

Where Did St. Valentine's Day Come From?

by Herman L. Hoeh

TODAY, candymakers unload tons of heart-shaped red boxes for February 14, while millions of the younger set are annually exchanging valentines. Florists consider February 14—St. Valentine's Day—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? Where do we find any such practices in the Bible? How did we come to inherit these customs?

It is time we examined why we encourage our children to celebrate St. Valentine's Day when it is never so much as mentioned in the Bible as a practice of the New Testament Church.

A Christian Custom?

Did you know that centuries before Christ, the pagan Romans celebrated February 15 and the evening of February 14 as an idolatrous festival in honor of 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—"have been 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," admits the *Encyclopedia Americana*, art., "St. Valentine's Day."

When Constantine made Christianity the 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.

But how did this pagan festival acquire the name of "St. Valentine's Day"? And why is the little, naked Cupid of the pagan Romans so often associated today with February 14? And why do

little children and young people still cut out hearts and send them 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 Greeks called Lupercus by the name of "Pan"—the Semites called Pan "Baal," according to the *Classical Dictionaries*. Baal—mentioned so often in the Bible—was merely another name for Nimrod, "the mighty hunter" (Genesis 10:9). So the hunter Nimrod was the Lupercus—or wolf hunter—of the Romans. And St. Valentine's Day was a day set aside by the pagans in his honor!

But why should Nimrod have been called "Valentine" by the Romans?

Valentine comes from the Latin word *Valentinus*, a proper name derived from the word *valens*, meaning "to be strong," declares *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*. It means literally "strong, powerful, mighty." Could this refer to Nimrod, the grandson of Ham? Indeed! We read in the Bible that Nimrod was the "MIGHTY hunter" (Gen. 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!*

One translation of Genesis 10:11 implies the same fact: "Out of that land he [Nimrod] went forth *being strong* and built Nineveh . . ." The Hebrew word "Asshur," usually found in this verse, means "to be strong," to be—as

the Romans would say—a Valentinus, a Valentine!

How plain that the original Valentine was Nimrod, the mighty hunter of wolves. Yet another of Nimrod's names was "Santa," meaning "Saint"—which we mentioned in the December *Plain Truth*. No wonder that the Roman Lupercalia is called "St. Valentine's Day"!

But why do we associate HEARTS on a day in honor of Nimrod—the *Baal* of the Phoenicians and Semites?

The surprising answer is that the pagan Romans acquired the symbol of the heart from the Babylonians. In the Babylonian tongue the word for *heart* was "bal" (see *Young's or Strong's Concordance*). The heart—*bal*—was merely a symbol of Nimrod—the *Baal* or *Bel* of the Babylonians!

Executed at Rome

Nimrod—the *original St. Valentine*—*fled to Rome*, according to ancient tradition, *and was killed there for his crimes*. Later the half-pagan Church in Constantine's day made Nimrod—the St. Valentine of the heathen—a *Saint* of the Church and continued to honor him by calling him *falsely* a Christian martyr.

But why should the 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 sungod of the ancient pagans—was said to have been born at the winter solstice. In ancient times the solstice occurred on January 6 and his birthday therefore was celebrated on January 6. Later, as the solstice changed, it was celebrated on December 25 and is now called Christmas. It was the custom of antiquity for the mother of a male child to present herself for purification on the fortieth 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 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 St. Valentine's Day. The *februa* were thongs from the skins of sacrificial animals used in rites of purification on the evening of February 14.

Cupid Makes His Appearance

Another name for the child Nimrod was "Cupid"—meaning "desire" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, art., "Cupid"). It is said that when Nimrod's mother saw him, she *lusted* after him—she *desired* him. Nimrod became her Cupid—her desired one—and later her Valentine! So evil was Nimrod's mother that *it is said she married her own son!* Our trip to Egypt in 1957 confirmed this. We found inscribed on the monuments of antiquity that Nimrod (the Egyptians called him Osiris) was said to have been "the husband of his mother."

As Nimrod grew up, he became the child-hero of *many* women who *desired* him. He was their Cupid! In the Book of Daniel he is called the "*desire of women*" (Dan. 11:37). He provoked so many women to *jealousy* that an idol of him was often called the "image of jealousy" (Ezekiel 8:5). Nimrod, the hunter, was also their Valentine—their strong or mighty hero! No wonder the pagans commemorated their hero-hunter Nimrod, or Baal, by sending heart-shaped love tokens to *one another* on the evening of February 14 as a symbol of him.

It is about time we examined these foolish customs of the pagans now falsely labeled Christian. It is time we quit this Roman and Babylonian foolishness—this *idolatry*—and get back to the faith of Christ delivered once for all time. Let's quit teaching our children these pagan customs in memory of Baal the sungod—the original St. Valentine—and teach them instead what the Bible really says!