

Front page:
Famous scholar challenges the faith of centuries

CHRIST AND THE SACRED MUSHROOM
By DAVID YORK



Lecturer John Allegro examines a dried specimen of the sacred mushroom.
'Some will accuse me of blasphemy'

A DISTINGUISHED British scholar has written a sensational book that is certain to cause the greatest upheaval in orthodox Christian thinking since Charles Darwin said Man was descended from the ape.

For he not only argues the non-existence of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, but claims that Christianity itself – as well as Judaism and other religions of the near and Middle East—are no more than hangovers from an ancient fertility cult.

Expert

The author of this remarkable book is 47-year-old John M. Allegro, lecturer in Old Testament and Inter-Testamental Studies at Manchester University, and a philologist—a student of words and language.

He is also one of the world's greatest experts on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Mr. Allegro told the Sunday Mirror yesterday: "Thousands of years before Christianity, secret cults arose which worshipped the sacred mushroom—the *Amanita Muscaria*—which, for various reasons (including its shape and power as a drug) came to be regarded as a symbol of God on earth. "When the secrets of the cult had to be written down, it was done in the form of codes hidden in folk tales. "This is the basic origin of the stories in the New Testament. They are a literary device to spread the rites and rules of mushroom worship to the faithful."

Challenge

Such a claim, such a challenge, to orthodox belief, coming as it does from one of the country's leading experts in his field, is something of a religious H-bomb—threatening a shattering fall-out. The controversy it will arouse must certainly lead to furious and acrimonious debates and schisms that will divide, not only Christians but Jews, Mohammedans and others whose religions have their origins in the areas covered by Mr. Allegro's researches. It is a fundamental challenge. To many it might suggest not only that there was no Christ or Moses,

THE SACRED MUSHROOM

Not only to use Mr. Allegro's own words – "that the stories in the Gospels and Acts were a deliberate hoax," but also that there is no God. Mr. Allegro bases his claims on his researches into the oldest written language known to us—Sumerian "Cuneiform" text dating back to 3500 BC. From this ancient tongue he believes came the language of the Bible. And so, he says, we no longer have to take the New Testament story at its face value. We can trace the proper names and words used in it back to their true and original meanings.

"It is this," says Mr. Allegro, "That reveal the cult of the phallic mushroom."

Mr. Allegro's book, which is to be published throughout the world, is bound to lead to fierce arguments. He says: "I'll doubtless be accused by some of blasphemy. But these conclusions are the result of purely scientific dispassionate research."

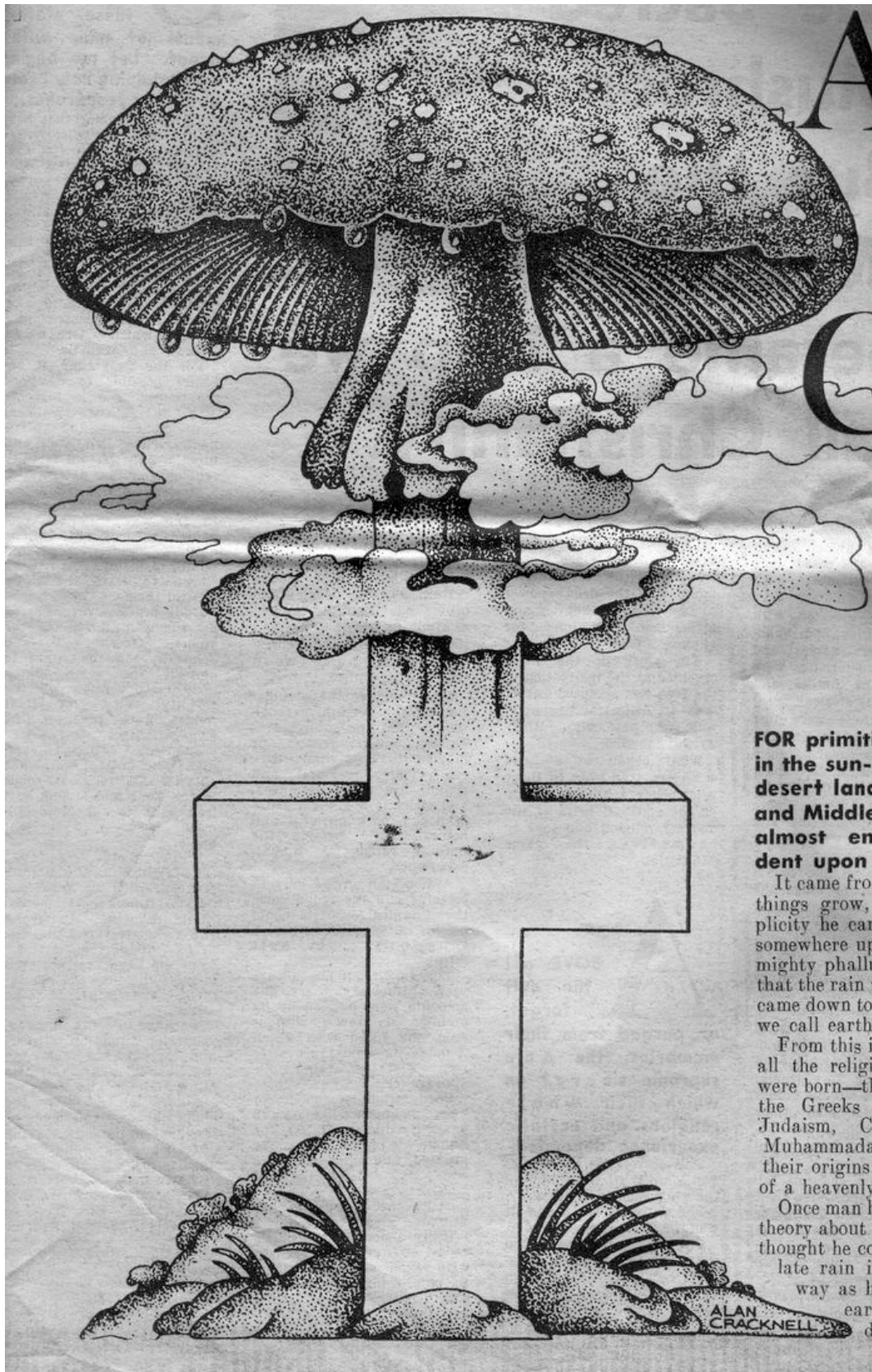
Languages

"When I left the Royal Navy in 1947 I began to train for the Methodist Ministry as a theological student at Manchester University. This led me to a study of the ancient Semitic languages – including Old Testament Hebrew and Aramaic—and I became progressively more interested in the language and less in theology. "Then came my appointment as the first British representative on the Dead Sea Scrolls editing team in Jerusalem. From my work on these texts, the next step was a re-examination of New Testament names and titles, and to the realization that more lay behind them than was generally appreciated. "And so I probed deeper—to the very beginnings of civilization. To Sumerian. And this book is the result."

Mr. Allegro's book, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, is to be published by Hodder and Stoughton in May.

Why are they handling it? Says their managing director, Mr. Robin Denniston: "John Allegro unquestionably raises fundamental and revolutionary religious questions. "But even if he can be challenged on some of his interpretations, our feeling is that this is a serious and deeply important contribution to an area of knowledge which is of vital concern, not just to the Christian community, but to every literate person."

THE SACRED MUSHROOM AND THE CROSS
BEGINNING THE MOST CHALLENGING BOOK FOR YEARS
 by **JOHN ALLEGRO**



FOR primitive man living in the sun-parched, often desert lands of the Near and Middle East, life was almost entirely dependent upon rain.

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FOR primitive man living in the sun-parched, often desert lands of the Near and Middle East, life was almost entirely dependent upon rain.

It came from the sky to make things grown, and in his simplicity he came to believe that somewhere up above him was a mighty phallus in the sky, and that rain was his semen that came down to fertilise the womb we call earth. From this innocent reasoning all the religions of that area were born—the ancient cults of the Greeks and Persians, Judaism, Christianity, even Muhammadanism. All had their origins in this basic idea of a heavenly phallus. Once man had worked out his theory about the divine rain, he thought he could help to stimulate rain in much the same way as he did orgasms on earth; by singing, dancing, orgiastic displays and, above all, by performing the sex act—particularly in the fields, where the sacred semen was most needed. It was then a natural step to want to share the secrets of how to control the power and knowledge of the heavenly phallus.

