

Religion and isolation in the stranger and chronicle of a death foretold essay sa...

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Religion is a major foundation for many cultures. It is present all over the world in many different shapes and forms. But all religions have one thing in common, communality. Naturally, with rituals such as congregation people of religion are brought together. This community worships together, but this relationship extends further than the confines of a church. Members of the same church, or religion, have the same core values, and these commonalities result in a community that would not have otherwise existed. When there is a disregard for religion, there is a loss of community and thus a step towards isolation. This is best seen through the comparison of *The Stranger*, by Albert Camus, and *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. In *The Stranger*, the main character exhibits an immense disregard for religion; coincidentally this person is very much alone in the novel. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, the main character is an avid follower of his religion; and such, he is a member of the community and has many relationships with other members of the community.

In *The Stranger*, the main character Meursault is very distanced from religion. It is revealed that Meursault has always been without faith when the reader learns that Meursault's mother "Maman had never in her life given a thought to religion" (Camus 6). With a mother whom didn't care for religion, it would have been impossible for Meursault to practice, let alone accept, any religion. His distance from religion is seen throughout the novel. At the very beginning of the novel, during his mother's funeral, Meursault's distance from religion is seen by the actual order of the funeral procession. Meursault describes the order of the procession as follows, "First came the priest, then the hearse. Flanking it, the four men. Behind it, the director and

myself" (15). The simple imagery of this event showcases Meursault's detachment from religion. In the funeral procession, he is as far away as possible from the priest. The priest is leading the procession, and Meursault is at the very end of the procession. This image of separation between Meursault and the priest shows Meursault's distance and indifference to religion.

This distancing from religion can also be seen at the very end of the novel. When Meursault is alone in his prison cell awaiting his execution, the chaplain comes to visit him, " he sat down on my bunk and invited me to sit next to him. I refused" (116). Here again Meursault is separating himself from religion. He is given the chance to confide and repent with this priest, but instead he rudely refuses. The tone here shows Meursault's disregard for religion. Although the priest was there for a " friendly visit", Meursault is cold and callous towards him (116). Meursault doesn't reject the priest's friendly moves because he is ill tempered, he does so because he " had only a little time left and [he] didn't want to waste it on God" (120). Seen here, Meursault's mood is irritable as he believes the priest is wasting his precious time. Lastly, Meursault's distance from religion is best seen through the nickname the magistrate gives to Meursault, " Monsieur Antichrist" (71). Giving Meursault a name that is the opposite of anything holy further demonstrates his separation from God and religion. All of these details come together to show that Meursault has a blatant disregard for religion.

Meursault's disregard for religion can also be seen through his actions. For example, Meursault has plenty of premarital sex with his girlfriend Marie. In

Catholicism for instance, premarital sex is frowned upon. Meursault's actions clearly devalue these aspects of religion. Minute details throughout the book also offer insight into Meursault's thoughts on religion. One day, after spending the night with Marie, Meursault "remembered that it was Sunday, and that bothered [him]: [he doesn't] like Sundays" (21). Sunday is the lord's day and Meursault's dislike of this day is due to Meursault's dislike of religion. Very different from Meursault, Santiago Nasar, the main character in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, is very much a man of religion. Santiago's respect for religion is seen in the first sentence of the novel, "Santiago Nasar got up at five-thirty in the morning to wait for the boat the bishop was coming on" (Marquez 3). Santiago's dedication is seen through the fact that he is rising at such an early hour to see a Catholic authority figure. Also, he "put on a shirt and pants of white linen... It was his attire for special occasions" (5).

The act of wearing clothes specific for this occasion shows Santiago's respect for religion. The importance of religion in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is not just in relation to Santiago. His whole community values religion. For example, when Angela Vicario and Bayardo San Roman wed, they wed in a church with "floral decorations equal in cost to those for fourteen first class funerals" (42). The flowers alone show the importance of marriage, which in itself is a religious institution. Even more important is the purity of the bride. After being returned to her mother by Bayardo San Roman, Angela says her mother "was holding [her] by the hair with one hand and beating [her] with the other with such rage that [she] thought [her mother] was going to kill

[her]" (46). The image of a mother beating her adult daughter is pretty powerful. One must have done something very wrong to receive this punishment. In Santiago's society, premarital sex elicits such a response. All in all, it is clear that religion is an important part of this society.

Furthermore, Santiago's murder is postponed for an hour because of his relationship with God. At first the Vicario twins planned to kill Santiago as he came out of his house to attend the bishop's arrival. But, Clotilde Armenta stalls them by saying, "' For the love of God,... Leave him for later, if only out of respect for his grace the bishop'" (16). Here, Santiago's respect for God is reciprocated as this respect gives him another hour to live. Without his faith, there would have been no reason to postpone his murder. When comparing the lives of Meursault and Santiago, a certain truth becomes evident.

Meursault is very isolated in his life. His relationship with his mother was distant, and his only friends are his neighbors. Meursault's isolation can be seen through his actions. Even in the beginning of the novel Meursault is seen as a lonely person. When Meursault is on a bus to go to his mother's funeral, a soldier asks him if he had been " traveling long", Meursault responds " ' yes,' just so [he] wouldn't have to say anything else" (Camus 4). Meursault has no interest in other people and he tries to detach himself from them. Even with his lover, Marie, Meursault is resistant to a deeper relationship, " she asked me if I loved her. [Meursault] told her it didn't mean anything but that [he] didn't think so" (35). Even in Meursault's description he is described as " taciturn and withdrawn" (66).

These examples illustrate Meursault's disconnection and isolation from everyone else in the novel. Santiago on the other hand is a valued member of his family, and he has many friends whom tried to save him from his fate. Santiago's sister describes him as " ' handsome, a man of his word, and with a fortune of his own at the age of twenty-one'" (Marquez 18). Here, Santiago's sister gives reasons as to why he is successful with women. This description proves that Santiago has the ability to establish relationships well. Also, within his family, Santiago is very cared for. When word of the murder reaches his family, the youngest brother, " touched by the breath of tragedy, began to weep" (23). Lastly, after hearing of the twins' plan, Santiago's mother tries to save him, " she quickened her step, with the determination she was capable of when there was a life at stake" (23-24).

Unfortunately, Santiago had already been murdered at this point. Meursault is detached from religion and thus dies alone. Although Santiago, also dies, he died as a loved member of his family and as a friend to many. Religion has the ability to bring people together. Without it, Meursault dies as a very isolated person. Contrastingly, Santiago dies as a loved member of the community and family. Though religion cannot be the sole reason for Meursault's isolation, or Santiago's lack thereof, it is important for these connections to be drawn. The effects of religion do indeed extend beyond faith and spirituality. Religion brings people together, and without it, it is possible to distance oneself from others.

Works Cited

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