

Mr. Evil-Questioning Tried and Executed

A Sermon

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At Exeter Hall, Strand.

“Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?”—[2 Kings 5:12](#).

PROUD SELF and EVIL QUESTIONING are two of Satan’s firmest allies, and two of the chief destroyers of the souls of men. Both of these adversaries attacked Naaman at once. Proud Self fell upon him and gave him the first blow, and Naaman cried, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper.” When Proud Self had given his blow, on came his friend and helper, Evil Questioning, and he smote Naaman, and then Naaman said, “Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?” Ah! it is a hard case with a man who has to fight with two such imps as these—his own proud spirit, and that equally wicked spirit of unbelief—asking questions—evil questions—and tempting the Lord our God. Against the first, namely, our proud and righteous self, God has opened all his batteries. The ten commands are like ten great pieces of ordnance, every one of them pointed against our own pride and self righteousness. The Bible is an opponent, even unto death, of everything like boasting, or encouraging the hope of salvation by any efforts of our own. Righteous Self is doomed to be rent in pieces, and his house to be made a dunghill; God hates him because he is an anti-Christ, and sets himself in opposition to the plenteous atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. As for Evil Questioning, he also doth much ruin among the souls of men. And as it has been my hap of late to meet him very often, I propose this morning to track him to his den, to bring him out to light, and by God’s help, if his Spirit shall be here present, to fully defeat him, once for all, to the rescue of many of you. Oh what multitudes of souls have gone to hell asking questions. Not asking, “What must I do to be saved?” but asking questions about matters too high for them; asking, in fact, questions which were only meant to be some excuse for continuing in their sins, pillows for their wicked heads to lean upon; putting queries to ministers, and propounding hard and knotty points that from the ignorance of man they might draw reasons why they should continue in their evil way, should hold on in their wicked course, and so should resist the mercy of God.

Just listen to what Evil Questioning said to Naaman, and what Naaman said as the result of it. If I understand my text aright, it means just this: “What virtue can there be in water? Why should I be told to go and wash at all? I have washed many times and it never cured

my leprosy. This dry disease is not so readily got rid of; but supposing there is some medical influence in water, why must I wash in Jordan? It is but a mere ditch, why can I not go and wash in some of my own rivers? We have medicinal streams in our own land. At any rate, Abana and Pharpar are cleaner and wider, and their current is stronger than that of the Jordan, which empties itself into the Dead Sea. And to my mind," he says "it seems to be but a dead river at the very best. May I not go home to Samaria and there wash? A pretty thing that I should come all this way from Samaria to see and then all he should tell me should be, wash and be clean. It is absurd," he says, "it is contrary to the nature of things; it cannot be possible, and therefore," he save, "I will not go and try it." This, you see, was Evil Questioning. What business was it of Naaman's whether there was any medicinal powers in the water or not? What concern was it to him whether Abana or Pharpar were better or worse than Jordan? he need have nothing to do but with the simple command—"Go, wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean." 'Twas his to obey, not to question. 'Twas his to fulfill the command, not to enquire into its philosophy.

Now, what Evil Questioning said to Naaman, *that* he has said to many of you, my hearers. I know there are some of you who are even to-day harbouring this arch-traitor. I pray that God by his grace may find him out this morning, that we may turn him out of your hearts.

I shall try, first of all, to *detect this old Mr. Evil Questioning*. When he have found him out, I shall try to *describe him to you* so that you may know him again the next time you meet him. Then when we have described him, we will bring him out, and by God's help we will *execute him*; and when we have done that, I shall propose to you that we *kill all his children*, for they are a very large family. If we may believe John Bunyan, there are some nine or ten of them, and all of them the picture of their old father. I hope we shall have grace to put an end to them as well as the parent.

I. First, then, let us DETECT OLD MR. EVIL QUESTIONING.

He does not go by that name in the world. When he was brought up to be tried as a traitor, he had the impudence to tell the Judge that his name was not *Evil Questioning* at all. "My Lord," he said, "my proper name is *Honest Enquiry*, not Evil Questioning. There may be a man of the name of Evil Questioning, but I am not that person at all, and I hope it will never become a sin for a man to make an honest enquiry, and freely to ask the ground of any truth that is propounded to him. For, my Lord, if we are to take things upon mere credence, matters of faith upon the witness of men, indeed we shall soon make great fools of ourselves. My name is 'Honest Enquiry,' my Lord, and I think myself to be a very honest citizen." Since Evil Questioning goes by that name, then, and you will not, therefore, readily detect him, I must take you round to see if we can find him out by his speech, for it is not by his name, but by his prating, that you may know this fellow.

