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## “ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL” – CHILDREN SINGING THE APOSTOLIC CREED<sup>1</sup>

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### OPSOMMING

Die kerk het oor die eeue heen van liedere gebruikgemaak om teologiese waarhede oor te dra aan volgelinge. Hierdie proses het ook plaasgevind in die godsdienstige onderrig van kinders. Kinderkerklidere raak veral in die 19de eeu in Brittanje toenemend toegespits op kinders se vermoëns om teologiese begrippe en Bybelse kennis te kan verwerk. In hierdie artikel word die oordrag van kennis van die apostoliese geloofsbelydenis, soos dit voorkom in drie liedere uit CF Alexander se *Hymns for Children* (1848), ondersoek. Daar word geargumenteer dat Alexander se benadering verskil van dié van vorige kinderliedere deurdat dit nie net konsentreer op oordrag van kennis (in hierdie geval die geloofsbelydenis) nie, maar ook aanspraak maak op die spirituele belewenis van die kind. Spiritualiteit word verstaan as 'n besondere vlak van bewustheid van die werklikheid en oomblikke van verwondering, opgewondenheid en verbeelding soos uiteengesit deur die Nye en Hay. Die gevolgtrekking is dat die digter deur gebruik van eenvoudige taal en beelde wat aan die kind bekend is, aansluiting vind by die kind se verwysingsraamwerk en spirituele vermoëns. Dit dra daartoe by dat oordrag van teologiese kennis in die *Hymns for*

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a paper read at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Spirituality and Music Education (S.A.M.E.), 26 March 2015, Potchefstroom, South Africa.

*little children* plaasvind deurdat die belewenis en ervaring van die betrokke aanhalings uit die geloofsbelydennis geïntensiveer word. Terselfdertyd gee dit aan die kind die geleentheid om sy/haar spiritualiteit uit te leef deurdat 'n besondere bewustheid van die werklikheid, soos verwoord in die lied, aangemoedig word en aspekte van spiritualiteit soos verwondering en verbeelding beleef en ontwikkel word.

## KEY WORDS

Apostolic creed, C.F.Alexander, Children's hymns, Children's spirituality, Hymns for little children

## INTRODUCTION

Historically the (Christian) church has utilised hymns, amongst other tools, for teaching theological truths to its members. Some scholars even consider hymns as theological statements (Kimbrough, 2006:22), or refer to them as being lyrical theology (Kimbrough, 1985:59). According to Horton (1995:27), "the average Christian will learn more about the objective truth of scripture by the hymns they sing than from systematic theology". Apart from being an instrument in worship, children's hymns have also been used as a tool in religious instruction, privately or in public Sunday schools.

Amongst the multitude of 19th-century British congregational hymns, children's hymns stood at a crossroads between the flourishing religious tract (often in the form of poems) and the grand tradition of English hymnody (Clapp-Itnyre, 2010:145). Children's hymns were shaped by the general conception of what a child is or what childhood should be. Texts either "talked down to the little innocent child" or had the aim of "lifting them up" to the world of the congregational hymn (Clapp-Itnyre, 2010:146; Curtis, 2006:216). In my research into the children's hymn and spirituality I have come across a unique genre of religious song, namely children's songs intended for accompaniment while learning about the Apostolic Creed<sup>2</sup>: *Hymns for little children* (1848) by Cecil Francis Alexander. These hymns were written especially to explain the contents of the Apostolic Creed to young children<sup>3</sup> and reveal a simple approach to assimilating the religious

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<sup>2</sup> The Apostolic Creed is the oldest of the creeds used in the Christian church and is dated fourth century. The complete text is given here for the sake of the reader:  
I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen. (*Psalter Hymnal*, 1988:813).

