



December 10, 2023  
**THE SONGS WE SING AT CHRISTMAS**  
**The Holly and the Ivy**  
 Romans 8:18-25

**About the Song**

Earliest extant manuscripts can be found on broadsides from the early 1800s  
 Cecil Sharp's *English Folk-Carols* (1911) collected from Mary Clayton in Chipping Camden  
 Evergreen holly and ivy were traditional Christmas decor linking back to medieval times  
 "Merry organ" may date back to Chaucer

**The Face of Nature**

The natural world as storytelling invisible realities  
 18 examples in the Sermon on the Mount  
 Holly as superior Christian symbol over ivy  
 White blossom, red berry, prickly leaf, bitter bark  
 The importance of connecting the cradle and the cross  
 The curious and seemingly unrelated chorus: sun, deer, organ, and choir  
 The relationship between a happy creation and the singing children

**Sin and the Curse and the Freedom of the Children of God: Romans 8:18-25**

The groaning creation: thorns and pain and death: **Genesis 3**  
 How human sin impacted the whole cosmos  
 Dominion: a vise is a vice and a conduit can do it!  
 The conduit principle: Abraham (**Genesis 12:3**), Jesus (**John 3:16,17**), Church (**Ephesians 1:9,10**)  
 Adam's abdication, Satan's (the murderer) rulership, death reigns instead of life (**Romans 5:12-14**)  
 Longing for the freedom of the children of God (**see 1 Corinthians 15:35-56**)  
 The new humanity allows for the new creation (a resurrection of the old creation)  
 Death will be no more: **Revelation 21:4**; **Isaiah 11:6-9**  
 The cosmic dimensions of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem (the Lamb, the lamb keepers, and the lambs)

**The Irony of the Christmas Tree**

The evergreen as a symbol of enduring life  
 Decorating the dying thing or resurrecting the dead thing  
 A warning not to mix up the two  
 A call to be agents of new creation life now in this world  
 Onward toward on earth as it is in heaven!

## The Holly and the Ivy

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The holly and the ivy  
When they are both full grown  
Of all trees that are in the wood  
The holly bears the crown

*O, the rising of the sun  
And the running of the deer  
The playing of the merry organ  
Sweet singing in the choir*

The holly bears a **blossom**  
As white as lily flow'r  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ  
To be our dear Saviour

The holly bears a **berry**  
As red as any blood  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ  
To do poor sinners good

The holly bears a **prickle**  
As sharp as any thorn  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ  
On Christmas Day in the morn

The holly bears a **bark**  
As bitter as any gall  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ  
For to redeem us all