But how?

Over the centuries there were those who experimented with herbs and drugs and, as I shall show, came upon one drug that really seemed to transport them out of this world into heaven. But this knowledge was not to be shared indiscriminately. If god was jealous of his powers, so were those to whom he gave this glimpse of divinity. Paradise was for the favoured few. And so there arose the priesthood with its secret preparations and ceremonies that had to be observed before the chosen ones could take the drug—rituals that gave them great powers over the rest of the community. Rarely, and then only for urgent practical purposes, were those secrets ever committed to writing. Normally they would be passed between the priest and the initiate by word of mouth: dependent for their accurate transmission on the trained memories of men dedicated to the learning and recitation of these “scriptures.” But if, for some dramatic reason – persecution, or the disruption caused by war—it became necessary to write down the precious names of the drug, the manner of its use, and the secret incantations, it was written in a secret form. A code—hidden in a story containing puns or some other word play.

I believe that this is the basic truth about the stories in the New Testament. The key which unlocked the secret is philology – the study of words and language. Recent discoveries about the origins of the language of the Old and New Testaments—Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek—have revealed to me that from very early times the original meanings of the words and stories were lost or misunderstood. Christ, for instance, far from being a real person, is now shown to be merely another name for the drug plant.

One of the occasions when the secrets of the drug cult had to be written down was after the Jewish revolt of 66AD.

Swayed by the narcotic-induced madness to believe God had called them to master the world in his name, the cult’s members provoked the mighty power of Rome to swift and terrible action. Jerusalem was ravaged, her temple destroyed. Judaism was disrupted and her people driven to seek refuge with communities already established around the Mediterranean coastlands. The mystery cults found themselves without their central fount of authority, with many of their priests killed in the abortive rebellion or driven into the desert.

The secrets, if they were not to be lost for ever, had to be committed to writing—and yet if found, the documents must give nothing away or betray those who still dared defy the Roman authorities and continue their religious practices. The means of conveying the information were at hand, and had been for thousands of years. From the earliest times the folk-tales of the ancients had contained myths based upon the personification of plants and trees. They were invested with human faculties and qualities and their names and physical characteristics were applied to the heroes and heroines of the stories.

Some of these were just tales spun for entertainment, others were political parables like Jotham’s fable about the trees in the Old Testament, while others were means of remember and transmitting therapeutic folklore. The names of the plants were spun out to make the basis of the stories, whereby the creatures of fantasy were indemnified dressed, and made to enact their parts.

Here, then, was the literary device to spread occult knowledge to the faithful...

To tell the story of a rabbi called Jesus, and invest him with the power and names of the magic drug. To have him live before the terrible events that had disrupted their lives, to preach a love between men, extending even to the hated Romans. Thus, should the talk fall into Roman hands, even their mortal enemies might be deceived and not probe further into the activities of the mystery cults within their territories. The ruse failed. Christians, hated and despised, were hauled forth and slain in their thousands. The cult well nigh perished. What eventually took its place was a travesty of the real thing, a mockery of the drug’s power to raise men to heaven and give them the longed-for glimpse of God. The story of the rabbi crucified at the instigation of the Jews was accepted as fact—as an historical peg upon which the new cult’s authority was founded. What began as a hoax became a trap even to those who believed themselves to be the spiritual heirs of the mystery religion and took to themselves the name “Christian.”

The Crucifixion story was a ruse to guard the Sacred Mushroom. But the hoax became a trap we call Christianity.



Author JOHN ALLEGRO

Above all the cult forgot, or purged from their memories, the one supreme secret on which their whole religious and ecstatic experience depended.

This secret was the names and identity of the source of the drug, the key to heaven. The source of the drug? It was the Sacred Mushroom. The fungus recognized today as the *Amanita Muscaria*, or Fly-Agaric, had been known from the beginning of history. Beneath the skin of its characteristic red and white-spotted cap, there is concealed a powerful hallucinatory poison.

Its religious use among certain Siberian peoples and others has been the subject of a study in recent years, and its exhilarating and depressive effects have been clinically examined. These include the stimulation of the perceptive faculties so that the subject sees objects much greater or much smaller than they really are. Colours and sounds are much enhanced, and there is a general sense of power, both physical and mental, quite outside the normal range of human experience. Although it grows only in certain climatic conditions, the *Amanita Muscaria* could be dried and transported long distances by cult members. The mushroom has always been a thing of mystery. The ancients were puzzled by its manner of growth without seed, the speed with which it made its appearance after rain, and its rapid disappearance.

Born from a volva or “egg.” It appears like a small penis, raising itself like the human organ sexually aroused, and when it spread wide its canopy the old botanists saw it as a phallus bearing the “burden” of a woman’s groin. Every aspect of the mushroom’s existence was fraught with sexual allusions, and in its phallic form the ancients saw a replica of the fertility god himself. Its drug was a purer form of the heavenly spermatozoa than that discoverable in any other form of living matter. The drug was God himself, manifest on earth. To the mystic it was the divinely given means of entering heaven: God had come down in the flesh to show the way to himself, by himself.

So far I have not backed these statements of mine with proof. Let me begin by explaining how I set about my researches.

The main factor that has made these new discoveries possible has been the recovery of the oldest written language known to us—Sumerian “cuneiform” texts, dating back at their earliest to about 3,500 BC. It now appears that this ancient tongue provides a bridge between the Indo-European languages, which include Greek, Latin and English, and the Semitic group which includes Hebrew and Aramaic. For the first time, it becomes possible to decipher the names of gods, mythological characters – classical and biblical – and plant names. Thus their place and functions in the old fertility religions can be determined. Stories and characters which seem quite different in the way they are presented in various locations and at widely separated points in history can now be shown to have the same central theme.

Gods previously considered as widely different as the ancient Greek Zeus and Jehovah can be seen to embody the same fundamental conception of the fertility deity, for their names have precisely the same origin. Suddenly almost overnight, the ancient world has shrunk. All religious roads in the Near and Middle East lead back to the Mesopotamian basin – to ancient Sumer. In biblical studies, as far as the origins of Christianity are concerned we must look not just to inter-testamental literature, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and the newly discovered writings from the Dead Sea, nor even merely to the Old Testament and other Semitic works. We have to bring into consideration Sumerian religious and mythological texts and the classical writings of Asia Minor, Greece and Rome.

Above all, it is the philologists—the students of language—who must be the spearhead of the new enquiry. It is primarily a study in words. The earliest writings were by means of pictures, diagrams crudely incised on stone and clay. However lacking such symbols may be in grammar or syntax, they do convey in an instant the one feature which seemed to the ancient scribe the most significant aspect of the object or action he is trying to represent.

“Love” he shows as a flaming torch in a container, representing a womb; a “foreign country” as hills (because he lived in a plain).

As the art of writing developed further, we can begin to recognise the first statements of ideas which later had tremendous philosophical importance – “life,” “god,” “priest,” “temple,” “grace,” “sin,” and so on. To seek their later meanings in religious literature like the Bible we must first discover their basic meaning. For example, “sin” for Jew and Christian originally had to do with the wasteful emission of human sperm—a blasphemy against the god who was identified with the precious liquid. To have discovered this is not just of limited academic interest—its original meaning lies at the root of modern Catholic strictures against the Pill. So language is important. Because of it, identification of the main characters of many of the old classical and biblical mythologies is at long last possible.

To a reader brought up to believe in the essential historic truth of the Bible narratives some of the attitudes displayed in my approach to the texts may seem strange. I appear to be more interested with the words than with the events they seem to record. Similarly, a century or so ago, it must have seemed strange to the average Bible student to understand the approach of a “modernist” of the day who was more interested in the ideas underlying the Creation story of Genesis and their sources than in dating, locating and identifying the real Garden of Eden, and to solving the problem of whence came Cain’s wife. Then, it took a revolution in man’s appreciation of his development from lower forms of life, and a clearer understanding of the age of this planet, to force him to abandon the idea that Genesis was historically true – that the whole of the human race could trace its origin to two people living in the middle of Mesopotamia, and that the earth had come into existence in the year 4,004 BC.