<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to determine the age group of the children since religious involvement is dependent on several external factors such as culture, previous experience and so forth. Alexander  
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teaching to which the child could relate and respond to spiritually. Three of these hymns have become well known and regularly appear in modern hymnbooks: “All things bright and beautiful”,<sup>4</sup> “Once in royal David’s city”,<sup>5</sup> and “There is a green hill far away”.<sup>6</sup>

The following questions arise: How are aspects of the Apostolic Creed taught and explained in Alexander’s *Hymns for little children*? To what extent do these hymns correspond to the spirituality of the child and how do they allow for deepened spiritual experience? This article endeavours to answer these questions by means of a literature study and an analytical discussion of the characteristic elements of the three hymns mentioned above.

## CHILDREN AND SPIRITUALITY

Several scholars have tried to formulate a definition of spirituality, but it seems to be a complex matter. Hay and Nye (1998:113) describe spirituality as “an unusual plane of consciousness” and “moments of awe, wonder, excitement and imagination.” They see spirituality as the expression of relationships with God, the self, the other and the world.<sup>7</sup> Nye and Hay (1996:145-146) have put together a set of three interrelated themes or categories of spiritual sensitivity that will form the basis of discussion for this article.

Awareness Sensing	Here and Now Tuning Flow Focus
Mystery Sensing	Awe and Wonder Imagination
Value Sensing	Delight and Despair Ultimate Goodness Meaning

**Figure 1:** Categories of spiritual sensitivity (Nye & Hay, 1996:145-146)

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only refers to “my little godsons” in the dedication of *Hymns for little children*. In general the author assumes that the age group 6 to 12 years is applicable in this case.

<sup>4</sup> VONKK 92: “Als so mooi en wonderlik”, Afrikaans text by Jacques Louw. (www.vonkk.co.za).

<sup>5</sup> This hymn appears in Afrikaans in the *Halleluja* (1949): “Daar is ’n groeneheuweltop”. (Author unknown).

<sup>6</sup> This hymn appears in the *Liedboek van die Kerk* (2001), Lied 350: “In die stad van koning Dawid”. The Afrikaans text written by Pierre Malan (1989) was revised in 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Since this paper deals with Christian hymns, my discussion of spirituality will be based on an assumption of Christian spirituality. ‘Spiritual’, however, is not synonymous with ‘religious’, but religious activity (such as hymn singing) can include the spiritual. They share common ground and often overlap (Boyce-Tillman, 2007:1415; Ratcliff & May, 2004:10-11). Spirituality can be distinguished from religiousness in that “[s]pirituality refers to an inner belief system that a person relies on for strength and comfort whereas religiousness refers to institutional religious rituals, practices and beliefs” (Housekamp *et al.*, 2004 as quoted in Holder, 2010).

Moments of *awareness sensing* are potentially spiritual and point toward the awareness of a specific sensation (Nye & Hay, 1996:146). It concerns the *here and now* and focuses on a “specific point in time” (Nye & Hay, 1996:147). *Tuning* can be understood as the kind of awareness which arises in heightened aesthetic experience (Nye & Hay, 1996:147) and the term *flow* refers to the “experience of concentrated attention, giving way to a liberating sense of one’s activity ... that is experienced as something transcending the self” (Nye & Hay, 1996:147-148). *Focusing* implies “the felt sense of a situation” and “a recovery of respect for the body as a source of spiritual knowledge” (Nye & Hay, 1996:148).

The category of *mystery sensing* involves an awareness of something that is in principle incomprehensible (Nye & Hay, 1996:148). The aspect of “wonder and awe” has been described by Otto (as referred to by Nye & Hay, 1996:148) as “two sides of our experience of mystery, fascination or wonder, and fear or awe”. It suggests “the awareness of things beyond one’s current understanding and is very familiar in childhood” (Nye & Hay, 1996:148). The concept of *imagination* refers to a tool used “to conceive what is beyond the obvious ... [it] is central to religious activity through metaphors, symbols and stories” which respond to aspects of the “otherwise unrepresentable experience of the sacred” (Hay & Nye, 1998:149).

