In The Name Of Love

by LUCILLE J. GOODYEAR

On Valentine's Day the small fellow with wings, scanty garments and a trusty bow and arrow circles low looking for likely targets. Cupid is a citizen of the world.

How did it all start? Actually, the origin of Valentine's Day is shrouded in a lacy mist of hearts and flowers. Most historians seem to agree that the traditions surrounding this observance stem from a combination of two events. The first is the martyrdom of a Roman priest, Valentine, on February 14, about 270 A.D. Several St. Valentines are in the history of the early Christian Church — the Acts Sanctorum (Acts of the Saints) lists seven separate St. Valentines, and February 14 is the saint's day of them all. But the one whose feast day is commemorated by sending *Valentines* was the priest who was executed for refusing to renounce his faith during a period of persecution under Claudius II.

The second event contributing to the observance was the Roman festival of Lupercalia which fell annually in mid-February. It was celebrated to insure fertility of people, flocks and fields. At this season young people customarily drew names from an urn to decide which was their "true love". Early Christian leaders, it is theorized, may have made February 14 the feast day of St. Valentine partially in an effort to combat this pagan celebration by substituting a Christian one. However, the custom of finding or choosing a "true love" on this day continued through the centuries, and many legends and traditions grew up around it.

Long ago in Derbyshire, England, young women circled the church 12 times at midnight on February 13th and repeated, "I sow hempseed, hempseed I sow, he that loves me best come for me now." After all that, her love was supposed to appear on the next day. Another old British rite consisted of fair young maidens smiting their foreheads with a folded rose petal. If the petal cracks, the love of your life loved you. Poet Robert Herrick offered condolences to the bride because she had to give up rose-smiting after marriage: "She must no more a maying/ Or by rosebuds divine/ Who will be her valentine."

The custom of the love lottery urn was still evident in the 18th century, both in England and in Scotland. Social groups of young people would gather together for the name drawing on the eve of St. Valentine's Day. Each young gallant drew a name and claimed his "valentine". He was then required to wear his "love's" name, encircled by a heart, on his sleeve for several days. Thus — the old saying — "he wears his heart on his sleeve".

The use of "love cards" or valentines is said to have originated in Italy, later spread to other parts of Europe, England and, finally to America. By the middle of the 18th century valentines were an accepted custom in the observance of St. Valentine's Day.

The earliest ones were often quite simple in construction, yet most artistic in style. They were all handmade, using various decorating processes, from water color to pencil to pen work. Each card was made with a special person in mind. A gentleman or a proper lady rarely, if ever, made and gave more than one card . . . which is a definite indication that in those days the valentines were taken much more seriously than they are today.

It is the 19th century that emerges as the most romantic age of valentines. The cards were still made by hand, but with a lavishness that has never been surpassed. Lace, ribbons, rich fabrics, feathers, beads, dried flowers, hand-drawn scenes, and prints were all put to use. And it was the men that took valentines very seriously. The ultimate goal of every love-smitten swain was to create a "love card" that his lady love would not soon forget. In many cases the gentlemen used just such an elaborate poetic offering as a proposal of marriage.

The valentine messages of those days were indeed flowery and effusive. Since but a few young men were gifted in the art of poetic expression, there were many who turned to special books of poetry for their special messages. One such book appeared in England in 1797, and was called "The Young Man's Valentine Writer". Many books of this type appeared in the 1800's. As late as 1876, Marcus Ward and Company of London, England, published "The Quiver of Love", which was filled with suitable poems and lines for valentine making.

As there were no envelopes available for these homemade valentines, the card was usually folded and secured with sealing wax. This was perfectly adequate as the cards were not mailed but delivered in person, or in cases of extreme shyness — slipped under milady's door. Although proper young ladies did not send valentines to gentlemen friends or sweethearts in those times, it was perfectly acceptable to acknowledge such an offering — if done with complete propriety.

A girl often had to be extra clever in order to figure out who had sent her the valentine. Many amateur versifiers took the trouble to work out an acrostic, a rebus or other type of puzzle or even a cryptogram.

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I Found God In A Wheel

by ELEANORE SPOONER

In the early years of my religious training, I had been told that God was everywhere. I remember that this teaching puzzled me for a long time. Over and over again I asked myself, "How can God, who created heaven and earth and all creatures, be everywhere at the same time?"

Time. I needed time and experience to discover where God really lived. It wasn't until I reached my early teens that I actually came to know God. To know Him is good; to find Him is better. But where can you find God?

