

THE CHRISTIAN RADISH CULT

“[H]istory doesn’t happen—it is created in all cases, sometimes with integrity and sometimes with other agendas.”¹

- John Rush

Let’s begin with accepting that different peoples in different places throughout history have used one intoxicant or another as a sacramental aid with which they believed that after ingestion allowed them to sit amongst the gods. Indeed, we know of some remote Siberian shamans that employ the fly agaric to commune with the spirit world—a practice that is most probably centuries older than westerners’ discovery of it in the mid-18th century. Other evidence shows that some peoples even used these substances as a form of reverential recreation.² Likewise, Mesoamerican datura and peyote use probably goes so far into the past that efforts to date its inception are futile. There are also the ancient Greeks who, although no one knows what exactly was in the *Kykeon* drunk at Eleusis, certainly had knowledge of intoxicants like opium, mandrake, henbane, storax, and many other soporific and tropane-containing herbs and plants.³

But a proto-Christian Mushroom Cult? Maybe; like all claims of such a culture-shifting caliber it’s really a question of evidence. However, the evidence touted by Christian mushroom-cult theorists reads more like an opinion column than real historical inquiry. When I first read Allegro, Arthur, Heinrich, (to name a few in the genre), I found the idea intriguing, and thought that the question of Christianity’s origins had been pulled from the abysses of history by the

¹ John Rush, *The Mushroom in Christian Art: The Identity of Jesus in the Development of Christianity* (North Atlantic Books, 2011), pg. 41.

² Andy Letcher, *Shroom: A Cultural History of the Magic Mushroom* (HarperCollins, 2007), pgs. 69-77.

³ Writings of Pliny, Galen, Theophrastus, and Dioscorides all bear this out.

aforementioned authors. But when I took a closer look I found that the hardcore evidence that such a large claim requires was nowhere to be found, save within the minds of the theory's proponents. Moreover, Mushroom Cult advocates view any questions against established mushroom orthodoxy as bias⁴; an orthodoxy that goes in this wise: *Jesus was not a real person, but the personification of a magic mushroom, the experience of whose ingestion is the true origin of Christianity. Priests knew this, but jealously covered it up by suppressing any conversation about the mushroom.* And then, in a way that the advocates fail to explain, these priests—who *fearfully and jealously guarded this secret*—decided to make sure that the “mushroom motif”⁵ was represented in their art. This is the kind of reasoning that conspiracy theories are made of; evidence is “covered up” when it suits the theorist's needs and “obvious” when even the slightest lead comes to light. As I found out, most of these leads channel to nowhere. While we really cannot know either way whether Jesus existed or not, the consensus amongst the top scholars in the field find strong evidence that—historically speaking—he probably did.⁶

Since the question of the historical Jesus is open-ended, we must recognize in the very least that mystics have existed for all ages, and the possibility of one living in Nazareth during the first few decades of the Common Era is not necessarily an outlandish idea. But let's say the Mushroom Cult theorists are correct: Paul of Tarsus made the whole thing up; Jesus was a figment of his imagination. That still does nothing to prove that Jesus was really a mushroom.

⁴ I would like to single out Professor Carl Ruck as the only researcher in this area that has carried on an amicable and interesting conversation with me over these matters.

⁵ Rush's theoretical “mushroom motif” holds that different shapes in the clothing, rocks, angels, blood, books, breasts, globes, and countless other objects in Christian art secretly render mushrooms by having a similar outline of that fungus. Otherwise known as “pure sophistry.”

⁶ Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God* (Anchor, 2010), pg. xxi; Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (HarperOne Publishers, 2012); E.P. Sanders *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (Penguin Press, 1993) pgs. 5-6. There are countless others.

According to Rush, whose ideas we are about to become familiar with, early Christians knew that Jesus wasn't a real person, "but an experience" with psychoactive mushrooms, that has been hidden in Christian art for centuries. Spanning from the religion's esoteric origins, through the middle ages, and into the 18th century, one can supposedly make out *mushroomic* images, both "hidden" and somehow "obvious" in various devotional portraits and paintings.