The inquirer must begin with his only real source of knowledge – the written word. As for as Judaism and Christianity are concerned, this means the Bible.

There is precious little else that can give us details about what the Israelite believed about his god and the world about him, or about the real nature of Christianity. The sparse references to one “Christus” or “Chrestus” in the works of contemporary non-Christian historians, tell us nothing about the nature of the man, and only dubiously—despite the claims often made for them—do they support his historic existence. They simply bear witness to the fact (never in dispute) that the stories of the Gospels were in circulation soon after 70 AD—after the revolt of 66 AD.

If we want to know more about early Christianity we must look to our only real source, the written words of the New Testament. The New Testament is full of problems. Among the most perplexing have always been the foreign, presumed Aramaic, “nicknames” given to characters like James and John—“Boanerges,” and Joseph, surnamed “Barnabas.” The New Testament says these nicknames mean respectively “Sons of Thunder” and “Son of Encouragement” (or “Consolation”). Unfortunately, they don’t, and no amount of dithering with the text will make the “translations” fit the names. Scholars usually assume that mistakes have crept into the writings through the unfamiliarity of later copyists with the language Jesus and his companions are presumed to have spoken—Aramaic. So they have tended to pass these “mistakes” by with a shrug. But they are of crucial importance. They provide us with a clue to the nature of the original “Christianity.” Concealed within the “nicknames” and their “translations” are names of the sacred mushroom, the sect’s “Christ.” The deliberately deceptive nature of the mistranslations puts the lie to the whole of the “cover-story” of the man Jesus and his activities.

Once the ruse is penetrated, then research can go ahead fast with fitting the Christian phenomenon more firmly into the cultic patterns of the ancient Near East. So our first task is to find out what these “nicknames” really meant, just as, in the Old Testament, we have to attach more importance to the names of its chief characters than the situation in which they are depicted. Of course, history now and again forced itself on my attention during my researches. Did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ever exist as real people? Was there ever a sojourn in Egypt of the Chosen People, or a political leader called Moses? Was the Exodus historical fact?

These and many other questions are raised afresh by my studies, but it is my contention that they are not of prime importance. Far more urgent is the meaning underlying the myths in which these names are found. In the case of Christianity, the historical questions are perhaps more acute. If the New Testament story is not what it seems, then when and how did the Christian Church come to take it at its face value, and make the worship of one man, Jesus—crucified and miraculously brought back to life—the central theme of its religious philosophy?

For Christianity under various names, had been thriving for centuries before the supposed birth of Jesus.

We are, then, dealing with ideas rather than people. We cannot name the chief characters of our story. Doubtless there were real leaders exercising considerable power over their fellows but in the mystery cults they were never named to the outsider. We cannot, like the Christian pietist, conjure a picture of a young man working at his father’s carpentry bench, taking little children in his arms, or talking earnestly with a Mary while her sister did the housework.

In this respect, our study is not an easy one. There is no one simple answer to the problems of the New Testament discoverable by just reshuffling the Gospel narratives to produce yet another picture of the man Jesus.

The question we have not to ask is: does the Christianity revealed for the first time by my researches fit adequately into what went BEFORE the first century—not what came after in its name?

JOHN ALLEGRO's controversial theory that strikes at the very foundations of Christianity..

THE SACRED MUSHROOM AND THE CROSS

ALL THE religions of the Near and Middle East—Judaism, Christianity and Muhammadism, as well as many of the old Greek and Persian mythologies—had the same common origin:



EXPLAINED: THE MYTHS OF MOSES AND PETER

A simple, primitive belief that God was a phallus in the sky whose orgasmic rain fertilized the womb we call earth and so produced crops and vegetation. Then priesthoods arose – men who said they were able to act as intermediaries with the divine phallus. And it was believed that they were able to do this by the use of a powerful drug that did indeed seem to transport them from this world to some celestial paradise.

This drug was the mushroom, *Amanita Muscaria*, or Fly-Agaric. At first the secrets of the mushroom cult – the procedures and incantations that had to accompany the gathering and use of the plant—were passed on only by word of mouth. But when the time came for them to be written down, the instructions were given in the form of a code. Old and secret names of the sacred fungus were woven into a story about a rabbi called Jesus. On the surface his sayings and actions seemed politically blameless, and religiously and morally praiseworthy. Under the surface, however—concealed by word-play or punning, false “translations” and similar literary devices—were the real secrets of the cult. In the sense that the story of Jesus and his friends was intended to deceive the enemies of the sect, Jews and Romans, it was a hoax, the greatest in history.

Unfortunately it misfired. The Jews and Romans were not taken in; but the immediate successors of the first “Christians” (users of the “Christus,” the sacred mushroom) *were*. The Church made the basis of its theology a legend revolving around a man crucified and resurrected—who never, in fact, existed. Why worship a mushroom in the first place? For one thing the hallucinations caused were a known fact. And to the ancients its very appearance added to its magical quality. A plant that grew rapidly like the male sex organ when aroused, and when it spread wide its canopy it was seen as a phallus topped by the woman’s groin – a symbol of the supreme act of fertility.

TO the ancients the mushroom was a replica of the phallus in the sky.

To the Roman naturalist, Pliny, the fungus had to be reckoned as one of the “greatest of the marvels of nature,” since it “belonged to a class of things that spring up spontaneously and cannot be grown from seed.” Until the invention of the microscope the function of the spore, produced by each fungus in its millions, could not be appreciated. One explanation among the ancients for the creation of the mushroom without apparent seed was that the “womb” had been fertilized by thunder, since it was commonly observed that the fungi appeared after thunderstorms.

It was thus uniquely begotten. The normal process of procreation had been by-passed. The seed had not fallen from some previous plant, to be nurtured by the earth until it produced a root and stalk. The god had “spoken” and his creative “word” had been carried to earth by the storm – wind – an angelic message of heaven. To see the mushroom was to see the Father, and it was as “the Holy Plant” that the sacred fungus came to be known throughout the ancient world.

HOW can we come to these conclusions?

The answer is in the study of philology—the science of words and language—and the discovery of the true origins (and therefore meanings) of the names and stories told in the Bible. The key is only about a hundred years old: the discovery by Sir Henry Rawlinson of clay writing tablets in the ruins of ancient Nineveh in Mesopotamia. On them were written message in a hitherto unknown language called Sumerian. The “letters” consisted of wedge – shaped (“cuneiform”) signs impressed into soft clay which was then baked in the sun. The wedge-shaped symbols developed from small pictures of common objects like a head, leg or other parts of the human body.

Each picture represented an idea, and such primitive “writing” can offer a better understanding of the thought behind the word than later, more stylized, methods of expressing letters and syllables. The languages of the Bible, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, all derive ultimately from this ancient Sumerian, so we can now trace basic religious ideas farther back than ever before. Furthermore, since proper names, like those of the gods and biblical and classical legends, tend to resist change, we can now begin to decipher their original meanings. For example, Esau means “canopy” – the mushroom cap (hence the idea of his red skin, like the red and white-spotted cap of the *Amanita muscaria*). “Moses” means “emergent snake” – a reference to the mushroom seen as a snake emerging from its hole in the ground (hence the conjuring trick with the serpent and the rod: Exodus 4.2-4). And so on. More important, we can now decipher the names of the Jewish and classical gods, especially Jehovah and Zeus. Both mean the same: “Juice of fecundity,” the source of life.

So, despite everything we had previously thought, Jehovah was a fertility deity, and not, as commonly supposed, a desert god implacably opposed to the nature gods of Canaan and their sex rites. Now we can begin to understand such biblical descriptive names of Jehovah as *Sebaoth*—“of Hosts,” as it is usually translated. Actually “*Sebaoth*” comes from two Sumerian words meaning “penis of the storm.” The name “Joseph” is a shortened form of the same title. Similar phallic designations are given, as we now see, to many Sumerian, Greek and Semitic gods, tribal ancestors and heroes. Hercules, that great “club – bearer,” was named after the grossness of his sex organ, as was the Hebrew tribal ancestor Issachar. This is just one example of how we can now span the whole area of our study and bring together apparently quite disparate religious cults simply through being able to decipher the names and epithets of their gods.