My heart overflows with sympathy for people who think they can find God behind stained-glass windows once a week, or worse yet, twice a year — on Christmas and Easter. I'm not implying that we shouldn't go to church. The house of our Lord is a wonderful place to worship. Yet through the years I've learned that I can worship Him wherever I am, and in any position. I can pray while driving my car, cooking a meal, or scrubbing a floor. For the spirit of God is within me. He dwells in the temple of my heart; and in your heart, "I am with you always." *(Matt. 28; 20).*

How many of you have seen the painting, "Christ at the Door"? The artist, Warner Sallman, nearly lost the sale of that picture simply because the door lacked a knob. Mr. Sallman explained to his prospective buyer that he had a reason for omitting the knob. He illustrated that Christ was knocking on our hearts. He cannot enter until we let Him in — until we open the door from the inside.

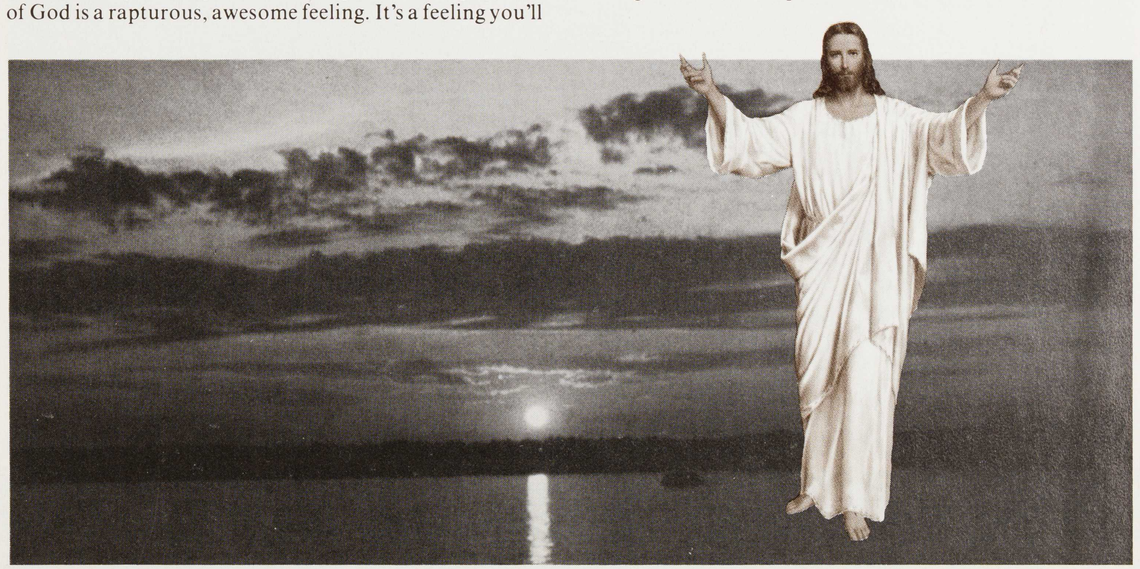
During the course of our daily lives we are sometimes apt to forget Him. To experience the presence of God is a rapturous, awesome feeling. It's a feeling you'll never forget, one you'll want to share with others. And so I'd like to tell you about my most beautiful inspiration.

Several years ago on a bleak February day I was walking to the chicken house to gather the eggs. The weather was foggy and as damp as my depressed spirits. However, I noticed the sun was trying to shine as my shadow was faintly visible. On returning to the house I still trudged along, chin on chest. I could have been praying — I don't remember. As I neared the garage something stopped me in my tracks. It seemed as though an invisible hand raised my head. I gazed at the sky in wonderment and in that same moment a surge of illumination swept through my body. Never have I seen anything so marvelous! The amber sun resembled the hub of a giant wheel. Pink fluffy clouds formed the spokes and rim of the wheel. Between each spoke the sky was of the prettiest blue. The remainder of the sky outside the rim was a pale gray. This magnificent perfection astonished me and I seemed to be enveloped in an eternal trance. It was then that I joyfully felt the presence of God.

So where is God? We can find Him wherever we go. The Scripture tells us that Jesus often went alone to the garden to pray. In this sense we can pray anywhere.

Emerson said, "Nature is too thin a screen; the glory of the omnipresent God bursts through everywhere." Yes, He *is* everywhere. He flows through acts of love and kindness. He lives in every human heart regardless of color, race or creed. He's everywhere in this great wide wonderful world.

I needed time and experience in finding God. Now I'm grateful that I opened the door to let Him in.□



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