So exactly how credible is all of this?

IMAGE PROBLEMS⁷

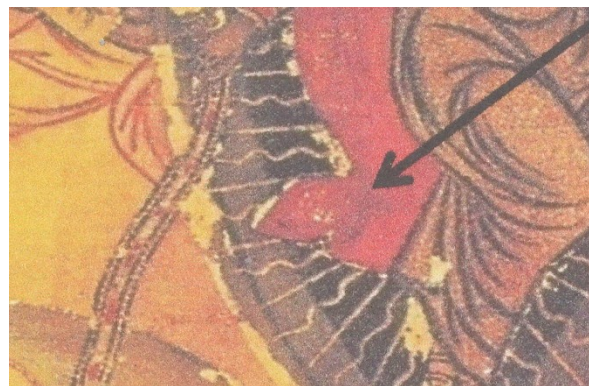
Rush's provocatively attractive *The Mushroom in Christian Art* is a striking read that includes 252 images on a companion DVD. I started by going plate by plate, image by image, looking at the pictures with a critical eye, and writing my thoughts about them. Before too long, I realized that I had the same objections to many of them. Slowly, my hope that Rush had found conclusive (or even marginal) evidence that the Christian Mushroom Cult's artistically-inclined members inserted mushrooms in their painting started to fade. I decided to discuss only a few of them for this critique. Therefore, if anyone wishes to out-rightly dismiss my critiques because I didn't address *every* image, know that the problems I have with the images selected for this write-up infiltrate the bulk; the few examples are endemic of the majority.⁸

Below we see one of the first plates on the CD that comes with the book.⁹ It is a mid-18th century portrayal of the famous piece "The Lady of the Assumption Gives Her Belt to St. Thomas." So the legend tells: Mary, in order to quell "doubting" Thomas's skepticism, dangled her belt to him as a demonstration of her ascension to Heaven. This image Rush supplies is from

⁷ All rights to all images are the exclusive property of their rightful owners, and are reproduced here strictly for educational purposes.

⁸ You can also see my "Roasting the Salamander," and "Mushrooms in Mommy Fortuna's Midnight Carnival," both available on psychedelicwitch.com

⁹ Rush (2011), Companion DVD, plate 1:2c.



the Balamand Monastery in Lebanon, and dates to the mid-18th century. According to Rush, this picture depicts Mary coming out of “the underside cap of a mushroom.” Or at least, Dr. Rush adds the caveat that he has been “informed” as such. Informed from whom? There is no citation, no name, no nothing. Just Dr. Rush’s word that some anonymous-tipster told him the hole in the sky that Mary descends from in the picture is the underside of a mushroom (or vagina). Moreover, Dr. Rush tells us that the curl in her cape is “mushroom-shape[d].”⁴ Above you will see the “curl” to which Rush refers (the arrow points to it). I don’t know how one makes such a critical distinction between two very different artistic

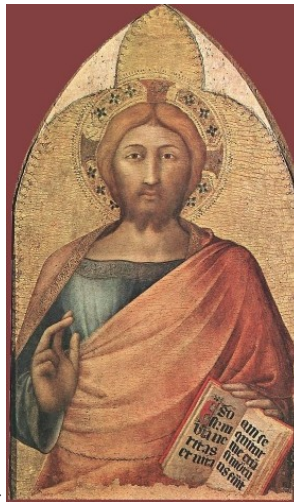
intentions—ordinary clothing fold or mushroom? There is nothing at all to suggest that the artist intended anything more than giving the painting a sense of dimension through shading to create a sense of movement in Mary’s garment.

