MS Spencer

MS Spencer takes its name from its provenance. It is another notebook (like MS Clarke and MS Shent) in which Charles Wesley gathered manuscript copies of hymns prior to potential publication. In MS Spencer some of the hymns are written in longhand and others in shorthand. Based on the Latin inscription in the notebook by Rev. Edward Spencer (1739–1819), he received it as a gift from Wesley about 1770, after Charles had published most of the items in it. The notebook was handed down through Spencer’s family until it was sold by Mellor and Kirk in Sept. 2020 (Lot 793) to a private party.

Knowledge of the contents of MS Spencer is limited at this time to page photographs included in the description at the time of its sale. Fortunately, these include the list of contents, written by Wesley in shorthand; as well as samples of two items in shorthand and one in longhand. These are transcribed (expanding the shorthand) below, indicating variant readings from their published form. Based on the list of contents, it appears that all of the items placed by Wesley in this notebook are known from elsewhere—most being published, a few present in other surviving manuscript collections. The sale description does not make clear whether all of the hymns listed by Wesley on the contents page survive in the notebook, or if several have been cut out (like MS Six). If the notebook is made available in the future by the private holder, we will update the file that follows.

Scholars of early Methodism will be interested that on the fly-leaf facing the page on which Wesley lists the contents of the notebook he has written in shorthand a list of members of a “Wednesday evening band.” Given the names on the list, this band was located in Bristol, c. 1755–65. The list reads as follows (expanded):

[[Wednesday evening band]]

[[John Jones]] Rev. John Jones (1721–85)
[[Sarah Jones]] Sarah (Perrin) Jones (1708–87)
[[Mrs. Vigor]] Elizabeth (Stafford) Vigor (1697–1774)
[[Nancy Stafford]] Ann Stafford (1710–92)
[[Molly Stafford]] Mary Stafford (d. 1782)
[[Susan Designe]] Susannah Designe (1712–79)
[[Sally Colston]] Sarah Colston (1716–67)
[[Betty Johnson]] Elizabeth Johnson (1720–98)
[[Nancy Shepherd]]
[[Alice Granil]]
[[Alice Downs]]
[[Sarah Wesley]] Sarah (Gwynne) Wesley

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1This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under the editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the diligent assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: January 14, 2021.
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<td>&quot;For One Grown Slack&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;For Those in the Wilderness: Jesus help as weak a soul&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Assign to the faithful God of love&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Allured into the desert&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;For a Family: Head of the church, appear, appear&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;O Saviour cast a gracious smile&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;To what am I reserved great God&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;My Lord and God thy counsel show&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;O thou with whom unfelt, unseen&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;On the Death of Mrs. Ann Wigginton: What Shall We Say, It is the Lord&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Of Mrs. Mary Naylor: But is the hasty spirit fled&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Where is the fair Elysian flower&quot;</td>
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</table>
Come let us join our friends above
That have obtain’d the prize,
And on the eagle-wings of love
To joy celestial rise;
Let all the saints terrestrial sing
With those to glory gone,
For all the servants of our King
In earth and heaven are one.

One family we dwell in him,
One church above, beneath,
Tho’ now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death:
One army of the living God,
To his command we bow:
Part of his host hath cross’d the flood,
And part is crossing now.

Ten thousand to their endless home
This solemn moment fly,
And we are to the margin come,
And we expect to die:
His militant, embodied host
With wishful looks we stand,
And long to see that happy coast,
And reach that heavenly land.

Our old companions in distress
We haste again to see,
And eager long for our release
And full felicity:

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2A manuscript precursor of the first four stanzas of this hymn appears in MS Richmond, 156. The full hymn is found in MS Six, 23–24. It was published in *Funeral Hymns* (1759), 1–2. The current manuscript form contains no variants from the published form.
3. Strong I seem’d, and rich in grace,
   When first I lisp’d thy name
But the hidings of thy face
   Have show’d me what I am:
Hence, I know myself but man,\(^4\)
   I feel my utter helplessness:
Turn, and look me … [out of pain,
   And look me back my peace.]

4. Sinks my weary, feeble mind
   Beneath its wait\(^5\) of care,
Labouring thro’ the fire to find
   Its old relief in prayer;
Labouring on, but\(^6\) still in vain,
   While horrid doubts my spirit seize:
Turn, and look me … [out of pain,
   And look me back my peace.]