The ancients believed that under the earth’s crust lay a “sea of knowledge” formed by the heavenly rain. Thus the souls of the dead must necessarily know more of the mind of God. It followed that, since plants had their roots under the earth, certain of them, the drug-plants, could also tap the reservoir of divine knowledge. So, if man could but discover by experiment those more powerful plants, he, too, could be permitted to share the secrets of the dead—and of God. He could know the future, and also be endowed with a god-like, superhuman strength of mind and body. Among devotees of the mushroom cult, it was the *Amanita Muscaria* which contained this divine juice more than any other drug-plant. It is not surprising, therefore, that the cult should have become, in the Near East, a mystery religion which persisted for thousands of years.

There seems good evidence for believing that it swept from there into India in the worship of the Soma drug, subject of many hymns of the Sanskrit *Rig Veda*, some 3,500 years ago. The cult certainly flourished in Siberia in more recent times, and a possibly related version in South American has been the subject of much recent inquiry. Partly because of the religious use of the sacred mushroom, and the fearful respect with which country folk have always treated it, its more original names became taboo and folk-names and epithets proliferated at their expense. It is as if, in our own language, the only name by which we knew the mushroom was the folk – name “toadstool,” and that some researcher of the future was faced with the problem of deciding what species of plant life served as the habitual perch of large frogs. In seeking for the mushroom folk-names and epithets, one of our main sources obviously will be its distinctive shape of a slender stem supporting an arched canopy, like a sun-shade. This characteristic

THE SACRED MUSHROOM AND THE CROSS

Was made much of in mythology. Extended to gigantic proportions, this figure is reflected in such imagery as huge men like Atlas holding up the canopy of heaven, or of mountains like Olympus serving the dual function of supporting the sky and providing a connecting link between the gods and earth. Above all, the mushroom provoked sexual imagery and terminology. The manner of its rapid growth from the *volva*, or “womb,” the rapid erection of its stem, and its glans-like head, all stimulated phallic names. Of such, as we may now recognize, is the most common Semitic name for the mushroom—*phutr* (Arabic), *pitra* (Aramaic)—portrayed in the New Testament myth as “Peter,” an invented disciple of the non-existent Jesus. The deciphering of plant and drug names not only allows us to share the imagery their shapes provoked in the minds of the ancient botanists, but to learn of the power they were supposed to wield. This is particularly important with regard to the mandrake – an old name for the Holy Plant. It was with the mandrake that Leah bargained with Rachel for a night of connubial bliss with Jacob (Genesis 30.14-16). It appears frequently in folklore as the prime magic plant and aphrodisiac. I can show that the Greek name, *Mandragoras*, comes from a Sumerian phrase meaning

“Fateplant-of-the-field,” and is philologically related to the classical “*Nectar*,” the food of the gods.’ Both in fact, represented the sacred mushroom.

AT LAST we can understand some of the legends about this magic plant.

We can see why it was thought to resemble parts of the human body; why it shrieked when pulled from the ground. The Christians believed that they were the true spiritual heirs to ancient Israel. So it was an obvious device to convey to the scattered cells of the cult reminders of their most sacred doctrines and incantatory names and expression concealed within a story of a “second Moses,” another Law-giver, named after the patriarch’s successor in office Joshua (Greek *Iesus*, “Jesus”). Thus was born the Gospel myth of the New Testament.

How far it succeeded in deceiving the authorities, Jewish and Roman, is doubtful. I can now show that one or two of the sparse references to Jesus that the ecclesiastical censors have allowed to come on in Jewish written traditions demonstrate without doubt that, as least at the beginning, Jews knew full well what the “Jesus” was that the Christians worshipped. The references also show clearly that the Jews despised the whole business as much as did the Romans. The Romans could not find words low enough to describe the Christians they hounded out from their secret meetings and tortured to death. And the Romans were famed for their religious tolerance! Those most deceived appear to have been the sect who took over the name “Christian” (“semen-smeared”), and formed the basis of the modern church.

But by then the prime ingredient of their sacred meal had been lost—or suppressed – and its priests offered the initiates in its place a wafer and sweet wine, assuring them that before the Host touched their lips it would have changed into the flesh and blood of God. Foremost among the literary devices used to encode secret names for the sacred mushroom was word-playing or punning. There are many examples of this in the Old Testament, and it was commonly used by Jewish teachers to discover supposed hidden meanings in Bible texts.

Here are examples of mushroom-name puns in a New Testament writer’s passage on the wisdom and foolishness of Christian teaching.

He ingeniously inserts the following phrase:

“For the Jews demand signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a *stumbling – block to Jews and folly to Gentiles . . .*” (I Corinthians 1.23). The word “stumbling-block” (Greek skandalon, our “scandal”) is properly used of a “trap” or “snare.” It denotes a knobbed stick or bolt upon which the bait is placed, and which, if tripped by the prey, sets off the trap itself. So metaphorically it is used for any impediment which hinders or traps an unwitting person. The Greek word skandalon, we can now appreciate, originally meant “bolt.” Its Aramaic equivalent was tiqla, and the phallic mushroom was sometimes called a “bolt – plant” because the shape of the primitive key or bolt was, in essence, a short rod surmounted by a knob. So we may decipher the first part: To the Jews (i.e., in the Jewish language), the “Christ crucified” (the semen-anointed, erect phallic mushroom) is a “bolt-plant” (tiqla – mushroom, “stumbling – block”). The second part neatly Confirms the first: “and folly to the Gentiles” (that is, Greeks). The Greek work for “folly” is moria, and Morios was a Greek word for the mushroom! Now the pun is made clear. The “stumbling-block” (tiqla, “boltmushroom”) pun appears quite frequently. We know it best in the text in Matthew 16 about Peter and the “keys” of heaven. In it, Peter—the mushroom—is given the “key,” or “bolt” of paradise (v. 19), and is called a “stumbling-block” (v. 23).

The other part of that text about Peter being the “rock” foundation of the Church-on which the Roman Catholics place so much emphasis—is a double wordplay. Not only is there the long-recognised pun on Peter-Petros in Greek and petra (rock) and pitra (mushroom)—but there is also a pun on the Latin cepa, one of a number of “onion” words which were used of the similarly formed bulbed mushroom. (The French still call certain mushrooms “cepe” or “ceps”—after the Latin.) Even calling the name “satan” (“Get thee behind me...v. 23) is in line with the depa pun, since *Setanion* is another Latin name which also means onion or mushroom. One of our common vegetables is chicory, a variant form of whose name in Greek is Korkoron. This last occurs also as a mushroom name, and Pliny’s description of “chicor” shows that whatever plant he is describing it is *not* the culinary root we know so well: “*Those who have anointed themselves with the juice of the whole plant, mixed with oil, become more popular and obtain their wishes more easily...so great are its health-giving properties that some call it Chreston...*”

SOME ancient confusion through similarity in words has taken place here.

The juice was to be “rubbed on” or “anointed” (christos), and its properties were so beneficial that it was called Chreston (Greek khrestos, “good honest, health-bestowing,” etc.). One is reminded of the form of the name by which non-Christians spoke of the object of the sect’s adoration – Chrestus. Suetonius speaks of the emperor Claudius having to expel Jews from Rome because they were making a disturbance “at the instigation of Chrestus.”

What Pliny is describing then is the “Jesus Christ” mushroom whose consumption brought upon the first-century Christians the vilification and contempt of the Roman historians.

WORSHIP BY ORGY TURNED THESE WOMEN INTO WITCHES
A startling theory that Christianity is a hoax based on a sex-drug cult
By JOHN ALLEGRO

Illustration: Hermann Degkwitz



AS WE now know from our studies of ancient Sumerian writings dating back to 3,500 BC, God was originally thought of as a giant phallus in the sky. His fertile seed—rain—fell to the womb called earth, causing it to “give birth” to crops and vegetation. And we also know that this led to a special priesthood – men who could act as intermediaries with the heavenly phallus. They achieved this by the use of the “Holy Plant”—a plant whose juices were a powerful hallucinatory drug that could indeed seem to transport its users to another world. This plant was the mushroom known as *Amanita muscaria*. And from my researches as a philologist—a student of languages and words—I know now that when the time came for the secrets of the mushroom cult to be written down to preserve them intact in a hostile world, it was done in a kind of code. Within the story of a rabbi called Jesus were woven names and incantations used in the gathering and consuming of the sacred fungus.