Rush also states that Mary gave away her “chastity” belt “as proof of both her assumption and virginity.”⁴ While Rush correctly points out that Mary gave her belt to Thomas to prove her assumption, I can’t find corroborating evidence for his latter claim—that she bestowed it also as a sign of her virginity. But there is a good reason supporting evidence is not forthcoming: the story has more to do with Mary proving to Thomas that she did, in fact, ascend into Heaven; it

⁴ Ibid, pg. 14.

has very little, or nothing, to do with Mary demonstrating her virginity. Is it possible that Rush's words are mere conjecture? If so, why are they presented as factual? Without a citation or an ancient version of the story that Rush dug up from some dusty archive telling the virgin aspect of the myth, it's hard to reach any other conclusion. This is not to accuse Rush of anything or even say he is wrong, just that he made it impossible to (presently) verify the claim. I therefore, leave it to Dr. Rush to supply the name of the person that informed him of Mary's rise into a mushroom. I, for one, hope he presents it.

Unfortunately, it might not even matter, for there are other problems with the way Rush interprets this picture in his book. His use of the word "areola" [*sic*]⁵ to describe the portal that Mary uses to enter Heaven isn't the correct term. Here, a working knowledge of language is necessary. An "aureola" (or aureole) is from the Latin word "aurea," meaning "gold." In devotional art, then as today, divine personages are often characterized by the "aureola"—a gold encircling of the divine dignitaries. Aureola appear in art from other areas of the world,⁸ and in Christian art evolved into (or from) halos.⁹ For example, the paintings (right) of "Blessing Christ," and "Our Lady of Guadalupe" each show Jesus and Mary cased in an aureola (the former with a halo as well).



⁵ An "areola" is the circular discolored flesh between the skin and nipple.

⁶ Simone Martini "Blessing Christ" (Naples, Italy c. 1317) Accessed via: museumsyndicate.com

⁷ Artist unknown "Our Lady of Guadalupe," Mexico City, Mexico (c. 1531) Accessed via: Guadalupe.com

⁸ For example, an aureola is found on a Tibetan thanka. But this thanka dates to the 17th century, hundreds of years after they appear in Christian art.

⁹ Sometimes aureola is found alongside a halo.

Rush seems to have confused an “aureola” with a “mandorla,” the latter of which refers to the kind of portal Mary enters in the “Handing St. Thomas Her Belt” painting. The reason the mandorla might appear to be “the underside cap of a mushroom” or vagina has to do with the shape that *all* mandorlas take—that of an almond. Which makes sense, as “mandorla,” is the Italian word for “almond.” This perfectly natural explanation requires zero leaps in faith.

The language problem might, of course, be a careless (and honest) error on the part of the author. We all make mistakes. But it speaks to a deeper issue I have with many of the images: does Dr. Rush understand these kinds of nuances in Christian art? Regrettably, a cursory appraisal of these images can lead to shaky (although certainly intriguing) conclusions.

But for argument’s sake let’s grant it: Mary *is* ascending into a mushroom, and the folds in her cape are supposed to secretly (*and somehow obviously*) portray a mushroom. There are still problems with this interpretation. This particular depiction of the Virgin and St. Thomas is a piece that has been reproduced numerous times over the centuries. Below are a few renditions:



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¹⁰ Bartolomeo della Gatta, “The Lady of the Assumption Gives St. Thomas Her Belt,” (c.1475), Museo Diocesano, Cortona, Italy. Accessed via: <http://www.aug.edu/augusta/iconography/biggerFiles/assumptionBartolomeo.html>

This above painting was housed in the Museo Diocesano in Cortona, Italy, until it was moved to the Church of Saint Dominic in the late 18th century. Here, Mary isn't wearing a cape, so no mushrooms can be found there. Also, the supposed "underside of a mushroom cap"—the aureola—is clearly a throne of angels (a common way to depict an aureola). They are *red* angels, for sure, but does that mean they were supposed to represent *Amanita muscaria* mushrooms? Using that kind of criteria, aren't the red angels just as much open to the idea of representing, say, apples? Berries? Red *anything*?

