

WBAl began this morning, 10May77, with a Johnny Appleseed record, Paul Gorman then asking whether "anybody out there on our periphery had snow on the appleblossoms yesterday." Phoning in, I said yes, and the six-minute broadcast conversation went like this:

E: "Good morning! Yes,.... I thought of the Rev. Jn. Chapman, who died in 1847, and who thought of the glory of God, and praised God, when he saw snow on the appleblossoms. Your secular-version recording just called him Johnny Appleseed. It distorted him into a nature-freak, and cheated the listener of Chapman's primary motivation, to scatter the love of God: the main thing he carried with him was his Bible, not appleseeds."....G: "I appreciate your criticism, and the obvious joy and playfulness in your voice. But you theologians are always drifting away. Stay with those snow-covered appleblossoms of yours: how did they feel to you?"....E: "You secularists are always drifting away. I did not just feel joy, I felt joy *in God*, the joy Johnny Appleseed felt--not a joy in the glory of nature, but a joy through the glory of nature. We cheat our children when we flatland them with upsidedown, secularistic versions of the primordial myths. For this idolatry of the natural and the human, we get zombies in our schools' halls and classrooms."....G: "Wow! A heavy trip! I still say you've drifted too far from the appleblossoms."

The talkman is a beautiful person, and I sympathize with what he was doing--reaching out to the exurban periphery for beauty, the specific beauty of an unusual event, snow on the appleblossoms. But I went on to ground my point: "I'm for staying with the appleblossoms and God, not one or the other; and for helping others, including the society in general, to do the same. At New York Theological Seminary I teach ministers of storefront churches, black and hispanic, who minister to many who seldom see an appleblossom, to say nothing of one with snow on it. The Rev. John Chapman would have more than a nature-mysticism message for God-alienated and nature-alienated urbanism." [The recording said "He spent his life planting appleseeds....He loved animals....preached about the beauty of things....about kindness, especially kindness to animals."] "When God is left out, we get the schizoid society--ugliness in the inner-city-scapes, beauty in suburban-scapes. I mean the biblical God of history and nature, the God referred to by the children who asked Rainer Maria Rilke to tell a story 'and leave <sup>God</sup> out'--who responded, 'Even if I did so, God would come into the silence after the last period.'"....G: "Wow!"

E: "I'm not for drifting away at all! I'm for keeping it all together: God and the world, the appleblossoms and the city, history and nature, and all the other real polarities. I'm for the complete circle symbolized in the West's primary story, that God made the world good, we messed it and ourselves, and God is available to help us restore the original unity, namely, our communion with God and with each other in 'nature'--if you please, all humankind ringing a snow-covered appletree in full blossom, singing hymns to the Creator and Restorer."

Plato has a good word for our culture: Truth is overcoming amnesia.

A subsequent phone-in: "He may have carried his Bible with him; but he talked primarily to the animals, I think--as a shaman." Anything, on BAI, but the Bible!