Now, Lord Will-be-will, according to John Bunyan, in his allegory of the Holy War, kept an officer called Mr. Diligence, who used to go about listening under people's windows, catching every word he heard, and then he would bring to his Lord, intelligence if any traitor were harboured within the gates. Let me play the part of Mr. Diligence, and we will listen a moment or two while we hear old Mr. Evil Questioning talk. He is a ready fellow; he can talk upon almost any subject; I heard him the other day preach a sermon upon doctrine. He had been hearing a Calvinist minister. This minister had preached the truth as it is in Jesus and he had earnestly exhorted him to lay hold on Christ Jesus, but Mr. Evil Questioning put it thus—"Now, if there are so many to be saved, and there are a certain number of people that are not to be saved, then it can make no difference to me, I had better leave it as it is; for if I am to be saved I shall be saved, and if I am not to be saved I shall not be saved. Besides," said he, "it is irresistible grace that saves men. Now, if God sends that grace into my heart, then I shall be saved, and if he does not, why I cannot do anything, and therefore I may as leave sit still as try and do anything you know, I hear the minister say that faith and repentance are the gift of God; well, if they are the gift of God, how inconsistent he was to exhort me to believe and repent. The man does not understand logic. I shall not believe, I shall not repent. For, do you not see that it does not stand to reason that I should try to do either the one or the other, because they are both the gift of God." Thus the man satisfied himself, and while I heard him talking, I thought to myself, "I know you Mr. Evil Questioning, well, and I know your father too; you are a descendant of the old fellow that was hanged in Bad Street, in old Bunyan's time, and I only wish I had the hanging of you again." He went another day to hear an Arminian preacher. He heard this preacher talking about the universal love, and the universal mercy of God; and this minister exhorted him to lay hold on Christ. But Mr. Evil Questioning is like a spider, he can suck gall out of any flower; so he went home and he said—"Well, if God is co infinitely merciful, then my sins are very little things indeed. I need make all this fuss and bother about them. I will just go on in them, and no doubt God will not be hard with me at the last, but will just forgive those sins off-hand, whether I believe or not. And, besides," said he, "his mercy is so lasting, that when I come to die I will just say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and then I shall enter into the kingdom of heaven as well as the best of them. And what is the use of that man exhorting me to believe and to repent, for he told me I might fall from grace? I might as well not begin, as begin now, presently to leave off, so I will wait till the end of my life before I begin, and then I shall run the less risk of falling from grace afterwards." Thus he reasoned with himself. Now whenever you hear that kind of argument, you may know at once there is a traitor there. You have discovered him. That is old Mr. Evil Questioning. Do not lose a moment, run straight up to your chamber, and tell the Lord that you have found out a traitor; ask him to send at once a warrant after him, to arrest the fellow who is doing the utmost he can to destroy your soul.