The category of *value sensing* emphasises the role of emotion in the nurturing of spirituality. It constitutes a “progression leading from self-centred emotion to an experience of value which transcends personal concerns ... clearly the conscience or moral sense ... is related to this idea” (Nye & Hay, 1996:149). *Delight and despair* are profound emotions commonly associated with value sensing and are intended “to convey something of the purity and self-sufficiency of the emotion, transcending any particular context” (Nye & Hay, 1996:149). *Meaning* points to the “activity of meaning-making by children” as well as the experience of meaning sensing in the spiritual or religious experience (Nye & Hay, 1996:150).

Hyde (2010:504) describes four specific characteristics of children’s spirituality which can be integrated in the categories of Hay and Nye as mentioned above: felt sense, integrating awareness, weaving threads of meaning and spiritual questing. According to Hyde, Yust and Ota (as quoted by Ingersoll, 2014:166) children should be thought of as “active participants in their own spirituality, instead of passive recipients of knowledge about God”. Spirituality can thus be thought of as “relational consciousness” (Hay & Nye, 2006; Nye, 2004:94)<sup>8</sup> and Nye (2004:93) further states that children “by *virtue* of their distinctive psychological characteristics, have an intriguingly rich capacity for spirituality”. Spirituality can be regarded as innate and integral to every child’s being.

## **HYMNS AS TEACHING MATERIAL**

Ingersoll (2014:167) refers to Haight’s study “A social perspective on children’s spiritual development” (2004), which states that “the majority of research on children’s religiosity and spirituality, from a Christian perspective, has focussed on cognition and capacity for religious and Biblical knowledge”. Ingersoll (2014:168) postulates that the Christian church relied on words to help children understand the Christian faith and this action could potentially “diminish

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<sup>8</sup> The term “relational consciousness” was actually coined by Nye (1998).

a child's natural wonderings" (Ingersoll, 2014:168), as in the Sunday school, for example. Religious education in the Sunday school, however, does not only rely on oral teaching, but also on the use of hymns for children which convey religious and biblical knowledge. The combined effect of the word (text) and music (as in a hymn) should not have the effect of diminishing the child's "natural wondering" but rather promoting it. Hymn singing provides a space for "a more active response to the hymn's religious contents" (Clapp-Itnyre, 2010:150).

The active response may entail a spiritual experience on different levels and the hymn can thus also be regarded as a tool for spiritual experience and nurturing. When children participate in the worship life of the congregation, this is considered to have a positive influence on children's spiritual development and contribute towards nurturing their spirituality (Ingersoll, 2014:170). Participation in hymn singing could move the listener to a perceptive state and engender a "calm and willing heart, making it receptive to God's Word and Truth" (Petty, 2010:74). This receptive state allows for a spiritual experience and a deepened understanding of the Words, God, the Self and the Other. It paves the way for sensing awareness, mystery and value as explained above (see also Figure 1).

### **British children's hymnody of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>9</sup>**

It became apparent from the earliest days of hymnody that children needed their own hymns. The challenge for writers of children's hymns has always been how to engage the young mind with thought-provoking material but also present it in an attractive and accessible manner (Warson, n.d.). Some of the earliest hymn texts written specifically for children, such as those by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), drew their inspiration from moral and everyday situations. John (1703-91) and Charles Wesley (1707-88) added more overtly spiritual hymn texts which concentrated on aspects of the Christian life (Warson, n.d.).

Isaac Watts's<sup>10</sup> preface to *Divine and Moral Songs for the Use of Children* (London, 1715) addressed "all that are concerned in the education of children" (Frost, 1962:542), and his approach was followed by others such as the Wesley brothers, John and Charles. Their *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1742) contained seven "Hymns for Children", including the well-known "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild". John Wesley wrote the following on the approach to children and children's hymns in the preface of the 1790 edition of Watts's *Divine Songs*:

There are two ways of writing or speaking to children: the one is to let ourselves down to them, the other to lift them up to us. Dr Watts has written in the former way, and has succeeded admirably well speaking to children as children, and leaving them as he found them. The following hymns are written on the other plan. They contain strong and manly sense, yet expressed in such plain and easy language as even children may understand.

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<sup>9</sup> Clapp-Itnyre (2010) and Warson (n.d.) have written extensively on the history of 19th-century British children's hymnody and I shall only refer to a few aspects here.

