

Valentine's Day

CHRISTIAN CUSTOM OR PAGAN PAGEANTRY?

"Will you be my valentine?" That question is asked by millions about this time of year. Why? Is there any religious significance to February 14?

By Herman L. Hoeh

*W*here did St. Valentine's Day come from?

You might suppose school-teachers and educators would know. But do they?

How many of you were ever taught the real origin of Valentine's Day — were ever told in school exactly *why* you should observe the custom of exchanging valentines?

Teachers are all too often silent about the origin of the customs

they are forced to teach in today's schools. If they were to speak out, many would lose their jobs!

Today, candy makers unload tons of heart-shaped red boxes for February 14 — St. Valentine's Day — while millions of the younger set exchange valentines. Florists consider February 14 as one of their best business days. And young lovers pair off — at least for a dance or two — at St. Valentine's balls.

Why? Where did these customs originate? How did we

come to inherit these customs? Isn't it time we examined why we encourage our children to celebrate St. Valentine's Day?

A Christian custom?

Many have assumed that the traditional Valentine's Day celebrations are all in connection with an early Christian martyr by the name of Valentine.

Nothing could be further from the truth!

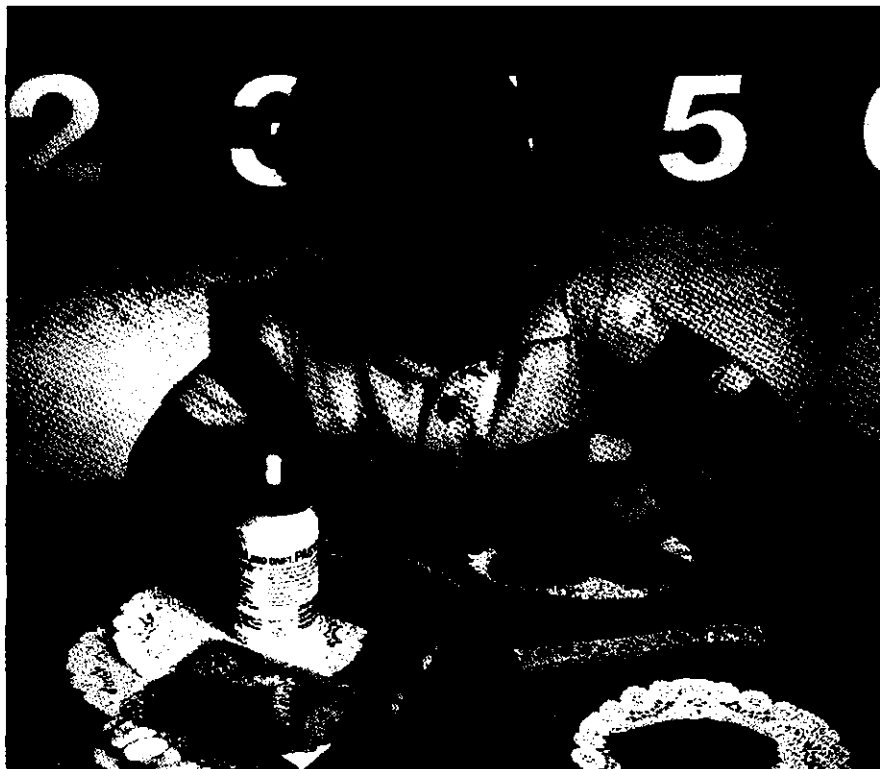
Notice what one encyclopedia says about this idea: "St. Valentine's Day as a lovers' festival, the choice of a valentine and the modern development of sending valentine cards has no relation to the saint or to any incident in his life" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article "Valentine, Saint").

Did you know that centuries before the birth of Jesus, the pagan Romans celebrated February 15 and the evening of February 14 as an idolatrous and sensuous festival in honor of one called Lupercus, the "hunter of wolves"?

The Romans called the festival the "Lupercalia." The custom of exchanging valentines and all the other traditions in honor of Lupercus, the deified hero-hunter of Rome, was also linked anciently with the pagan practice of teenagers "going steady." It usually led to fornication.

Today, the custom of going steady is thought very modern and advanced. It isn't. It is merely a rebirth of an old custom "handed down from the Roman festival of the Lupercalia, celebrated in the month of February, when names of young women were put into a box and drawn out by men as chance directed." That's the admission of the *Encyclopedia Americana*, article "St. Valentine's Day."

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* also points out that the custom of exchanging valentines arose from this "name drawing" during the Lupercalia. The "custom was introduced to England by the Romans and continued through the Christian era. In order to adapt the practice to Christianity the church transferred it to the



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feast of St. Valentine" (article "Greeting Card").

When Constantine in A.D. 313 made Christianity an official religion of the Roman Empire, there was some talk in church circles of discarding this pagan free-for-all. But the Roman citizens wouldn't hear of it! So it was agreed that the holiday would continue as it was, except for the more grossly sensual observances.

It was not until the reign of Pope Gelasius that the holiday became a "Christian" custom. "As far back as 496, Pope Gelasius changed Lupercalia on February 15 to St. Valentine's Day on February 14" (*Lavinia Dobler, Customs and Holidays Around the World*, p. 172).

But how did this pagan festival acquire the name of "St. Valentine's Day"? And why do little children and young people still cut out hearts and send them to "sweethearts" on a day in honor

of Lupercus, the hunter of wolves?

