

When Adam and Eve allowed cookies (Romans 5:12-19)

## **The tree of good and evil is a good analogy for the internet.**

by [Kathryn Z. Johnston](#)

February 20, 2023

*To receive these posts by email each Monday, [sign up](#).*

*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

It happens to all of us.

On a whim, you decide that what you really need is a pair of fleece-lined, diamond-soled, rubber ducky Crocs. So instead of working on your essay for the *Christian Century*, you throw that phrase into your preferred search engine and then click the links to see what's out there. Around the third or fourth website you realize that 20 minutes has gone by, and you need to get back to work.

Later in the day you go to a completely different website, and about halfway down the page, an ad pops up for fleece-lined, diamond-soled, rubber ducky Crocs. You go to a different website, and there they are again! What are the chances?

It's no coincidence, of course. Our every online move is tracked by a tool—a snippet of code—that was originally created to give us the ability to have shopping carts and comment on blog posts, all while actually *protecting* our anonymity. Instead, it became the dream of online advertisers and the nightmare of privacy advocates.

We know it as the internet cookie.

I've been playing around with the idea of original sin being the very first cookie. Adam and Eve are created and are specifically told not to eat of the tree of good and evil. If that's not a good analogy for the internet, I don't know what is.

Of course, they both ignore this command. This in turn creates all kinds of problems, most notably God letting them know that sin will be embedded in humans' code from then on.

Paul describes it slightly differently: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned . . . death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses."

In the New Testament, an upgrade is introduced—fully human and fully divine. He comes programmed to resist sin, but that doesn't keep the devil from trying his malware. Each attempt seems harder to resist. Of course, Jesus can turn stones into bread. He can also command the angels to protect him. He could even own all of the kingdoms and splendor.

Yet Jesus resists. And in doing so he deletes the cookies of sin from the browser history of all humanity.