This version (below) was painted by an unknown artist, though it is believed by some to have been produced by the Master of the Lathrop Tondo (c. early 16th century).¹¹



As we can see, the mandorla does not represent a mushroom at all, but an artist's idea of the portal between our world and that behind the veil. The red orbs around Mary *could* be *Amanita* caps, but the faces found on said balls make it more likely that they signify what they represent in other versions of this piece: angels. Again Mary isn't wearing a cape that can have

¹¹ John and Mable Ringling, *Late Gothic and Renaissance Art from Italy, 1350-1500*, Gallery 4 (The Docent Collections Handbook, 2007) pg. 7.

mushrooms “hidden” in them either. Suddenly, the strangely-shaped portal—the mandorla that Mary enters—becomes demystified. Maybe an almond *sort-of* looks like the underside of a mushroom or vagina, but all three are clearly different things, and given the long history that the mandorla has appeared in devotional art it makes more sense to conclude that that is exactly what the artist meant to represent.

To the right is a rendition of the piece that includes both an aureola and a mandorla painted during the mid-15th century.¹² We again see the small angel-head orbs on both sides of Mary’s legs. To her left, we see an angel

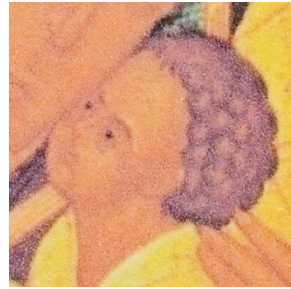


playing a mandolin. I suppose if one turned the mandolin upside down, and painted it red, it *could* almost look like an *Amanita* mushroom. Furthermore, the angel is wearing a red gown. Is this really di Sandro’s secret clue that the mandolin represents a mushroom? Why not? Rush has used such an argument before.¹³

Shortly thereafter, we are met with plate 1:3 (below). Like Mary’s cape in the Lebanese painting we are supposed to believe that the folds in baby-Jesus’ garment represent mushrooms. Not only that, but apparently there are “mushrooms as curls in Jesus’s [*sic*] hair.” Objectively speaking, there is absolutely nothing about Jesus’ hair that looks like anything

¹² Benozzo di Lese di Sandro, “Madonna della Cintola” (1450), Pinacoteca, Vatican. Accessed via: <http://www.lib-art.com/artgallery/19176-madonna-della-cintola-benozzo-gozzoli.html>

¹³ See, for example, Rush’s argument regarding Carlo Crivelli’s, “Madonna and Child,” *Mushroom of the Month* (Dec. 2009) Accessed via: www.clinicalanthropology.com.



other than what it is—hair. As for the folds in Baby Jesus' robe: I *suppose* the



upper image (top middle) sort-of looks like a mushroom, but it also looks *very much* like a sash, which seems more likely. Truthfully, I can see how the curve in the sash creates the illusion of a mushroom.

However, we see a similar effect in a lady's skirt:

Below is a close up of this garment-folding phenomenon.



Applying the Christian Mushroom Cult theorist method of picking what represents mushrooms, we would have to then agree that the designer of this fashionable woman's skirt was *also* an inducted member of the Christian Mushroom Cult. Furthermore, since folds appear in all places, pictures, and people that involve clothing, wouldn't we also have to admit that every skirt-wearing, bathrobe-clad woman or man that ever lived was really a member of the secret mushroom cult? One merely needs to go through her or his photo album to find a picture that

¹⁴ Image supplied by friend. The author has no idea as to the origins of the photo.

includes a fold in clothing. Many of which, like the skirt above, I'm sure, look very much like mushrooms.

Other notable plates that bear this problem are plates 1:16 through 1:19. So far as the accompanying text goes, we are to look for the mushrooms “in hems, sleeves, and stoles.”⁵

Plate 1:6 is accompanied by more boldness. We see portrayed a picture of a saint, but are told that this saint represents “the experience of the mushroom or dwelling in divine light.”⁶ While I want Rush to be right, I don't know where he derives this from. There is nothing about the picture at all to substantiate this claim. No citations are offered; not a single primary source for this claim can be found.

