

St. Valentine's Lovarchy

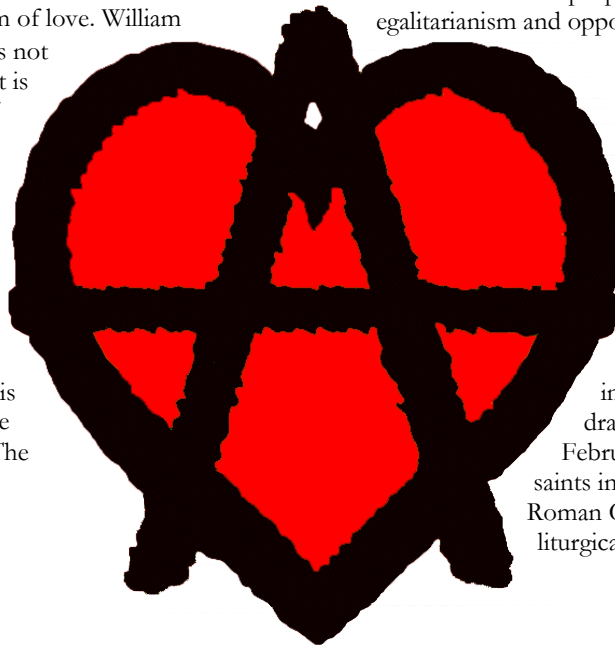
Saint Valentine was a political prisoner who based his work in Love. Sanskrit has ninety-six words for love, ancient Persian has eighty, Greek three, and English simply one. Koine Greek (in use from 300 B.C.E. To 300 C.E.) types of Love are Philia, Eros, & Agape. Another kind in the Mediterranean (1000 years later) was forbidden by the state because it was taboo. That's Amore. Each kind of Love has special significance to the modern celebration of Saint Valentine's Holiday. The power of Love is our evolutionary potential to be liberated from the penal system and hierarchy itself.

Philia is unconditional, brotherly love. It is the word of genuine affection—heart love. This type of love is usually common in strong, positive family and friendship relationships—it has a lot to do with loyalty. The English suffix “-phile” comes from this term, as in “audiophile” (one with a love for high fidelity sound reproduction).

Eros generally had to do with romantic & sexual love. The English word “erotic” is based on this word. Eros was the Greek god of love; earliest writers represented Eros as one of the initial creator gods, later writers depicted him as the son of Aphrodite, equivalent to the Roman god Cupid. This god of love, son of Venus; was usually represented as a naked, winged boy with bow and arrow.

Agape can be translated to English as the noblest form of love. William Barclay noted that, “Agape has to do with the mind: it is not simply an emotion which rises unbidden in our hearts; it is a principle by which we deliberately live.” It is a kind of love that we can actually create for all people, including enemies.

Amore is the kind of love that was forbidden by Rome. The government enforced the custom of social control via arranged marriages, and thereby outlawed the autonomy of individuals choosing their own mates based on eros, lust, or a spiritual connection. Since the nation was “Roma” and the opposite spelling is “amor”, troubadours popularized this term to reverse the common power of the state over matters of the heart. The English term “amorous” has roots here.



Religious & Cultural Origins

The holiday of the Valentine (February 14th) is rooted in both the Christian prisoner killed by the Roman Empire and in that country's older traditional Pagan feast of Lupercalia. In early Rome, fierce wolves roamed the woods nearby. The Romans called upon their god Lupercus to keep the wolves away. A Springtime festival held in honor of Lupercus was celebrated on the 15th of February. (The goddess Februata Juno was a counterpart to Lupercus.) On the eve of the festival of Lupercalia one custom was to write names of Roman girls on slips of paper and placed the papers into jars. Each young man drew a slip. The girl whose name was chosen was to be his sweetheart for the year.

Political & Spiritual Developments

The Roman Emperor (circa 260 C.E.) Claudius II, ordered the Roman soldiers to NOT marry or become engaged. Claudius believed that as married men, his soldiers would want to stay home with their families rather than fight his wars. The spirit of Agape, Philia, Amore and Eros are in conflict with the spirit of war, domination and the power of nation-states. At that time Christianity was an underground, unsanctioned religion. Valentine was a holy man in Rome, who, with St. Marius and his family, assisted the martyrs suffering in the persecution under Claudius II. Valentine was imprisoned for disobeying the emperor, including allegedly performing marriages for couples. While incarcerated he continued writing letters and even helped other prisoners in their conversion to Christianity. His friend Julia was the jailer's daughter. Claudius discovered that Valentine was still propagating faith in Christ (celebrating love, forgiveness, egalitarianism and opposing empires, violence and warfare) from his jail cell, so the prefect of Rome had him beaten with clubs, and then later gave him the death penalty. He was beheaded on February 14, 270 C.E., the eve of Lupercalia. In his last letter to the jailer's daughter before his execution, he signed it “*From your Valentine*”.

The Aftermath

For his heroism and subsequent martyrdom, Valentine was named a saint. As Rome became more “Christian”, the priests moved the spring holiday from the 15th of February to the 14th - in order to honor Saint Valentine instead of Lupercus. To abolish the pagan custom of boys drawing the names of girls (in honor of their goddess Februata Juno) several zealous pastors substituted the names of saints in the billets given on this day. The 14th was also an official Roman Catholic feast day until 1969, when it was dropped from the liturgical calendar.