

## *Hymn for Condemned Prisoners (1742)*

[Baker list, #70]

### **Editorial Introduction:**

Both John and Charles Wesley devoted considerable energy to ministry among prisoners. A striking account in Charles's *MS Journal* (July 10–19, 1738) describes how he spent days with a group of prisoners about to be executed, encouraging them to make their peace with God. He then accompanied them to the gallows, offered them a last communion, and joined in singing hymns as they met their fate. Charles clearly assumed that those condemned to die had a particular need to “prepare” to die and that he had a ministry of helping them in this preparation. It is little surprise that this ministry would find poetic expression. In 1785 Charles published *Prayers for Condemned Malefactors*, but these were not the first instance of such verse. The ledgers of the printer William Strahan of London carry a charge against the Wesley brothers in December 1742 for printing a “Hymn for Condemned Prisoners.” No copy of this publication has been located. However, it is almost certain that it was the hymn included in MS Clarke, 87–89, that Charles later placed in his collected *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1749) under the title “A Hymn for Condemned Malefactors.”

### **Editions:**

Charles Wesley. [*Hymn for Condemned Prisoners.*] London: Strahan, 1742. [no copies]

### **Text:**

For the likely text of this hymn, see *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1749), 1:176–78.