns to third person. Rodrigues is called to meet Inoue at his home, the first time he has seen the magistrate since he apostatized. Inoue greets him gently and is careful to avoid mention of the priest's apostasy. Rather, he announces that a man named Okada San'emon recently died in Edo, and in a month, the priest will take the man's name and wife. Rodrigues does not meet Inoue's eyes, and the news feels like yet another defeat; he does not want a wife, and does not want to become Japanese. Even so, the priest shrugs and quietly answers his approval.

Once again, Inoue's calm demeanor and care to not further shame Rodrigues characterizes him not as an evil man—though he orchestrates brutal persecution of Christians—but as one who is simply operating as he must in his role as a magistrate. This again suggests that persecution is not necessarily motivated by hatred or animosity, but may rather be driven by practical goals and needs.

Noting his defeated posture, Inoue reminds Rodrigues that he was not "defeated" by the magistrate himself, only by the "swamp of Japan" in which Christianity cannot grow. Unwittingly, the priest answers, "My struggle with Christianity was in my own heart." Inoue questions whether the priest had faith at all, and though the priest wants to challenge the man, he does not. Inoue further tells him that, although there are many Christian farmers in the outer regions of Japan, without the presence of priests to guide them, their religion has morphed into something entirely different, something which does not concern Inoue.

Rodrigues's suggestion places the blame for his apostasy not on his environment, but on his own shoulders, questioning whether he had faith to begin with. However, the narrative throughout makes it clear that Rodrigues possessed a strong faith in God, though perhaps not strong enough to overcome such extraordinary suffering as he witnessed. Inoue's disinterest with the Japanese distortion of Christianity confirms yet again that he is primarily opposed to Western Christianity's foreign influence.

Rodrigues leaves and returns to his own house in Nagasaki, reflecting cynically that everything he had once longed for, he now has, but in the wrong manner. As a missionary, he'd intended to take on the life of Japan for himself; now he even had a name. Though a celibate priest, he is given a wife. However, never being able to cross the **sea** and return to Portugal, and return to the Church feels like living in a "Christian prison."

Rodrigues's taking of a Japanese name, house, and wife suggests that his shift in identity is nearly complete; the process that began with donning the red Buddhist robes has come to fruition, though it is the last thing that he wanted. Everything that once made up his identity as a Christian priest has been taken from him and replaced by Japanese culture.

Kichijiro arrives at Rodrigues's door, whispering that he wants the priest to hear his confession and offer him absolution. The priest initially resists, since he is no longer technically a priest. However, as he considers Kichijiro's weakness next to his own weakness, he sees **Christ's face** in his mind, reassuring him that just as Christ told Judas to fulfill his purpose (to betray Him as he must), so Christ told the priest to trample the fumie, and that Christ will suffer alongside him regardless.

Although Rodrigues believes Christ told him to apostatize, the guilt and shame he feels questions that belief. Thus, the answer to the question of whether or not Rodrigues should have trampled the fumie is left intentionally ambiguous for the reader to personally wrestle with, just as Rodrigues does. This suggests that there is no simple, clear answer to such a dilemma.

Rodrigues decides to hear Kichijiro's confession, since there are no other priests left in the country. Although the priest knows his former brethren would see his performance of the priestly duties as sacrilegious, "even if he was betraying them, he was not betraying his Lord." The priest realizes that he is still the last priest in Japan, and that even when God is silent, the priest's life and presence speaks of God's existence.

Ultimately, the novel seems to suggest—while leaving plenty of room for disagreement—that although Rodrigues's apostasy was a betrayal of the institution of Christianity, it was not an absolute betrayal of Christ himself, and that his very survival and existence in Japan is a testament to his own faith and God's presence.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Homstad, Levi. "*Silence*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 21 Aug 2019. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Homstad, Levi. "*Silence*." LitCharts LLC, August 21, 2019. Retrieved April 21, 2020. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/silence.

To cite any of the quotes from *Silence* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Endō, Shūsaku. Silence. Picador. 2016.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Endō, Shūsaku. Silence. New York: Picador. 2016.