<sup>10</sup> See also Watts's *Reliquiae Juveniles: Miscellaneous Thoughts in Prose and Verse, on Natural, Moral, and Divine Subjects; Written chiefly in Younger Years* (London, 1734).

But when they do understand them they will be children no longer, only in years and in stature (Wesley, 1790:iii) (see also Clapp-Itnyre, 2010:148-149).

During the early 19th century, all branches of the church (in England) became convinced of the importance of education, and the practice of singing hymns was considered a crucial part of children's moral education. Music was believed to have "an amiable effect on the individual's disposition and to provide a congenial mode of inculcating both practical and theological tenets" (Curtis, 2006:220). The Sunday school movement, starting in the 1780s, yielded many hymns books for children such as Robert Hawker's *Psalms and Hymns (c. 1787)*, and Rowland Hill's *Divine Hymns attempted in easy language for the Use of Children (1790)*. The collection *Hymns for Infant Minds (1809)* by Ann and Jane Taylor<sup>11</sup> "adapts evangelical truths to the wants and feelings of childhood" (Clapp-Itnyre, 2010:152).

However, Frances Mary Yonge's (1795-1868) *The Child's Christian Year: Hymns for every Sunday and Holy-day (1841)* reveals a contrasting view. Yonge thought that the "first impression ... will probably be that the hymns are too difficult", but that they should be read in connection with the services of the day. She argued that "such subjects cannot be lowered to the level of childish minds without more or less of irreverence" (Clapp-Itnyre, 2010:156). This may be in following of the theologian John Keble's idea that "hitherto so-called hymns for children had been very unworthy of that sacred name". Keble (1792-1866) was concerned with the spiritual wellbeing of young worshippers, but was also anxious that they should be fully absorbed into what he described as "the tone of the Ancient Church" (Yonge, 1841: Preface). The children's hymn at this point in time was surely at a crossroads (see Clapp-Itnyre, 2010:145).

In his influential work *Christian Nurture (1847)*, Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) argued that "religious education should begin not with catechisms, which only serve to worry small children, but instead with 'the memorization of the Ten Commandments, followed by the Apostle's Creed and the simplest Christian hymns'" (Curtis, 2006:224). Bushnell's views on Christian education were soon reflected in children's hymnals, many of which "began to emphasize the advantages of hymnody as a more 'tender' means for instilling piety and teaching doctrine" (Curtis, 2006:224).

Authors, however well-meaning though they were, had difficulty relating to the level of children's minds and could not bring themselves to write with any simplicity. Many hymns were about children rather than for them. Although based on scenes and situations that would be familiar to children, the texts of such hymns in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century were sometimes morbid and sentimental, focusing on the brevity of life and the need for virtue to ensure a place in heaven. Children's hymnody has often become "a context for imposing adult songs in 'praise of God' on infant minds" (Clapp-Itnyre, 2010:48).

The hymns constantly refer to children as being little, weak and small<sup>12</sup> – a typically Victorian conception.

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<sup>11</sup> The sisters Ann (1782-1866) and Jane (1783-1824) Taylor contributed considerably to writing hymns and poems for children. Jane is the author of the well-known secular text "Twinkle, Twinkle, little Star".

<sup>12</sup> One example is the hymn "We are but little children weak", also by Alexander.

## C. F. Alexander: *Hymns for little children*

The collection *Hymns for little children*, written by British hymn writer Cecil Frances Alexander (née Humphreys), was first published in 1848. Apart from the hymns written on the words of the Apostolic Creed, the book also contains hymns on other aspects of Christian faith such as Holy Baptism (“We were only little babies”), the Ten Commandments (“There is One God, but One alone”; “On the goods that are not thine”) and the Holy Trinity (“We are little Christian children”). It quickly rose in popularity because of the “broad exploitation of faith” that is offered “for a child’s comprehension” (Clapp-Itnyre, 2012:64). The Advertisement for the first American edition (1850) mentioned that “[t]here is no greater want, at this moment, than books really suited to children; and nothing certainly more difficult than to produce such books. The charm of this little volume is that it teaches truths ... in language so simple, as never to be above the understanding of a child ... a true church feeling pervades it.” (Alexander, 1848:Advertisement).