He also tells us that the image portrays “mushroom caps on the table.”⁷ But, there is a caveat. Don't look at the food on the table (which clearly is bread), look past the “naturalistic” explanation, and just see what Dr. Rush wants you to see—mushrooms. It just looks like bread to me, and there is nothing to suggest that that's not what the artist intended.



Plate 1:17 (left) also leaves much to be desired. We are to “notice” that Moses, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham “have mushroom shapes in their hems,” and that the soldiers in the picture do not.¹⁵ Oddly, using Dr. Rush's method of interpretation, there are several things that the soldiers carry/wear that could represent mushrooms, like shields, and the “folds” of their clothing. Let's zoom in on these soldiers down towards the bottom right of the picture.

¹⁵ Rush, pg. 77.

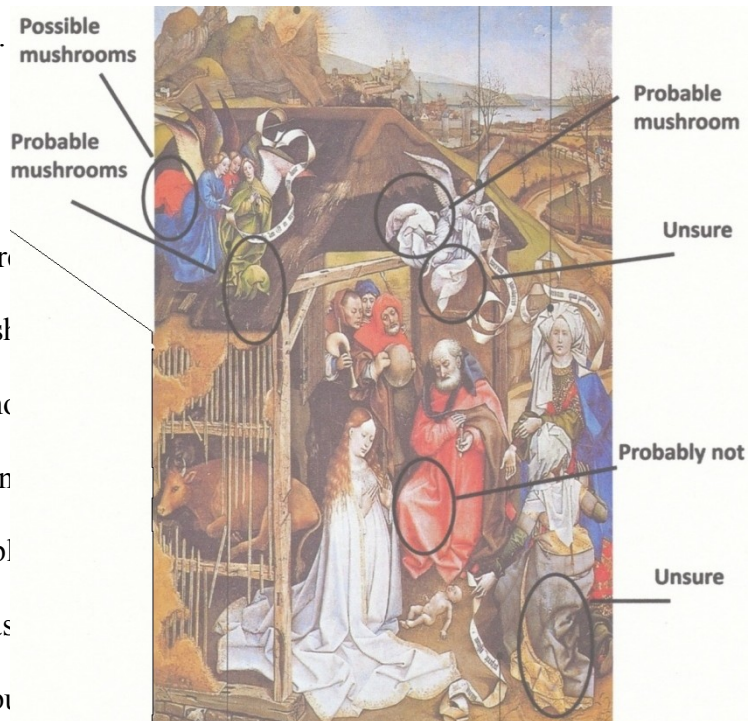


Despite Rush's claim that mushroom images do not appear associated with their Pagan persecutors, here, using the very standards he uses to draw his conclusions, one cannot miss the shroom in this soldier's stole: the white "stem"

between his legs, and the obvious "cap-shape" of the bottom half of his *chitoniskos*.

FOR CRITERIA'S SAKE!

Plate 1:18 (right) is a little confusing. Dr. Rush points to hems and such (which look like all the other "mushroom" clothes from other images), and tells us that these are "probably not,"/ "unsure,"/ "probable" mushrooms. Of those labeled "probably not" and "why not?" They look like all the other clothing used throughout the work. Rush has no problem squaring this circle: "part of the art form was the mushroom identifiable *as* a mushroom but



hidden within the other symbols."¹⁶ I would be more willing to accept this claim if Rush supplied even *one* source containing such a declarative statement from a medieval artist. Saying such evidence was destroyed means he has no evidence.

¹⁶ Ibid., pg. 78. *Italics* in original.

Furthermore—what *criteria* is Rush using to conclude that one ambiguous shape is a mushroom, and the same kind of ambiguous shape isn't? What method is he using to differentiate other than his opinion, which seems colored by acute pareidolia?

