



The Sadness of Christ: Title and Manuscript

- **Note on the title:** While More's last major writing in the Tower of London is commonly called *The Sadness of Christ*, the full title of the manuscript is: *The Sadness, the Weariness, the Fear, and the Prayer of Christ before He Was Taken Prisoner – Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 18.*
- **Note on the manuscript:** *The Sadness of Christ* survives in More's own hand in the astonishing Valencia manuscript. For a full version of the original manuscript, see https://www.thomasmorestudies.org/docs/Tristitia_Christi.pdf.

The Sadness of Christ: Major Themes for Reflection

- **Key problem posed by More:** Why does Christ allow himself to be “sad unto death”? (*EWTM*, 1253-57)
- **More's brief answer:** Christ wanted to teach us a “fighting technique and a battle code” (1257/74) so that “His followers [would] be brave and prudent soldiers, not senseless and foolish” persons (1254/46-48).
- **Major question for reflection:** What are the “fighting technique” and “battle code” that readers should learn from this last work? What are some of the specific counsels that More shares for facing pain, suffering, loneliness, and their own limitations?
- **Exploring connections:** How do the counsels on living and leading one's life well in *Sadness* compare to More's earlier counsels in *The Life of Pico*, *Utopia*, *Epigrams*, and *Dialogue of Comfort*?

The Sadness of Christ: Outline of Major Passages

- Comments on the prayer of Christ the “Commander” (1258-61)
- Comments on how Christ deals with friends who fall asleep on him (1261-65, 1269-71; longest section in *Sadness*)
- Comments on how Christ prays (1262-63, 1265-66); first lesson on prayer qualified (1273-74)
- Comments on the extent of Christ's suffering; why wasn't Christ an eager, cheerful martyr? (1267-69)
- Comments on how Christ deals with Judas, who does not sleep (1277-85, second longest section in *Sadness*)
- Comments on the *Severing of Malchus' Ear (1285-89)
- Comments on leadership: the Priests' and Magistrates' “hour ... of darkness” (1289-93)
- Comments on the *Flight of Disciples (1293-97)
- Comments on patience vs. thoughtless drowsiness (1293)
- Comments on the young man who flees naked (1293-96)
- Other commentary: on the ineffectiveness of guards, 1294; on the value of gathering wholesome counsels, 1295/4; on the example of the young non-pot-bellied youth, 1295/76; on the body as garment of the soul, 1295; on the similar example of patriarch Joseph, 1296; on Christ's advice to “be wise as serpents,” 1296
- Comments on the *Capture of Christ (1297)
- The text breaks off with “only then, after all these events, did they lay hands on Jesus.”
* Indicates the title and subtitles given in More's hand

More's Catena and Final Prayers & Instructions

More's Catena of Scriptural Quotations and Brief Reflections (*EWTM*, 1297-1301)

“A Godly Instruction [on Not Bearing Malice or Ill Will]” (1339)

“A Godly Instruction on Whether to Save One's Life” (1339)

“Imploring Divine Help against Temptation” – More's collection of Latin Psalms (1342-48)

“A Godly Meditation [on Detachment]” – originally written in the margins of More's prayer book (1349)

“A Devout Prayer before Death” (1350)

Question for Reflection on Sadness of Christ and Final Prayers & Instructions

In one of his *Final Prayers*, More desires a certain “mind” – a mental outlook or way of seeing and judging – as the result of his prayer. What “mind” or mental outlook do *Sadness* and *Final Prayers* reveal and foster? On the evidence of these last writings, what was More's “mind” towards the circumstance and events he was confronting in the time before his trial and death?