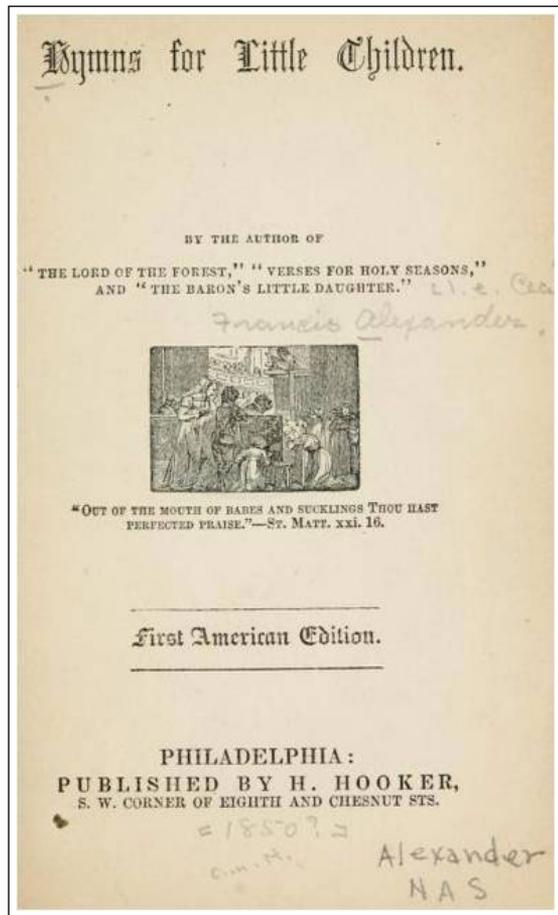


Figure 2: Title page of *Hymns for Little Children* (Alexander, 1848)

In the Preface to *Hymns for Little Children* Alexander dedicated the book to her “little Godsons”, but we do not know how old the children were at the time:

To my little Godsons,  
I inscribe these simple lines,  
Hoping that  
The language of the verse which children love  
May help to impress on their minds  
What they are,  
What I have promised for them,  
And  
What they must seek to be.

Cecil Frances (Fanny) Alexander (1818-1895) is regarded as one of the greatest of 19<sup>th</sup>-century British women hymn writers. She was well educated and religious and showed an interest in poetry and literature from an early age. The family were closely associated with the Protestant aristocracy of Ireland. Her first publication, *Verses for Holy Season* (1846), was intended for Sunday school teachers. In 1850 she married William Alexander, then a rector of a village in County Tyrone. After that she was known as ‘Mrs Alexander’, signing her work with the initials C.F.A. After serving in several parishes, her husband became Bishop of Derry and Raphoe in 1867. She continued to write hymns and other poetry, and devoted her life to Christian education and to the care of the young and the poor. All the profits from the sale of her books were donated to a home for deaf children. Alexander’s major publications include *The Lord of the Forest and his Vassals, an allegory* (1848); *Moral Songs* (1849); *Narrative Hymns for Village Schools* (1853); *Poems on Subjects in the Old Testament* (Part I, 1854; Part II, 1857); *Hymns Descriptive and Devotional* (1858) and *The Legend of the Golden Prayers, and other poems* (1859) (Watson, n.d.).



**Figure 3:** Cecil Frances Alexander (Hymnary, n.d.)

### **Three hymns on the Apostolic Creed from *Hymns for little children***

The three hymns under discussion here are all settings for articles from the first section of the Creed. The Apostolic Creed used in the Church of England in Alexander's time was probably the one from the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662).