Sometimes this gentleman does not preach a doctrinal sermon but it is a practical one. I heard him the other day declaiming thus: "I do not go to any place of worship now-a-day; for to tell the truth, there is such a variety of sects and parties, and one kind of Christians finds fault with another kind, that they are not agreed among themselves, I do not mean to go and listen to them or to pay any attention to them while they are so divided and so bigoted. Besides," he said, "look at the Christians, they are no better than other people, I dare say; their best ministers, if we could catch them in a corner are not at all superior to the rest of mankind, and as to common professors, why I lost ten pounds the other day by one of them who is a deacon. They are not a whit superior to the rest of mankind, I am sure; therefore, I shall not think about religion at all, it is all a farce and a lie. Why should I consider it? I will have nothing to do with it." There is the traitor again. At other times this man will find out some poor, lean, half-starved Christian, who has but little grace and very great misery, and he begins to talk thus. "There are your Christians, see what moping folks they are! How miserable! I never saw such a set of people in my life. Why if I were to go and listen to their minister I should drown myself in a month; they are such miserable wretches. As for me, I say let us *hope* well and *have* well; let us live merrily while we may, and if we must ever think about these serious things, let us put it off to the last." Have you never heard that gentleman? Ah, my hearers, there are some of you that have got him in your hearts, and I am only describing what you have often said to yourselves; or if I have not as yet hit upon the precise discourse of old Mr. Evil Questioning, yet I think I have tracked out some of his haunts. Does he not often give a tap at your door, and you say, "Walk in friend *Questioning*, I have a little matter to talk over with you. The minister has given me a little trouble in my conscience; come and see if you cannot put a plaster over the wound, so that I may go on in my sins comfortably, and be relieved from the troublesome necessity of changing my life and becoming a Christian." Sometimes this old fellow *Evil Questioning* goes further and tries, as he says, to lay the axe at the root of the thing. "Why," he says, "this doctrine of the atonement, this salvation by the blood of Christ, I have only just this to say about it, that a rational man cannot believe it at all. It is positively ridiculous to think of a man being saved by the righteousness of somebody else, let the Methodist believe it, I shall not. There is no reason in it." Then he begins to ask questions about the atonement, and proceeds to questions about the decrees, questions about inscrutable matters, questions about effectual calling, about total depravity, and the like, and so he runs through the whole scale of gospel truths and Bible revelations, stopping at each one and asking a question that he may find in each some apology for disobeying God, some excuse for not yielding up his whole heart to Christ, and *now* believing in him that died to save the souls of men.

I think, however, I need not give you a more accurate description than I have done of this archdestroyer. In fact, it were utterly impossible for me to describe to you all his speeches. There is no subject which he will not handle. He is so glib of tongue and he has such sophistry

of argument, that he will often persuade a man to believe that the worse is the better reason, and make a man imagine that he is not only excusable, but even commendable, for not being a Christian, and giving up his heart to Christ. Oh! if I could but see this Evil Questioning buried seven fathoms deep, I should feel I had an easy work to do in preaching the gospel; but, alas! when I have been the most earnest, my hearers have raised a question on the discourse, instead of yielding to its precepts; and when I have sought to explain the doctrine and lay it down by the rule of the Word, I find instead of producing conviction, that one and another will be questioning the orthodoxy or the heterodoxy of it. No fruit is brought forth because ye suffer not the seed to enter into your hearts, there to work effectually to the saving of your souls. Oh, fools and slow of heart, to be for ever asking questions while time is flying, and men are dying, and hell is filling—to be questioning when there is but a step between you and death—to be trying to unriddle mysteries and to unravel secrets when you are on the borders of the tomb and your souls may soon be required of you. Oh, fools, I say, and slow of heart, but surely so ye will be to the end of the chapter, unless sovereign grace shall open your eyes to see in the face of this Mr. Evil Questioning the marks and lineaments of a child of Satan, and unless God shall give you grace to turn him out of doors, to expel him instantly, find have no more to do with him as long as you live.

But do you know while I was going my rounds this morning looking after Mr. Evil Questioning, I happened to stop at the door of a house that had the blood-mark over the lintel and I was very much surprised to hear a voice just like old Mr. Questioning's inside that house. I could not believe my own ears, but I saw my own name on the door, and so I thought I might venture to enter and lo, I found this old villain sitting at my own table, and what think you he was saying? Why he was talking like this, "God has promised that you shall hold on your way, but then you have so many temptations you cannot. He has promised to bless your ministry, but then the hearts of men are so hard, you might just as well give up preaching." He began to question the promises and asked how they could be fulfilled, and was beginning to make me question the vitality of my own religion Get you gone, sir, I will have nothing to do with you, and if I meet you again I hope by the grace of God I shall be able to heave a stone that shall sink deep in your old crazy pate. Begone, sir, and have nought to do with me. With the child of God thou art a hated intruder. Who am I that I should question the Almighty? Who is the finite that he should ask the Infinite where is his power to fulfill his promise? No, my God:

"I trust the all-creating voice,
And faith requires no more,"

II. Having thus detected Mr. Evil Questioning, we will go on to DESCRIBE HIM.

Mr. Evil Questioning often boasts that he is the child of Human Reason; but I will let you know a secret or two about his parentage. Mr. Human Reason has once a very respectable man. He had a country-seat in the gardens of Paradise, and he was then great and honorable.