Moving along, we get to Plate 3:48a. Dr. Rush continues his fixation with ancient wardrobe. Here he uses arrows to point to stoles. We are, for example, supposed to see mushrooms in the “stole of angel Gabriel,” and “[m]ake note of the well.”¹⁷ Like the portraits of Mary giving her Belt discussed above, there is nothing to suggest that the artist was secretly portraying mushrooms rather than simply painting folds in clothing.



About this time I noticed a pattern: there aren't citations or linguistic interpretations, and Rush certainly employed nothing by way of critical analysis of any kind

; if it *maybe* almost looks like a mushroom, it *is* a mushroom.

That is, of course, unless you aren't supposed to see one. Dr.

Rush includes several “secular” paintings to demonstrate the difference between religious and secular art, offering plates 1:14 and 1:15 as evidence.



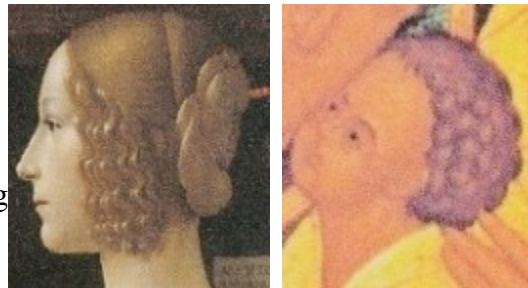
Plate 1:14 (partial)

¹⁷ Quoted on plate. Commentary on pg. 35 in text.

This is the ultimate problem with Rush's work; the secular art, which is supposed to be barren of shrooms, actually does have images that, in other circumstances, Rush would view as mushrooms! Perhaps, most odd is that Rush admits this conundrum openly: "images of mushrooms or mushroom shapes are very rare in secular art. There are some examples of mushroom shapes in clothing, but most can be ruled out."¹¹ Rush never explains *why* these "mushroom shapes" can be ruled out, however, which means there is probably little to no supporting evidence for the assertion.

For example, take the image of the woman on plate 1:14—what is the difference between the waves in her hair and the "mushroom curls" in Jesus' hair? Seems like either picture can really be seen either way, no? Yet, upon closer inspection, we see that the "secular" lady has a more *easily* identifiable mushroom motif in her hair!

In fact, if one wanted to, one could see a bonafide shroom in her "do." The curls are the "stem," leading up to the smooth, triangular "cap." Of course, if one



were prone to ancient alien theories, the woman's hair could also be a disk-like spaceship taking off, the curls representing the exhaust from its launch into outer space. Like all art, which is inherently subjective to the viewer, it really comes down to what the observer *wants* to see.

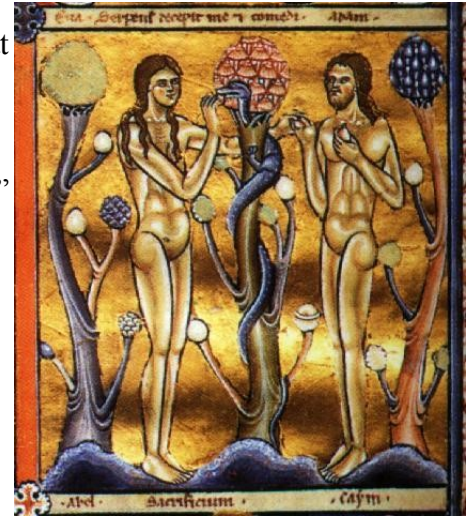
And the problems mount. Aside from the woman's mushroom hair, we Also see a familiar pattern in her sleeve—familiar, that is, if you know the Christian Mushroom Cult theorists' arguments. For this, we must temporarily leave Rush and accompany the bold though usually erroneous¹⁸ artistic interpretations of Jan Irvin. In Irvin's *The Holy Mushroom*,



¹⁸ See "Roasting the Salamander" and "Mushrooms in Mommy Fortuna's Midnight Carnival," both on arspsychodelia.com.