#### ***All things bright and beautiful***

"All things bright and beautiful" is based on the following excerpt from the Apostolic Creed: "We believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth". In the text Alexander reflects on the wonders of creation (Clapp-Itnyre, 2012:66). According to Watson (2002:283), the strength of this hymn "comes from its unquestioning simplicity of language and idea". The hymn appeals to the singers immediately as the child celebrates well-known phenomena in creation: flowers, colours of the birds, sunsets, mountains and the seasons. This celebration heightens the sense of awareness and focuses the attention – and can be linked to moments of *awareness sensing* but also *tuning* in so far as a heightened aesthetic experience is made possible (Nye & Hay, 1996:146-147). Line 4 of the first verse introduces the reference to the Creed: "The Lord God made them all". This serves as a simple reflection on the original formulation: "Maker of heaven and earth". The last verse calls upon the singers to tell of the wonders of nature as created by the Almighty. A new awareness of the creation is invoked – thus drawing attention back to the creedal statement: "We believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth". The last two lines lead to a conclusion, a point of meaning, by stating "how great the Almighty God is" and that He "has made all things well".

This hymn is sung to two tunes; the oldest is ROYAL OAK taken from a book called *The Dancing Master* (1686) (Brink & Polman, 1998:597). It was arranged by Martin Shaw (1875-1958) and published in *Songs of Praise* (1925) (Watson, 2002:284; McKim, 1993:191). In this setting Alexander's original first stanza has been turned into a refrain.

**Example 1:** "All things bright and beautiful", arrangement Martin Shaw<sup>13</sup>. Public domain.

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Fellas Shaw (1875-1958) studied music at the Royal College of Music under the guidance of Charles Villiers-Stanford, Hubert Parry and Walford Davies. After being organist at St Mary's in Primrose Hill, he was appointed organist of St Martin in the Fields in 1920 and acted as director of music for the diocese of Chelmsford from 1935 to 1945. He was editor of several publications including the Oxford Book of Carols (1928) (Frost, 1962:690).

# All things bright and beautiful (OAKLEY)

Arr.: Martin Shaw

Words: C.F. Alexander

The second tune for this text was written by William Henry Monk<sup>14</sup> and is called “All Things Bright and Beautiful”. It was printed with Alexander’s text in *The Home Hymn Book* (1887) and is probably the more familiar tune in use today (Watson, 2002:284).

<sup>14</sup> William Henry Monk (1823-1889) studied music under Thomas Adams, J.H. Hamilton and G.A. Griesbach. He occupied several post as organist which included Eton College Chapel and King’s College, London. He was also appointed professor of vocal music at King’s College in 1874. He was given an honorary DMus by Durham University in 1882. Apart from several arrangements, he contributed 15 tunes to *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1861) and was also music editor for the editions of 1875 and 1889 (Frost, 1962:683; Stanislaw & Hustad, 1993:305). He is best-known for the melody EVENTIDE.

**Example 2:** “All things bright and beautiful”, W.H. Monk. Public domain.

All things bright and beautiful

Refrain WH Monk, 1887

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'All things bright and beautiful'. It consists of four staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff is the Refrain, starting with a treble clef and a common time signature. The second staff continues the Refrain and ends with a 'Fine' marking. The third staff is the Verse, starting with a treble clef and a common time signature. The fourth staff continues the Verse and ends with a double bar line. The music is written in a simple, accessible style suitable for children's hymns.

**Once in royal David's city**

The second hymn from Alexander's collection, "Once in royal David's city", deals with a very difficult theological concept from the Apostolic Creed: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost born of the Virgin Mary ...". This is one of Alexander's most "narrative and vivid texts, shattering perceptions of the picturesque Nativity with the realities of the lowly stable, and the weak and dependent baby" (Hawn & Hanna, n.d.). The narrative painted by Alexander truly relates to the entire "youth" of Christ and not just his birth.

Alexander chooses to focus on the central elements of the mother and the baby. She paints a scene around which the narrative unfolds. "Jesus' childhood is emphasized and this heightens the child's understanding and confidence" (Clapp-Itnyre: 2012: 68).

Once in royal David's City,  
Stood a lowly cattle shed,  
Where a mother laid her baby,  
In a manger for His bed.  
Mary was that mother mild.  
Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from Heaven,  
Who is God and Lord of all,  
And his shelter was a stable,  
And his cradle was a stall;  
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,  
Lived on earth our Saviour Holy.

