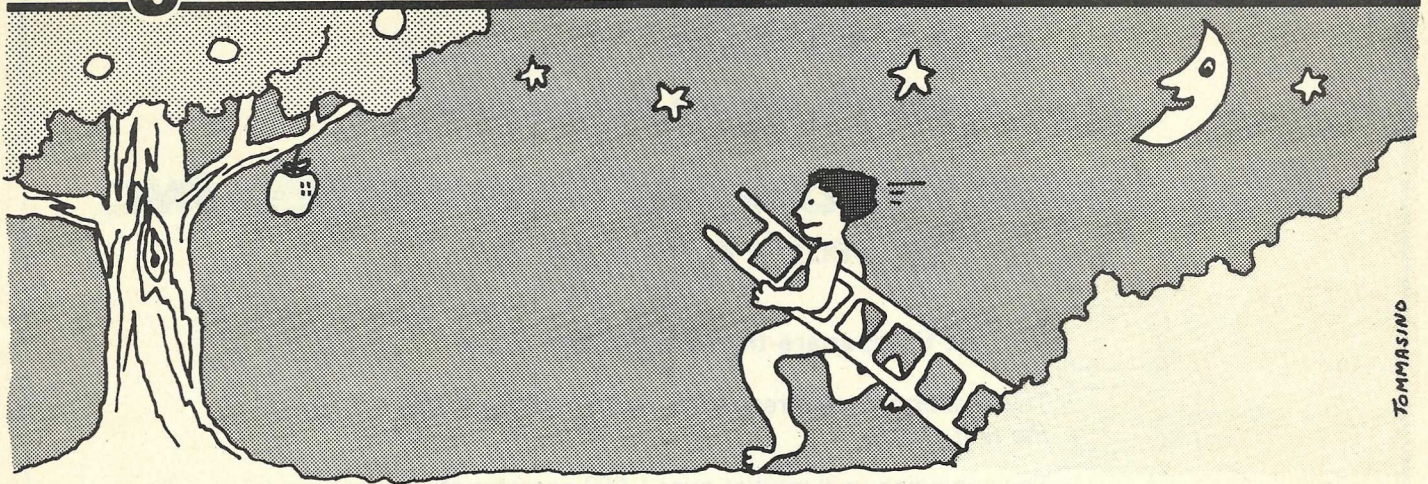


The Last Word



Jamie Buckingham

Mark Twain came close when he said, "Adam did not want the apple for the apple's sake; he wanted it only because it was forbidden."

In other words, there is something about forbidden fruit which attracts flies.

Ban a book in Boston and it will sell a thousand copies in Pittsburgh. Making a thing illegal somehow makes it attractive at the same time.

A lot of Christians rejoiced when *Hustler* magazine publisher Larry Flynt was jailed in Cincinnati on obscenity charges. True, the magazine is unbelievably filthy—and blasphemous. Yet, because of all the ruckus, *Hustler's* circulation increased by more than 300 per cent the next issue.

Recently certain parties threatened me with a lawsuit over the publication of a certain book. The complaint was finally withdrawn. A lawsuit, they wisely reckoned (to my relief), would only make the book more popular.

A number of years ago a fishing lure called the "Bomber" was put on the market. It was a short, squatty lure

that didn't look anything like what most fishermen thought a bass plug should look like. They refused to buy anything that bumped along the sandy bottom, bounced off submerged logs and rocks, and had to be pulled by the tail.

The plugs collected dust in the stores.

That is, until the southeast sales manager, Tom Henson, had a brainstorm. Taking a note from Uncle Remus ("Skin me, Brer Fox, snatch out my eyeballs . . . but please don't fling me in dat brier-patch.") he decided to take advantage of man's attraction to the forbidden.

Mississippi was the most difficult state in Henson's sales territory. He made a deal with a friend who introduced a bill into the Mississippi legislature, outlawing the Bomber as a destructive force.

"If it's not banned immediately," the fishing expert told the lawmakers, "it will clean out the largemouth bass population in the state."

The bill passed, and suddenly the Bomber was the hottest lure on the market—the black market, that is. It was sold by the thousands under counters and behind boatdocks. Of course there was no way one fishing lure could clean out the bass population in Mississippi, and the game wardens just smiled and let it go. Tom Henson be-

came wealthy that year—selling forbidden fruit at inflated prices.

Few understand that legislation will never prevent sin—nor bring about righteousness. Temperance workers used to ask a drunk to "sign the pledge and then keep it." One bleary-eyed fellow answered back. "Lady I don't need something to keep. I need something to keep me."

The natural man will always find a way around the law—and eat (or drink) the forbidden fruit.

Someone suggested the finest thing that could happen to Christianity would be a Congressional law making it illegal to be born again. I'm not sure that's exactly the same thing Brer Rabbit had in mind, but it appeals to the same instinct. Challenge a man with a marshmallow roast and he'll yawn. Challenge him with death and he just might respond.

Of course, that kind of Congressional action would mean a presidential impeachment. It might even mean a few church members would have to go underground.

But think of the excitement of serving communion in the brier patch.