he discusses a phenomenon in Christian art that is *also* found in Plate 1:14. The phenomenon is the surreptitious addition of “little mushrooms” hidden inside bigger mushrooms (which are also “hidden” as trees).¹⁹ He offers us this dazzling illumination of Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden from the *Canterbury Psalter* (c. 1200).²⁰ The idea is that

that the snake is feeding Eve fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (which is really a mushroom). Irvin’s “proof” that this is an *Amanita muscaria* mushroom is found in those hidden little mushrooms at the top of the tree. But this ultimately presents a problem for



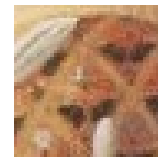
Rush; let’s take a look at the sleeves from our secularist:

If the above fruit from the Eden tree above are shrooms, then by any fair-minded evaluation of what constitutes a shape as such, these sleeves secretly hide mushrooms as well. Despite Rush claiming that the mushroom shapes

“are numerous enough to suggest this is more than simply

the mind wanting to see a specific outline,”—that is *exactly*

what is going on.²¹ And most unfortunately, this simply does



not count as the kind of strict historical criteria that college professors like Rush *should be* employing.

We see a similar problem with the other image on Plate 1:14—the three musicians (above). Take a close look at the mandolin player’s right shirt-sleeve, inching down his wrist. It

¹⁹ Jan Irvin, *The Holy Mushroom* (Gnostic Media, 2008), pg. 117.

²⁰ Accessed via: forbiddengospels.blogspot.com

²¹ Rush (2011), pg. 78.

has a white bottom going into a red top, and even has the *Amanita* “gills” underneath! Why isn’t this an initiated artist’s allusion to the *Amanita muscaria*?



At this point, I feel like my argument has been made. My opinion on just about every plate and

accompanying description has similar problems as the ones already addressed:

1. The overwhelming majority of the supposed mushroom motifs can really be many things. Do some look like mushrooms? Sure! But these are so few and far between, so as to make it a leap of faith to accept all the others as such. However, these few that *do* resemble shrooms are undercut by Rush’s admittance that the “meanings and rituals I describe are my opinions ... and conclusion are debatable.”²² A reasonable caveat, certainly. But I found that as I read through *The Mushroom in Christian Art*, Rush’s “opinions” were asserted more and more as facts. He tells us that first we must “admit” that mushrooms “are part of this [i.e. Christian] art.”²³ Why? What reason has he given us to believe it other than his word? We are simply supposed to consent, and then shuffle on; we have to take all of this on faith. Now that we have “admitted” that mushrooms appear in Christian art (for unknown reasons), we are told that they mostly won’t appear as mushrooms at all! For example: “In this sense a tree is not a tree, a rock is not a rock, a mushroom is not a mushroom, a halo is not a halo ... the value of the motif is its visible invisibility.”²⁴ A mushroom *is not* a mushroom? *Visible invisibility*? This reeks of

²² Ibid., pg. 1.

²³ Ibid., pg. 17.

²⁴ Ibid., pgs. 3-4.

casuistry, and it doesn't end there: "These images (e.g., vine, bread, and fish) are those that first became determinatives for Jesus (Teacher of Righteousness) or adjectives for the mushroom experience."²⁵; "a tree can never be a tree One has to look beyond any naturalistic interpretation."²⁶

I'm not sure how fair this approach is. Looking beyond a naturalistic explanation is *everything* that enlightened gents fought the Church over during the Early Modern Period. For a man who seems incensed over the history of Christianity (in my opinion, with good reason), Rush surely enjoys using the same tactics as the Church. To use this approach means to say that *whatever* you look at in these images can be *anything*; at one point Rush even states that clouds are really secretly depicted mushrooms.²⁷ In other places, he refers to the "mushroom motif" in the "halos, crosses, bread, books, wounds, and blood," portrayed in the pictures.²⁸ But Dr. Rush gives us no reason to believe that a book, or a halo, or a fish is really a mushroom. The paintings clearly depict a book, halo, or fish. Using that kind of criteria, what's to stop someone from saying that Mary wasn't really handing St. Thomas her belt, but rather a tree branch? Or a horse for that matter? So long as we are seeing one thing for another, why not just have the whole painting of the Virgin Giving her Belt to St. Thomas really be a disguised portrait of Jesus (depicted as Mary), handing mushrooms (depicted as the belt) to all humanity (as represented by St. Thomas)? It seems that there are just as many leaps of faith in this interpretation as there are in Rush's. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion, let's assume that the objects that appear as bread, fish, books, etc. really do represent those items.