5. Faintly hoping against hope,
   Devoid of life and power,
Now I woud decline the cup
   I gladly drank before,

\(^3\)A revised version of this complete hymn appears in MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 40–42.
\(^4\)MS Miscellaneous Hymns changes “Hence, I know …” to “Yes, I know ….”
\(^5\)MS Miscellaneous Hymns changes “wait” to “weight.”
\(^6\)MS Miscellaneous Hymns changes “but” to “yet.”
Now I shun my former gain,
And fears of death my heart oppress:
Turn, and look me ... [out of pain,
And look me back my peace.]

6. Once I knew the Master’s mind,
Which now I cannot know,
Doubly dead to God, and blind
To all his ways below:
Who his counsel can explain,
Or trace him thro’ the dark abyss?
Turn, and look me ... [out of pain,
And look me back my peace.]

7. O for one kind, pitying ray
To lead one through the gloom,7
Till the long-expected day
Of my deliverance come!
Till that happy8 port I gain,
Emerging from these stormy seas,
Turn, and look me ... [out of pain,
And look me back my peace.]

7MS Miscellaneous Hymns changes to “To cheer me in the gloom.”
8MS Miscellaneous Hymns changes “happy” to “heavenly.”
Wherefore with meekest awe to thee [/
My time, my life, my all I leave,
Eternal wisdom choose for me, [/
And when, and as thou wilt, receive.]]

Or come in perfect light and love, [/
To me, to all thy people given,
Or come thy servant to remove, [/
And take me to thyself in heaven.]]

On the Death of Mrs. Ann Wigginton
[April] 24, 1757.

What shall we say? It is the Lord! [/
His name be prais’d, his will be done!
Bereav’d by his revoking word, [/
We meekly render him his own,
And faultless mourn our partner fled, [/
Our friend remov’d, our Dorcas dead.]]

A Christian good, without pretence, [/
A widow by her works approv’d,
A saint indeed is summon’d hence, [/
To triumph with her best belov’d,
In whom she found acceptance here, [/
And show’d her faith by humble fear.]]

By works of righteousness she show’d [/
The gracious principle within,
By reverence for the things of God, [/
By deadness to the world and sin,
By laying up her wealth above, [/
By all the toils of patient love.]]

[Memorial of her faith unfeign’d, [/
As incense sweet, before the throne,

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9These of the final two stanzas of Hymn 152 as published in Family Hymns (1767), 162–63. There are no variants from the published form

10Funeral Hymns (1759), 31–33
Did not her prayers and alms ascend, [I] And bring the heavenly herald down?
Did she not for the preacher call, [I] With news of pard’ning grace for all?

What tho’ she in the desert pined, [I] And languish’d for the light in vain,
Her soul obedient and resign’d, [I] Did darkly safe with God remain,
Who led his trembling servant on, [I] And bless’d her in a path unknown.

Unconscious of the grace receiv’d, [I] She mourn’d, as destitute of grace,
A pattern to believers liv’d, [I] And labour’d on with even pace,
Possest of Martha’s better part, [I] And Mary’s hands, and Lydia’s heart.

Unconscious of the grace receiv’d, [I] She mourn’d, as destitute of grace,
A pattern to believers liv’d, [I] And labour’d on with even pace,
Possest of Martha’s better part, [I] And Mary’s hands, and Lydia’s heart.

No noisy self-deceiver she, [I] No boaster vain of faith untry’d:
Her own good works she could not see, [I] But did, and cast them all aside;
And when her useful course/glorious race was run, [I] Complain’d she never yet begun.

Soon as the warning angel came, [I] That call’d her up to worlds on high,
Meek as a death-devoted lamb, [I] Yet starting, as unfit to die,
Her nature’s frailty she confest, [I] And sunk upon her Saviour’s breast.

He own’d the soul so dearly lov’d, [I] And cutting short his work of grace,
Her sins insensibly remov’d, [I] Made meet at once to see his face,
And lo! Her latest fears are o’er, / And pain and suffering is no more.

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11"Martha” and “Mary” are reversed in placement in *Funeral Hymns* (1759).
12*Funeral Hymns* (1759) has “good deeds” instead of “good works”; and “But wrought” instead of “But did.”