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STRANGER THINGS

Images from
Kyōsai's Pictures
of One Hundred
Demons, 1890



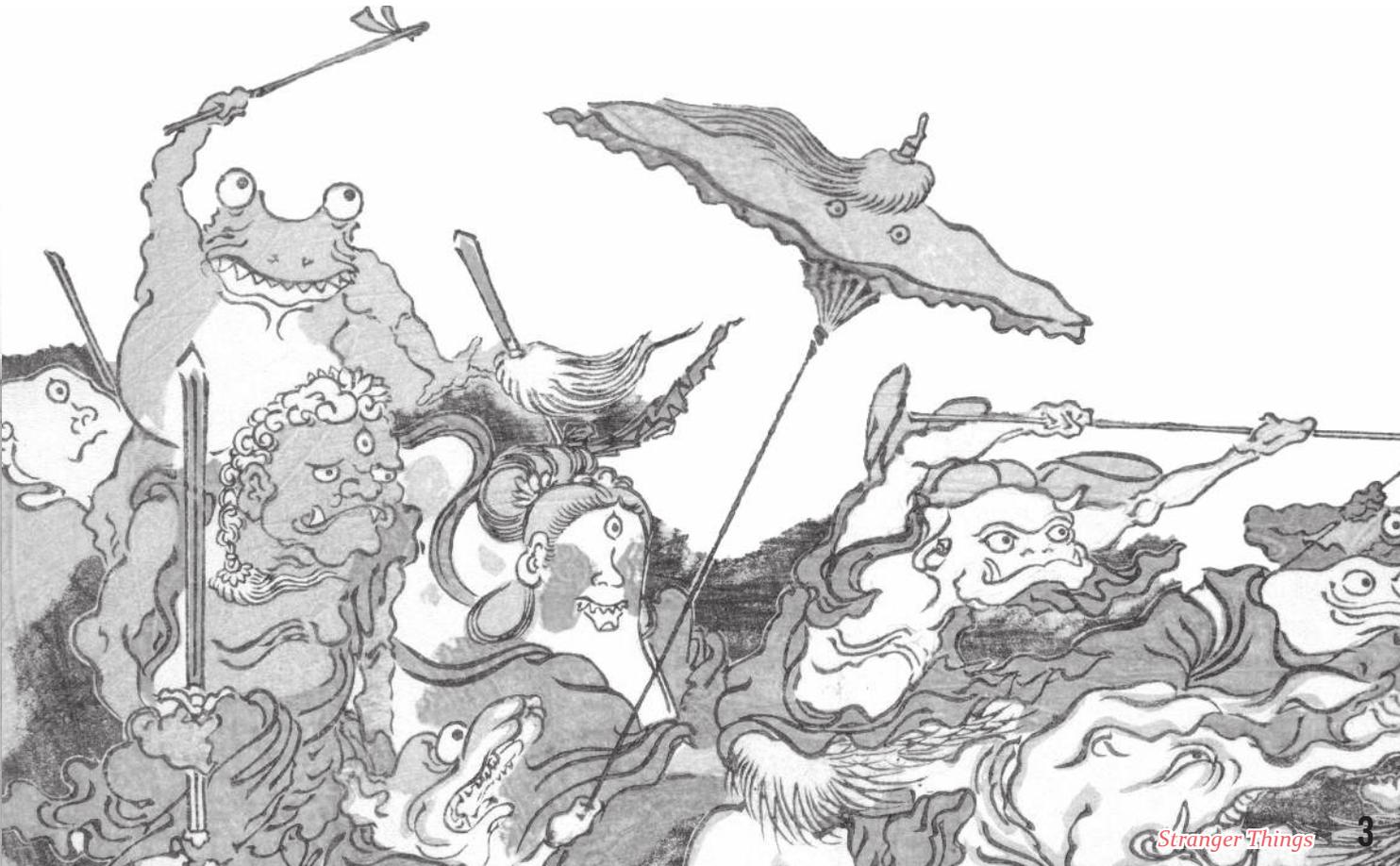
*There are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*

The ghost of Hamlet's father has just appeared to Hamlet and his friend Horatio. Horatio struggles to comprehend what he has just seen, and so Hamlet famously tells him he needs to widen his horizons.

The same could be said for much of our theology, since the Bible speaks of a spiritual realm to which we pay very little attention. That would not be true for many of our brothers and sisters around the world and it would not be true for Western Christians in the past. Martin Luther's most famous hymn, for example, makes the theme prominent:

*And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him.*

What Luther does so brilliantly here is to marry an honest acknowledgment of spiritual forces of evil with a deep sense of Christian assurance. As I think about it, that expresses very well the aim of this issue of *Primer* too.



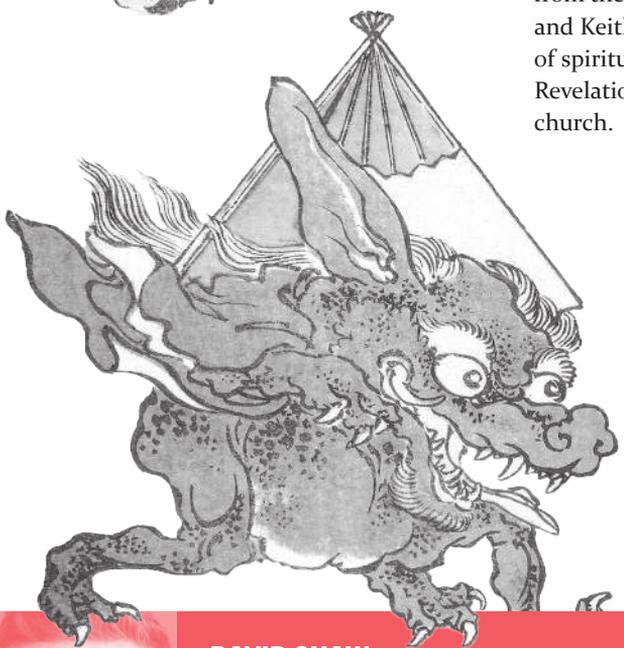


We have just finished reflecting on the doctrine of God (in issues 08 and 09). Everything we have said about God there tells us that the devil is not his equal. But he is his enemy and his rival, and so here we shall spend time reflecting on Satan, and the activity of demons in the world and against the church. We need our eyes open to these things.

That said, what should emerge throughout is a deep sense of Christian assurance – “We tremble not for him” – and also a sense of calling: at an individual level, to help others in the spiritual battle; and as a church, to be faithful in our mission, even as the devil pursues his own.

To see how this issue equips us for those tasks, let me introduce you to its shape.

We begin with two longer reads. First, Kirsten Birkett provides an overview of magic, superstition, and the occult in Western culture and reflects on what we should learn from their recent resurgence. We then turn to Scripture and Keith Ferdinando walks us through a biblical theology of spiritual warfare. After that, in my article, we zoom in on Revelation 11-13 for an exposé of the devil’s war against the church.



Our regular historical piece comes from Thomas Brooks’ *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*, where we get a deep dive into the nature of temptation and Satan’s role in that. Lewis Allen is our guide to Brooks, and helps us reflect on that question.

Brooks provides a wonderfully pastoral text, and that emphasis continues in Helen Thorne’s article. Before his death in 2019, David Powlison wrote a final book on the connection between spiritual warfare and pastoral counselling. Helen takes us through his argument and shows us how we might put it into practice.

The final piece is a Q&A. We know this is a topic where there are lots of questions and so we have gathered up some of the major loose ends and put them to our contributors. You can hear them weighing in on Halloween, guardian angels, consulting the dead, exorcisms, and more!



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