And through all his wondrous childhood  
He would honour and obey.  
Love and watch the lovely maiden  
In whose gentle arms He lay.  
Christian children all must be  
Mild, obedient, good as He.

The child is drawn into the narrative because it can relate to Christ as being “little, weak and helpless” like him/herself and also by the fact that He was familiar with “tears and smiles” and “sadness” – human feelings the child has surely experienced:

For He is our childhood's Pattern,  
Day by day like us He grew,  
He was little, weak and helpless,  
Tears and smiles like us He knew,  
And He feeleth for our sadness,  
And He shareth in our gladness.

In the last two verses Alexander answers the question which may arise in children's minds: “Why has Jesus come to earth?” She cleverly combines the idea of Christ as the little baby with his eventual glory in Heaven. The children experience the wonderful promise that when Christ “is our Lord in heaven above”, they will follow Him and eventually be “crowned like stars”. The poet explores the paradox (Hawn & Hanna, n.d.) that this “child, so dear and gentle” is actually the “Lord in heaven” who “leads his children on to the place where he has gone.” In this way the spiritual imagination and awareness of the child is captured.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,  
Through His own redeeming love,  
For that child so dear and gentle  
Is our Lord in heaven above;  
And He leads His children on  
To the place where he is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,  
With the oxen standing by,  
We shall see Him; but in heaven,  
Set at God's right Hand on high.  
When like stars His children crowned,  
All in white shall wait around.

The tune IRBY is used for this hymn. It was composed by H.J. Gauntlett<sup>15</sup> for Alexander's text and first published in a pamphlet *Christmas Carols* in 1849. It was later included in the *Appendix* to the *First Edition of Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1868) (Brink & Polman, 1998:500). IRBY underscores the content of Alexander's text perfectly.

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<sup>15</sup> Henry John Gauntlett (1805-1876) became organist in his father's church in Olney, Buckinghamshire at the age of 9. He was trained in the fields of law and music. He played the organ part in the first performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in 1846 and is said to have composed over 10,000 hymn tunes. IRBY is the primary tune for which he is known today (Brink & Polman, 1998:238; McKim, 1993:52; Temperley, n.d.).

**Example 3: “Once in royal David’s city”, Henry Gauntlett. Public domain.**

**Once in royal David's city**  
(IRBY)

CF Alexander, 1848

HJ Gauntlett, 1849

1. Once in a city, 2. He came down from heaven, 3. He sits at the right hand of the Father, 4. And he will come again with the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom shall have no end.

where he was crucified for us, who are his people, whom he loved with his own blood, that he might cleanse himself by his blood for himself, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Ma-ry the mother of Jesus Christ, who was with him in the manger and on the cross, and who was buried with him, and who was raised again for our sake, and who is seated at the right hand of the Father, and who will come again with him to judge the living and the dead.

***There is a green hill far away***

The hymn “There is a green hill far away” is based on the following clause from the Apostolic Creed: “Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried”. Alexander addresses all the aspects but that of being buried. As a skilled teacher she knew that her first task was to capture the child’s imagination. Alexander begins the first verse by painting a picture of the landscape. It sets the scene of Christ’s passion. She points out the “pains he had to bear”, the suffering and the hanging on the cross.

There is a green hill far away,  
 Without a city wall,  
 Where the dear Lord was crucified.  
 Who died to save us all.

The second verse celebrates the mystery of the cross, “We may not know, we cannot tell...”. The probable question in the young minds as to why the passion of Christ happened is addressed. Although “... we may not know, we cannot tell ...”, “we believe it was for us, our forgiveness and to better us”. The passion of Jesus, though difficult to comprehend, is something He endured for us and for our salvation. This is celebrated in the next two verses: “He died that we might be forgiven, He died to make us good ... There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin”. The hymn ends with a call to “love as he has loved us”. The promise of life eternal in heaven (“That we might go at last to Heaven”) is reiterated in the penultimate verse: “He only could unlock the gate/Of Heaven and let us in”. This promise brings assurance to the child and promotes spiritual wellbeing. In the concluding verse Alexander makes an appeal for a response to the relevant phrase from the Creed – thus enhancing and deepening the sense of meaning (value sensing) attached to the hymn. In similar fashion to “All things bright and beautiful” the last verse of “There is a green hill” has an application of the content of the text as it urges the singers to “trust in His redeeming Blood, and try his work to do”.