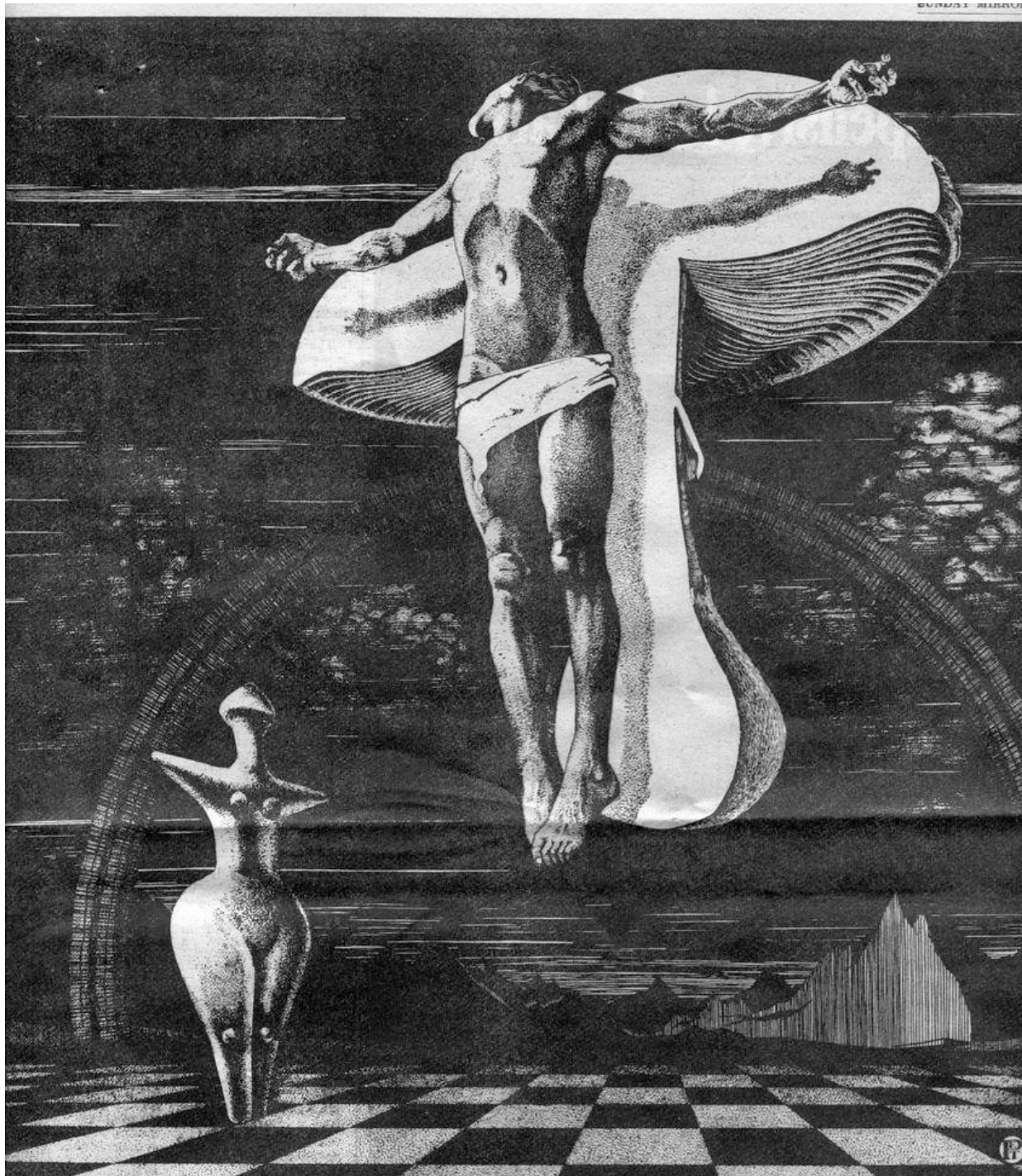
The Church made the basis of its theology a legend revolving round a man Jesus, crucified and resurrected, who never, in fact, existed. In the sense that the story of Jesus and his friends was intended to deceive enemies of the sect, Jews and Romans, it was a Hoax—the greatest in history. Unfortunately it misfired. The Jews and Romans were not taken in; but the immediate successors of these first “Christians” (users of the “Christus,” the sacred mushroom) were. It was a concentration of the powerful juice of the “Holy Plant” that the Magi—the magicians or Wise men (the great pedlars of the ancient world) – believed would give anyone anointed with it amazing power. They could “obtain every wish, banish fevers and cure all diseases without exception.”

So the Christian, the “smeared or anointed one,” received “knowledge of all things” by his “anointing from the Holy One” (I John 2.20). Thereafter he had need of no other teacher and remained for ever-more endowed with all knowledge. Whatever the full ingredients of the Christian unction may have been, they would certainly have included the aromatic gums and spices of the traditional Israelite anointing oil: myrrh, aromatic cane, cinnamon and cassia. That these ingredients formed only part of the sacred formula is well known. Josephus, the Jewish historian of Roman times, says there were thirteen elements, and the Talmud names eleven, plus salt, and a secret herb which was added to make the smoke rise in a vertical column before spreading outwards at the top. With the characteristic shape of a mushroom in mind we can now hazard a fair guess at the secret ingredient. Knowledge and healing were two aspects of the same life-force. To be rubbed with the Holy Plant was to receive divine knowledge. It also cured every sickness. Josephus suggests that anyone of the Christian community who was sick should call the elders to anoint him with oil in the name of Jesus (the Epistle of James 5.14)—in other words with the juice of the sacred mushroom.

Use of the name “Jesus” as an invocation for healing was appropriate enough. Its Hebrew origin which we know as “Joshua” comes from a Sumerian phrase meaning “semen which saves” or “restores.” The fertility god of the Greeks, Dionysus (otherwise known as Bacchus, the god of the wild women known as Bacchantes), whose symbol was the erect penis, has virtually the same name as Joshua (or Jesus), as we can now recognise from their mutual Sumerian source. Their orgiastic rites were derived from the same maddening drug of the *Amanita Muscaria*. The Twelve Apostles are sent out among their fellow-men casting out demons and anointing the sick with oil (Mark 6.13). Healing by unction persisted in the Church until the 12th century, and the anointing of the dying—“extreme unction”—has persisted in the Roman Catholic Church. The principle behind this practice remains the same: God’s “seed-of-life” imparts life to the ailing or the dead. Things, as well as people, could be anointed so that they became “holy”—that is separated to the god’s service. The Semitic word for “holy” is fundamentally a fertility word.

The anointing into holiness of kings and priests is again largely imitative in character. The prime duty of the king was to ensure the fertility of the land and well-being of his subjects. Many of the Greek and Semitic words for “lord” and “lordship” convey this idea when seen in their Sumerian form. The priest’s function was also to see that the god played his part in inseminating the land.

THE SACRED MUSHROOM AND THE CROSS



The most common Hebrew word for “priest”—kohen—familiar as well-known Jewish surname, comes from a Sumerian title meaning literally, “guardian of semen.” Pouring the sacred juices over the heads of these dignitaries was intended to represent them as “gods”—replicas of the divine phallus. So we anoint our Sovereign at the coronation ceremony. In our churches the ritual procession through the nave to the altar, headed by the fertility symbol of the cross and the anointed Bishop, preserves the ancient idea of the fertility god entering his house. In the phallic mushroom—the “man-child” born of the “virgin” womb—we have the reality behind the Christ figure of the New Testament story. By imitating the mushroom by eating it and sucking its juice (or “blood”), the Christian was taking unto himself the panoply of his god, as were the priests in the sanctuary. As the priests “served” the god in the temple—the symbolic womb of divine creation—so the Christians and their cultic associates worshipped their god and mystically involved themselves in the creative process. In the language of the mystery cults they sought to be “born again,” when—purged afresh of past sin—they could apprehend the god in drug-induced ecstasy.