²⁵ Ibid., pg. 33.

²⁶ Ibid., pg. 76.

²⁷ Ibid., pg. 215.

²⁸ Ibid., pg. 17.

2. Even if some of the pictures do represent mushrooms, there is no way of knowing that the artist meant them to be hallucinogenic transportation tools into the spirit world; they could just be mushrooms for eating. Furthermore, mushrooms do not start appearing in European artwork in earnest until the late 15th century; and when they do, they aren't ambiguous.²⁹

3. Too many of Rush's plates are pictures of folds in clothing, which, so-long as you aren't at a zentai-suit convention, will usually pop up in images that have people wearing clothing. But using this standard, one could find a mushroom in almost every picture ever painted, from cave art to Andy Warhol's "Campbell Soup." After all, as one can see, the bottom of the can of soup is white, and the top is red. Using Rush's criteria, Warhol was *really* disguising his *Amanita* use.



Adopting Rush's standard for color schemes in Christian art, perhaps this portrait of Pope Clement (Plate 1:21, below) was really supposed to represent Campbell's Soup?

Obviously Campbell's Soup didn't exist in Clement's day—but radishes did! Is it possible that this pope belonged to a Secret Cult of the Radish? Borrowing the *very* standards of criteria Rush, Irvin, Heinrich, and the rest use, what other conclusion could one reach? Those like Jan Irvin are quick to point out the color similarities of Christian ecclesiastical duds and *Amanita muscaria* mushrooms³⁰; why should this be any different?



²⁹ See "Mushrooms in Mommy Fortuna's Midnight Carnival" available on arspsychedelia.com.

³⁰ "Interview with Jan Irvin," *The Joe Rogan Experience*, Podcast #119.

According to *The Mushroom in Christian Art*, if something looks like a mushroom, it *is* a mushroom; however, if something *doesn't* look like a mushroom, it's still a mushroom! This is having a double-standard. In other cases, something that does look like a mushroom, cannot be because the art was painted for “secular” purposes. This is having a *triple*-standard. It would seem that the only Mushroom conspiracy in existent is the one perpetrated by loose scholarship, supposition, and uncritical thinking on the part of the theorists. While they try cheaply to protect their ideas with a sentence like “debatable” the fact is that these caveats are surrounded by bold claims of truth-offering.

Moreover, to simply assume that *anything* that remotely looks like a mushroom *is* a mushroom is to commit “culturcide” – the killing of a peoples’ culture to further one’s own agenda. Historians and sociologists are supposed to let cultures speak for themselves. What Rush has done is embroidered his modern western ideas about mushrooms onto ancient cultures, a practice similar to how medieval clergymen invented the Sabbat.³⁰

Maybe Rush is correct; a Christian Mushroom Cult existed secretly for centuries, and while the members feared persecution, torture, and death they still found time to include mushrooms in their paintings. Unfortunately, anonymous tips, curls in clothing and hair, and distrusting your own eyes (by seeing a mushroom where none is evident³¹) simply do not count as the kind of hardcore evidence needed to prove a Christian Mushroom Cult existed. I hope that one day such hardcore evidence is found. Until then, the emperor is parading the streets naked, whether or not you imagine clothes on him—mushroom ruffled or otherwise.

³⁰ Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), esp. chaps. 10 – 12.

³¹ I.e., “faith.”