Why have we supposed these pagan customs, in honor of a false god, are Christian?

Who was the original "St. Valentine"?

Valentine was a common Roman name. Roman parents often gave the name to their children in honor of the famous man who was first called Valentine in antiquity. That famous man was Lupercus, the hunter.

But who was Lupercus — and why should he have also borne the name Valentine among the heathen Romans?

The Romans identified Lupercus with the Greek god Pan (*Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, Vol. II, article "Lupercus"). Pan was an Arcadian god of light. As such he was equivalent to the Phoenician sun-

god Baal. Baal — mentioned so often in the Hebrew Bible — was a title of Nimrod, “the mighty hunter” (Genesis 10:9).

The Persian author Rashid al-Din, in his *History of the Franks*, mentions that Nimrod extended his hunting expeditions even to Italy. The Apennine mountains of Italy also bore the name the Mountains of Nembrod or Mountains of Nimrod.

The hunter Nimrod pursued wolves in the Apennine mountains of Italy and acquired the title *Lupercus*, or “wolf hunter.” Valentine’s Day was originally a day set aside by the pagan Romans in his honor!

But why should Nimrod have been called Valentine by the Romans? And why should the celebration of this day have been anciently limited to the city of Rome before Pope Gelasius’ time? What part did the site of ancient Rome play in the life of Nimrod?

Valentine comes from the Latin word *Valentinus*, a proper name derived from the word *valens*, meaning “to be strong, powerful, mighty.” Any connection with Nimrod?

We read in the Bible that Nimrod was “the mighty hunter” (Genesis 10:9). It was a common proverb of ancient time that Nimrod was “the *mighty* hunter before the Lord.” Nimrod was their hero — their strong man — their *valentine*!

But why do we associate hearts with a day set aside in honor of Nimrod — the *Baal* of the Phoenicians?

The surprising answer is that the ancient Romans acquired the symbol of the heart from the Babylonians. Nimrod founded Babel. He was the first lord of the Babylonians.

In the Chaldean tongue, spoken in Babylonia, the word for “heart” was *bal*. The heart — *bal* — became, because of similarity in sound, a symbol of Nimrod — the *Baal* or Lord of the ancient Babylonians!

Later, professing Christians in Constantine’s day associated one of their martyrs named Valentine

with festivities honoring Nimrod — the Valentine of the heathen. In this way pagan Romans were influenced to “embrace” the church while still continuing their pagan customs.

Why February 14?

But why should the early Romans have chosen February 15 and the evening of February 14 to honor Lupercus — the Nimrod of the Bible? (Remember that days in ancient times began at sunset the evening before.)

Nimrod — the Baal or sun-god of the ancient pagans — was said to have been born at the winter solstice. In the 21st century B.C., the winter solstice occurred on January 6. Semiramis I, who ruled as queen in that century, ordered Nimrod’s birthday to be

began on the evening of February 14 — the Lupercalia or St. Valentine’s Day.

On this day in February, Semiramis, the mother of Nimrod, was said to have been *purified* and to have appeared for the first time in public with her son as the original “mother and child.”

The Roman month February, in fact, derives its name from the *februa*, which the Roman priests used in the rites celebrated on the Lupercalia. The *februa* were thongs from the skins of sacrificial animals used in rites of purification on the evening of February 14.

This, then, is the origin of Valentine’s Day.

Why should we continue teaching children these pagan customs, derived from ancient and out-

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celebrated on the day we designate January 6.

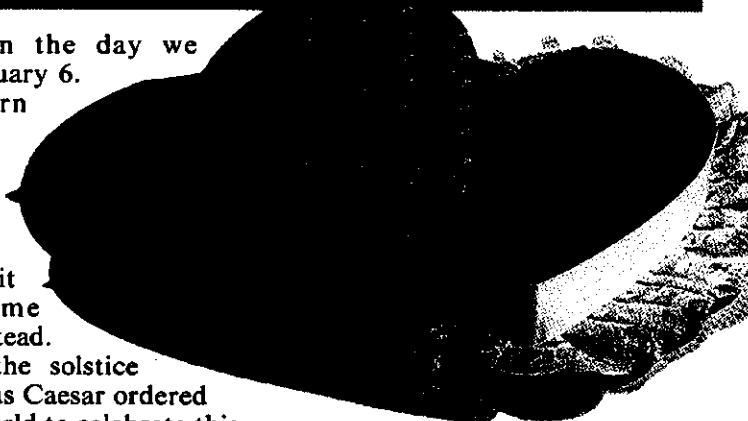
The Eastern Orthodox churches still commemorate this particular day, but now call it by the name *Christmas* instead.

Later, as the solstice changed, Julius Caesar ordered the Roman world to celebrate this birth date on the new date of the solstice — on December 25 on his reformed calendar. This day was called the *Brumalia*. Today it is labeled Christmas.

It was the custom of antiquity for the mother of a male child to present herself for purification on the 40th day after the day of birth. The fortieth day after January 6 — Nimrod’s original birthdate — takes us to February 15, the celebration of which

dated pagan sex- and hero-worship? Why not teach them, instead, what history and the Bible really say?

You need to know exactly what the Bible *does* say about what days God’s true people should observe. For more information be sure to request our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God’s Holy Days — Which?* You may have a copy by writing to our address nearest you. □



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