Women had their roles in the ancient cult. There were the sacred prostitutes—an office well known in the ancient world. It is usually assumed that the woman dedicated herself to the service of the god as a sexual partner in some imitative ritual designed to stimulate the generative faculties of the fertility deity. Doubtless, in many of the cults she did perform such a function, copulating before the altar with the priests or other male worshippers at certain festivals. There are also indications that it was considered necessary to make some sort of booth or covering for the prostitute and the magic plant during the seduction.

Hosea specifies that the sacred prostitutes practised their art under the trees, where “the shade is good” (4.13). Ezekiel speaks of some kind of full-length veil by which they “ensnared souls” (13.18). The Holy Plant had not be uprooted under cover of darkness, “lest the act be seen by the woodpecker of Mars” (perhaps a folk-name for the red-topped *Amanita Muscaria*), or “the sun and moon.” The sexual power of women was vital to the mystery cults and accounts in large measure for the attractiveness of cuts to women from the earliest times. It also has much to do with the antagonism towards sexuality generally and the distrust of women displayed by the later Church, and the readiness with which supposed witches were hounded by Christians until quite recent times. The telepathic control over people’s minds exercised by such females, known the world over as “the evil eye,” came originally from this ability to arouse men’s passions.

The Latin *fascinus*, from which our “fascination” comes, as well as meaning “bewitching,” was also the proper name of a deity with a phallic emblem, and this as we can now appreciate, is the original source of this word and the Greek *baskanos*, “sorcerer.” It was believed that the malign influences of “fascination,” which came to be extended to any form of mental dominance, could be averted by wearing on the person a model phallic symbol—rather as the Christian symbol of the Cross is currently displayed by those within and without the Church toward off evil.

A similar connection between sexual influence and sorcery appears in the derivation of our word “magic.” Its immediate source is the Latin *magus*, representing the Old Persian *magush*, the title of a religious official whose power of mind and body earned him a reputation for sorcery—and whose name meant originally “big penis.” Ezekiel, in describing the necromantic (divination from the dead) ritual of the witches, says they fastened on their wrists “magic bands,” as our English versions translate the Hebrew (13.18). As we can now appreciate, the Sumerian original means “magical imprisonment,” and is portrayed in scenes of mystery rites of the Dionysiac cult as a basket from which a serpent’s head is emerging. The symbolism here represents the matted vulva bursting open to reveal the emergent mushroom, anciently identified with the snake. Here is the origin of the magic practice of serpent-charming, as well as of such mythologies as Moses (“emergent snake,” as his name means) in his basket in the bull-rushes (exodus 2-3).

The snake is an important feature of Dionysiac (Bacchic) imagery and cultic rites. The Maenads are pictured with serpents entwined in their hair and round their limbs. In the case of Ezekiel’s witches, their soul-catching “baskets” were brought along partly to offer some imitative encouragement to the dormant fungus to open and reveal itself. It is not difficult to understand the reasoning behind the ancient identification of the mushroom and the serpent. Both emerged from holes in the ground, could erect themselves, and both bore in their heads a fiery poison which the ancients believed could pass from one to the other.

The prime example of the relation between the serpent and the mushroom is, of course, in the Garden of Eden story of the Old Testament. The cunning reptile prevails upon Eve and her husband to eat of the tree whose fruit “made them as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3.4). The whole Eden story is mushroom-based mythology—not least in the identity of the “tree” as the sacred fungus. Even as late as the 13th century some recollection of the old tradition was known among Christians, to judge from a fresco painted on the wall of a ruined church in Plaincourault in France. There the *Amanita Muscaria* is gloriously portrayed entwined with a serpent, while Eve stands by, her hands on her belly. As we saw, women had an important part to play in the mushroom cult. Another of their activities lay in that curious phenomenon – religious lamentation. This sympathetic identification of the worshipper with a suffering god seems to be a necessary part of most religions. To see Catholic women, particularly in Mediterranean countries, racked with real grief at Eastertide as they contemplate the Crucifix and the wounds of their Lord, can leave little doubt that they are suffering real mental anguish. There is apparently in human beings, and in women particularly, a capacity for sympathetic grief – which demands dramatic expression – however historically improbable the tragic events and persons they re-enact in their imaginations.

Ritual lamentation has a sexual significance as can now be demonstrated by its terminology. Whatever inward emotional satisfaction the practice of lamenting the dead god may have achieved, its basic intention was to bring him back to life. In the case of agricultural communities, the dead god is a personification of the fertility of the soil deemed to have perished during the hot summer months, but capable of being revived under the influence of the autumn and spring rains—the fertilization of the father-god in heaven. Thus the lamentation ceremonies were intended to rejuvenate the dormant phallus of the fertility deity.

The common word in the Hebrew Old Testament for “lamentation” we now recognise as having come from a Sumerian term meaning “erect.” It is related to other words in Hebrew and Greek for a musical instrument, *kinnor* and *kinura* (“penis erector”) respectively. This is the harlot’s “harp” of Isaiah 23.16, the “lyre” of David, whose playing relived the maniacal fits of Saul (I Samuel 16.16, etc.).

The priestesses whose task it was to make ritual lamentation for the dead god—or the dormant mushroom—by screeching and wailing had their classical counterpart in the female votaries of the god Bacchus/Dionysus – the so-called Bacchantes, “raisers of the phallic

mushroom,” as we now understand the term. They were noted for their drug-induced frenzy, at one moment whirling in a mad dance, tossing their heads, and driving one another on with screaming and wild clamour of musical instruments. At another, they were sunk in the deepest lethargy. The Bacchantes both possessed the god and were possessed by him; theirs was a religious “enthusiasm” in the proper sense of that term—that is, “god-filled.”

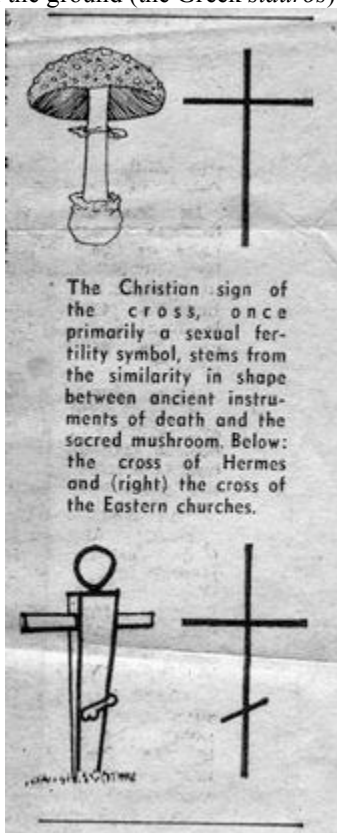
**ABRACADABRA –the magic phrase hidden in the Lord’s Prayer
THE SACRED MUSHROOM AND THE CROSS**

JOHN ALLEGRO’s startling theory that challenges all Christian belief.

THERE always have been extreme difficulties in understanding the story of Jesus. There are in the New Testament problems posed on historical, geographical, topographical, social and religious grounds which have never been resolved. But to the Christian scholar they have always seemed of less relevance than the apparently incontrovertible fact of the existence of one, semi-divine man who set the whole Christian movement in motion, and without whose existence the inauguration of the Church would seem inexplicable. But if it now transpires that Christianity was only a latter-day manifestation of a religious movement that had existed for thousands of years—what then? Let it be emphasized: if only one of the mushroom references of the cryptic phrases of the New Testament text were correct, then a new element has to be reckoned with in the nature and origin of Christianity.

If the stories of Jesus are no more historically real than those of Adam and Eve, Jacob and Esau and even of Moses, what of the Bible’s moral teachings? How far can our new appreciation of the origins and nature of Judaism and Christianity allow us to accord its teaching universal authority? This, perhaps, is the most crucial issue raised by the present discoveries. And in my mind there is no doubt that thanks to these discoveries about the origin of the languages of the Bible—Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, and their related tongues – the stories of the New Testament have indeed been exposed as myths. Just as years ago Bible commentators realized that when the writer of the New Testament Book of Revelation wrote “Babylon” in his political diatribe he meant the enemy Rome, so we know now that when the Gospel writers speak of Jesus, Peter, James and John, and so on, they are really personifying the sacred mushroom – the *Amanita Muscaria*. They are spinning stories from its cult-names.

