Green Grow the Rushes

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Green Grow the Rushes (Commentary):

This file is a summary of postings to the Internet whenever this song re-surfaces for discussion. I have always been intrigued by the mix of references to the Bible and to the constellations and wonder if the verses are a blending of an astronomical version and a biblical version.

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TITLES:

Alternate Titles:
- Children Go Where I Send Thee
- I'll Sing You One Oh
- The Carol Of The Twelve Numbers
- The Twelve Apostles
- The Dilly Song

Unrelated Song:
- Green Grow The Rashes-o (Robert Burns)
- Often confused because of the title

EXPLANATIONS:

One is one and all alone:
- God, or Jesus Christ

Two, two, the lily-white boys (babes), clothed all in green-ho
- God and Jesus
- Or: Jesus Christ and John the Baptist
- Or: the constellation Gemini (the twins) (a sign of spring?)

Three, three, the rivals
- The Trinity (God, Jesus, The Holy Ghost)
- This explanation does not explain the term "rivals"

Four for the gospel makers:
- The Four Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John)

Five for the symbols at your door
- The five books of Moses
- Or: a pentagram, a common motif on doorposts (why?)

Six for the six proud Walkers (or: charming waiters):
- "Walkers" may be a corruption of "waters"
- The six water-pots used in the miracle of Cana
- Where Jesus changed water into wine at a wedding

Seven for the seven stars in the sky:
- The seven stars in the constellation Ursa Major (The Big Dipper)
- Or: the seven visible stars in the constellation Pleiades
- From: cyronwode@aol.com (catherine yronwode), 16 Feb 1996

Eight for the April rainers:
- The constellation Hyades (eight stars)
- Also called "The Rainy Hyades"
- Rise heliacally with the sun in the month of Arpil
- Or: Gabriel and the Archangels

Nine for the nine bright shiners:
- The Muses (does not fit with biblical or astronomical theme)
- Suggests another constellation

Ten for the ten commandments:
- Self-explanatory

Eleven for the eleven who went to heaven:
- The eleven apostles minus Judas

Twelve for the twelve apostles:
- Self-explanatory

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REFERENCES:

English Country Songs:
- Editor: Lucy Broadwood
- Leadenhall Press, London, 1893

One Hundred English Folk Songs:
- Editor: Cecil Sharp
- New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1975
- ISBN: 0-486-23192-5
- From: wald@theory.lcs.mit.edu (David Wald), 18 Dec 1994
- Also mentioned by Holly Tannen (see: Sing Out)

Sing Out Magazine (39-4, page 105):
- From: htannen@mcn.org (Holly Tannen), 4 Jan 1996
It has been collected in the southern mountains, the north atlantic states,
Ohio, Michigan, and in Canada. These versions trace back to Cornwall and the

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west country of England, where it was popular as a Christmas carol and as a harvest song.

Journal of American Folklore:
- V.62 no. 246, Oct-Dec 1949 (Leah Yoffie)
- Songs of the Twelve Numbers and the Hebrew Chant of Echod Mi Yodea
The song was well known in many sections of Europe as early as the sixteenth century, when it first appeared as an addition to the German Jewish Passover Haggadah, and may have existed as a Jewish folk song some time before it was printed. A Latin version from a 1630 manuscript lists two testaments, three Patriarchs, four evangelists, five books of Moses, six vessels (of Cana) etc.

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