“There is a green field” is sung to the tune HORSLEY written by William Horsley.<sup>16</sup> It is a simple melody clearly moulded in the British hymn tradition.

**Example 4: “There is a green field”, W Horsley. Public domain.**

There is a green hill  
 (HORSLEY)

CF Alexander W Horsley

1. There is a green hill far a - way, out - side a ci - ty wall,  
 2. We may not know, we can - not tell, what pains he had to bear,  
 3. He died that we might be for - given, he died to make us good,  
 4. There was no o - ther good e - nough to pay the price of sin,  
 5. O dear - ly, dear - ly has he loved! And we must love him too,

where... our dear Lord was cru - ci - fled who died to save us all.  
 but... we be - lieve it was for us he hung and suf - fered there.  
 that... we might go at - last to heaven, saved by his pre - cious blood,  
 he on - ly could un - lock the gate of heaven and let us in.  
 and trust in his re - dee - ming blood, and try his works to do.

<sup>16</sup> William Horsley (1774-1858) became organist of Ely Chapel, Holborn when he was 19. He was awarded the degree of BMus at Oxford in 1800. He was organist of the Belgrave Chapel (1812–37) and of Charterhouse in the City of London (1838–58). In 1820 he published *A Collection of Hymns & Psalm Tunes* and his *Twenty Four Psalm Tunes and Chants* (1844) contained the tune HORSLEY (Barkley, 1979:285-286; .

## CONCLUSION

This article gave a background to the nature and characteristics of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century hymns for children. I also described what Christian spirituality could be and highlighted the elements identified as part of the experience of music and spirituality. It can be deduced that the three hymns from *Hymns for little children* by C.F.Alexander under discussion here were written in such a way that the texts display several possibilities to allow for the child's experience of different aspects and features of spirituality by clarifying aspects of the Apostolic Creed.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this research regarding the characteristics of the hymns from *Hymns for children*. They contribute not only to the understanding of the Apostolic Creed, but also create opportunities for a deepened spiritual experience. Firstly the texts draw on subjects that are known to the child such as natural phenomena, for example, flowers, birds and seasons in "All things bright and beautiful", or the human qualities present in the figure of the baby Jesus and his mother in "Once in royal David's city". Thus scenes are painted that allow for the experience of awareness sensing, awe and wonder (mystery sensing) as well as feelings of calm and holiness (mystical awareness). Secondly, the texts incorporate inclusive elements, for example, referring to "we" instead of "I" – thus creating opportunities to experience oneness – directing the spiritual experience towards the Other and/or God, away from the Self (value sensing). Thirdly, the combination of the text and the fitting tune serves to further strengthen and deepen the spiritual experience by utilising more of the senses: speech, hearing and the physical experience of singing the hymn. The tunes are melodious and simple without being tedious and the settings support the combination of metrical elements, phrasing and so on as displayed in the words and music.

Although 19<sup>th</sup>-century British children's hymns may not have been conceived as a "spiritual experience" as such – the focus was more on the information conveyed and the teaching of theological truths – the hymns under discussion here reveal how the opportunities created by authors such as Alexander do enable the child to experience aspects of spirituality through reading and/or singing the texts. By singing the Creed the child engages in a particular way with the content of the hymn, the simple language and interpretation of the creedal excerpts. Well-known images support the child in experiencing meaning sensing and achieving a "relational consciousness" in the religious experience.

It is noteworthy that these three hymns have also successfully migrated from the status of children's hymns to that of congregational hymn. Included in many modern hymn books, they are now sung by adults as well, maybe even more so than by children only. These facts, in my opinion, point towards the inclusive opportunities for spiritual experiences created by these hymns.

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