But what of the crucifixion of Jesus? Well, for a start, one of the names for the mushroom which has come down in Aramaic, with a somewhat different reference, was “The Little Cross.” To understand the significance of this folk-name, we have to appreciate the nature of the ancient instrument of death. The Roman *crux*, or “cross” itself, was a straight or forked piece of wood which the criminal carried across his shoulders like a yoke to the place of execution. There his wrists were tied to the extremities of the “yoke” and this stretcher was then hoisted to the top of a pole set in the ground (the Greek *stauros*).



This gave the well known form of the cross of Christian symbolism. Sometimes, some of the weight was taken off the wrists or hands by providing the upright with a projection peg to support the wretched man’s crutch. It was called a “saddle” (Latin *sedile*). In all this, the ancient worshipper of the sacred mushroom saw a striking, if gruesome, similarity with the adored object of his religion.

The cross piece was the mushroom cap and the upright support was the stem of the fungus. Every aspect of the phallic mushroom was replete with sexual allusions, and the sign of the cross was primarily a sexual fertility symbol. It is with this significance that the cross became the sign of the phallic god Hermes, erected throughout the ancient world at cross-roads, and thought to bring good luck to travelers, as the Crucifix is commonly displayed by the roadside in Catholic countries today.

In the case of the Hermes symbol, not only have we the upright and two “arms but half-way up the vertical post was fixed a replica phallus, to remind the passer-by of the god’s fertility powers. This phallus—“saddle”—is possibly preserved symbolically today in the double cross-piece of the characteristic crucifix of the eastern churches. The Semitic verb for “crucify” as used in the Old Testament means stretch out, disjoint. So the “crucifixion” of the “Christ” fungus in these terms meant the stretching out of the mushroom at its fullest extent. Thereafter the fungus speedily wilts and rots away. The ancient saw in its fast “growth,” and speedy death, a microcosm of nature. For they believed the fungus no less miraculously came to life again, and after a day or two its red tip could be seen pushing its way through the pine needles of its natural habitat.

The god had been resurrected.

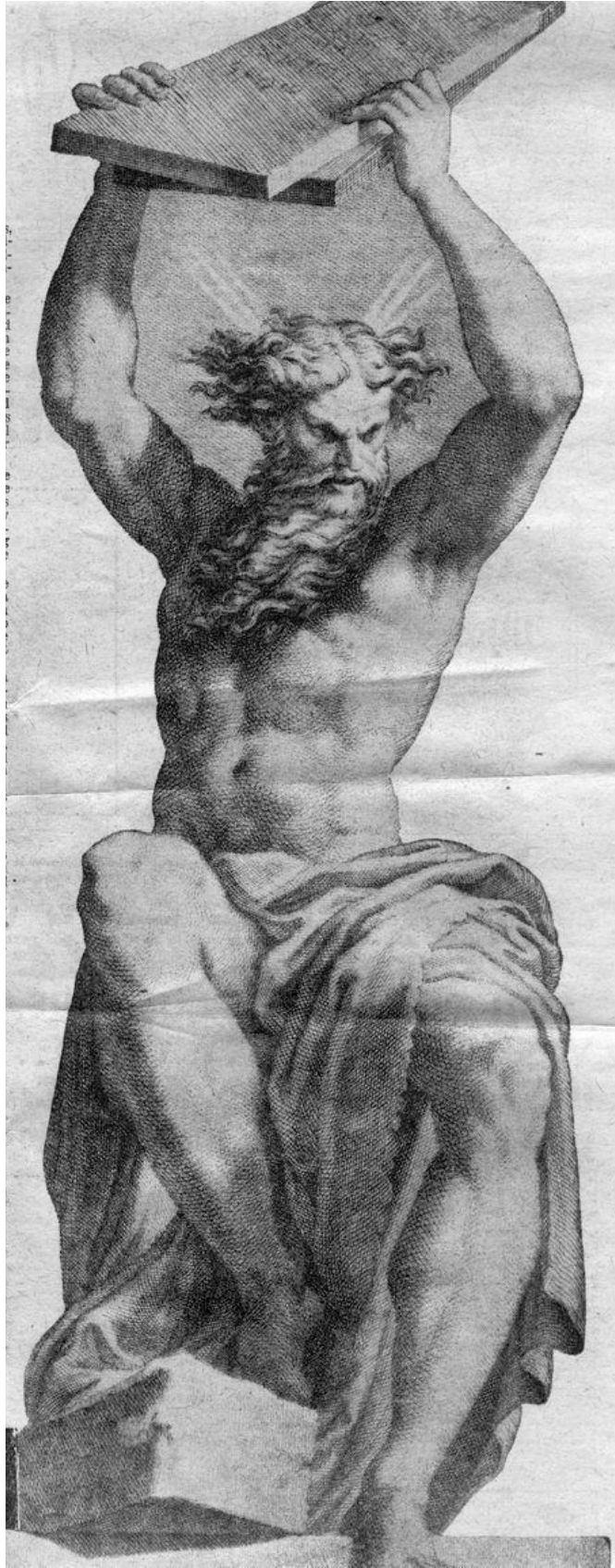
THE Easter story of the New Testament simply puts into human story terms the “crucifixion” of the sacred mushroom.

This is followed by its return to the mother earth that gave it birth and its resurrection to life after thirty-six hours. And what of the words supposedly spoken by Jesus at the time of this crucifixion? “At the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’” which means “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15.34).

Unfortunately, it doesn’t. “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani” is an ingenious approximation to ancient incantation to the mushroom. The whole name will have meant “the cone of the erect mushroom.” That is the cap, or “glans” of the fungus. It has, of course, nothing at all to do with a Semitic phrase about “forsaking” anyone. The invocation was meant to be made when the devotee was on the point of pulling up the sacred mushroom—that is, after it had been “crucified” or stretched out to its full. It reminds us of another invocation to God. When Jesus speaks of the deity he is often made to say “My father who art in heaven,” and the Lord’s Prayer starts off similarly: “Our father who art in heaven...”

“My/our father who art in heaven” conceals at a Semitic level of understanding another secret name of the sacred fungus. The original, which meant “sky-stretched canopy of the cone,” was cleverly teased into an Aramaic phrase “abba debaregi’u,” “O my (our) father who art in heaven!” Having now penetrated the disguise and laid bare the original Sumerian from which the name must have been derived, we can recognise it in a somewhat jumbled form in a phrase we have all known from our childhood story-books—“abracadabra.” Originally it had a far more serious intent, and is first found in the writings of a second-century physician of a heretical “Christian” sect, the Gnostics. This author left precise instructions for the use of “abracadabra,” which by that time had come to be used simply as a magical phrase to ward off evil. Having broken the code of the “Lord’s Prayer” to this extent, we can go on and solve a number of perplexing problems in the text which have engaged scholars’ attention for centuries.

The Ten Commandments form part of a mushroom myth in the Old Testament story of Moses and Mount Sinai. Even the two slabs of stone on which the “Ten Words” were inscribed by the finger of God originated from the “bun” shape of the primitive writing tablet, resembling the top of a mushroom. Indeed, it is from one of the names of the fungus that, through Greek and Latin, we derive our word “tablet.”

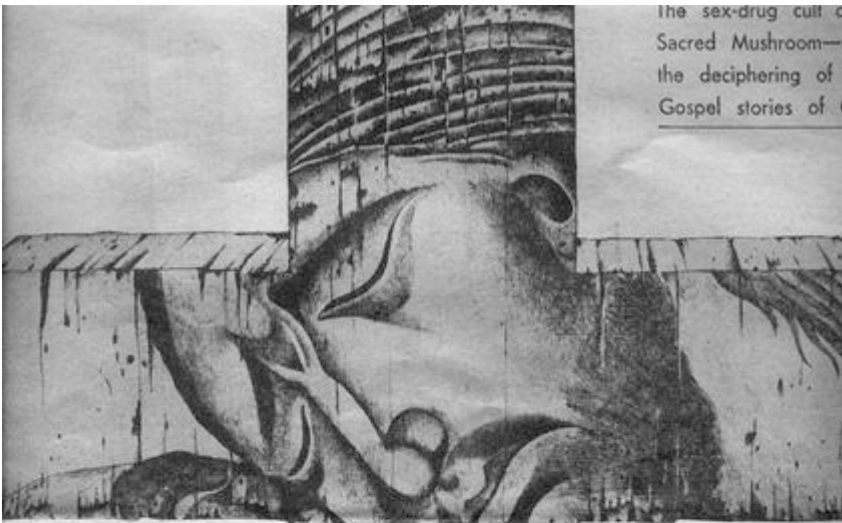


**The Old Testament Story of Moses and the Ten Commandments
was a myth disguising mushroom worship, Allegro Claims.**
Illustration from the Mansell Collection.

THE name of the sacred mountain, Sinai, comes, as we can now see, from a Sumerian word meaning “brazier.” This accounts for its description as “wrapped in smoke...like the smoke of a kiln” (Exodus 19.18) The fiery-topped Amanita Muscaria seemed to the ancients like a brazier. When Moses, the serpent-mushroom character, meets Jehovah there and receives the “tablets of testimony,” he finds after the interview that his face is glowing so much that people are afraid to approach him (Exodus 34.30). The substance of the Ten Commandments, however well rooted some of them may have been in ancient tribal laws, owe their form and position in the story to word-play on ancient mushroom names.

The ancient Israelite religion of Jehovah worship was based largely on the mushroom cult. Many other of the old myths about the patriarchs—stories like Jacob and Esau, representing the stem and red cap of the sacred fungus respectively—now reveal for the first time their mushroom connections. The earlier legends are not cryptic writings, like those of Jesus and his friends. They are merely mushroom folk-lore, illustrating in entertaining story form, aspects of the mysterious fungus. Later the cult came under pressure from a new “orthodoxy” in Judaism which tried to root out all traces of the fertility religion that gave it birth. The sacred mushroom cult then went underground, to reappear with even more disastrous results in the first and second centuries AD, when the drug-crazed “Zealots” (another pun on a mushroom name) and their successors again challenged the might of Rome.

A “reformed” Christianity then drove its drug-takers into the desert as “heretics,” and eventually so conformed to the will of the State that in the fourth century it became an integral part of the ruling establishment. By then its priests had forgotten the codes and the true meaning of Christ’s name—and were taking the words of the hoax literally—trying to convince their followers that the Host had miraculously become the flesh and juice of the god. But, as I said at the beginning, what matters is the *moral teaching* of the Bible. Can it be argued that the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount embody a store of moral idealism that will serve mankind for a long time –irrespective of their origins? If some aspect of the Christian ethic still seem worth while today, does it add or detract from their validity that they were promulgated two thousand years ago by worshippers of the Amanita Muscaria?



The sex-drug cult of
Sacred Mushroom—
the deciphering of
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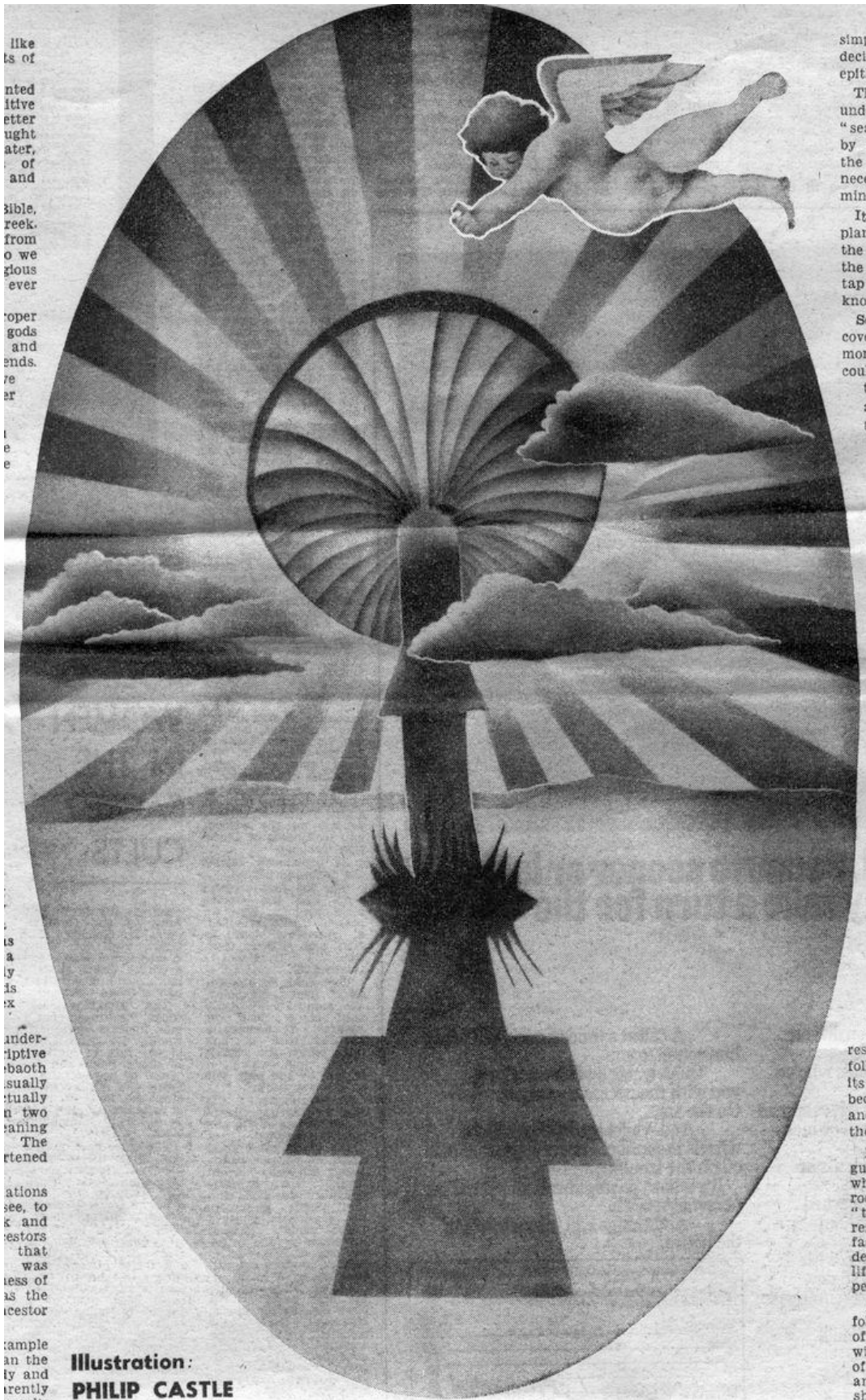


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PHILIP CASTLE

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What Who's Who says about Allegro

ALLEGRO, John Marco; Lecturer in Old Testament and Intertestamental Studies, University of Manchester, since 1952; b. 17 February 1923; s. of late John Marco Allegro and Mabel Jessale (née Perry); m. 1948, Joan Ruby Lawrence; one s. one d. Educ.: Wallington County Gram. Sch.; Univ. of Manchester. Royal Navy, 1941-46; Manchester Univ. 1947-52; B.A. 1st cl. Hon. Oriental Studies, 1951; M.A. 1952; Blos Hebrew Prize, 1950; Scarborough Ser. Studentship, 1951-54. Leverhulme Research Award, 1958; Oxford Univ. (Magdalen), research in Hebrew dialects, 1952-53. Brit. rep. on Internat. editing team for Dead Sea Scrolls, Jerusalem, 1953; Adviser to Jordanian Govt. on Dead Sea Scrolls, 1961. Lectureship in Comparative Semitic Philology and in Hebrew, Univ. of Manchester, 1954-62. Trustee and Hon. Sec. of Dead Sea Scrolls Fund, 1962. Organiser and leader of archaeological expedns. to Jordan, 1959. Popular lecturer and broadcaster on archaeol. subjects. TV films include: Dead Sea Scrolls, B.B.C., 1957; Search in the Kidron, B.B.C., 1963. Publications: The Dead Sea Scrolls (Pelican), 1956 (revised edn. 1964); The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 1968; The Treasure of the Copper Scroll, 1960 (revised edn. 1964); Search in the Desert, 1964; The Shapira Affair, 1964; Discoveries in the Judean Desert, V, 1968. Articles in J.T. on Semitic philology. Recreated: photography; sketch: Reservoir Bos. Reservoir. T. Reservoir.