He served his God with all his might and many a great and marvellous thing did he discover for the good of mankind; at that time he had a family, and they were all like himself, right good and loyal. But after the fall this man married again, and he took to himself one called Sin to be his partner, and this old Evil Questioning was one that was born after the fall. He does not belong to the first family at all. The first family was not so numerous as the last. There was one called Right Judgment born at that time. I hope he is still alive, and I believe he is. But the second family was very black and of tainted blood. They did not take at all after the father, except in one point, that at the time of the fall Mr. Human Reason lost his country-seat at Paradise, and together with the rest of the servants of Adam fell from his high estate and became perverted and depraved. His children are like him in their depravity, but not in their power of reasoning. They take after their mother, and they always have a predilection for sin, so that they “put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.” The old gentleman never mentions his mother’s name if he can help it. He always likes to boast that he is a lineal descendant of Human Reason, and so indeed he is, but he is a descendant of fallen Human Reason, not of Human Reason as it was in its glorious perfection. Now, all the powers of Adam were by the fall spoiled and ruined. They are there, but their bias was turned from that which is good to that which is evil, and now reason is not a trustworthy guide. Enlightened by the Spirit of God it *can* judge righteous judgment, but unenlightened and uninstructed, its bias is towards that which shall excuse man in his rebellion, which shall dishonor God, and which shall seek to raise the human race in proud rebellion against their Lord and Master.

Understand then, that the parentage of Evil Questioning lies here; man’s perverted reason meets with man’s love of sin, and these twain do join to bring forth these evil questions. It is not your reason that makes you talk against God, except it be your perverted reason. It is your love of sin that sets your reason on the wide-awake watch to try and discover some difficulty, and to make that a pretense why you should not be obedient to the heavenly command. Do not believe yourself when you repeat the tale told you by Satan, that you are only making honest enquiries—do not believe it for a minute. The honest enquiry is content with “It is written,” and there it stops. Besides, if not content with this, the truth of the Bible is proved by the most conclusive logic. It is proved too by arguments against which all the gates of hell can never prevail. There are many excellent works which have been written, and all the arguments of modern sceptics have been refuted a thousand times over. Every objection that man can make has been already broken in pieces, and if a man be honest in his enquiries, he cannot long remain an unbeliever. Do not believe that your questioning springs from honesty, but be honest with yourself, and acknowledge this, that you do not love the gospel because it is too hard for you—it wants you to give up sins that you love too much, to renounce them, and because of this, you begin to question its truth. If it did not come upon you so sorely, and deal with you so summarily, you would believe

it. But because it will have you give up your sins, you go in quest of a doubt, and put in plea after plea to gain time and hold on with the world. Though you do not doubt the justice of the law, or the truth of the gospel, ye vexatiously question both. And yet you know very well that it is beyond your questioning, for it is the eternal verity of the Eternal God.

I have thus described the old man's parentage; shall I now tell you where he had his education? After Mr. Evil Questioning was born, he was put to the school of that old schoolmaster who has taught a great many of you—Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and this Mr. Worldly Wiseman used to make him read out of a book, called "Human Maxims," and this man has learned all the logic-art of that book of Human Maxims—a book very much patronized by the sacred consistory of hell. They greatly delight in it, and would have it spread everywhere; and they would have even the prophets of God bow their knee to this Baal, and take "for doctrines the commandments of men." No wonder, therefore, that being bad at first, and essentially vicious, this education was just suited to develop his powers, and he has gone from bad to worse, till he has been known at times to question the very existence of a God, the immortality of the soul, the truth of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, in fact; he has questioned everything which can be dear to a true-hearted man, every truth which can sustain the soul in the midst of its troubles, and give it light in its seasons of darkness.

And now to come nearer still to him. I have told you his parentage and education, now as to his character. If, you notice this man, it is only his talking that will strike you, and you will observe this about his talk, that he speaks about things of religion in a very different style from what he thinks about things of the world. If you meet him and he is buying or selling, he talks very rationally indeed; but when he comes to make excuses for himself and tell you why he is not converted, he talks like a fool, as he is. He would not himself act in the world upon the theories that he adopts in religion. Did I not tell you that I heard him say once, that because God had decreed therefore he would do nothing? Now you would expect to find him if he were honest in what he said, going out into the world and folding his arms, and saying, "Now if I am to get rich I shall get rich, and so there is an end of it; and if I am not to get rich I shall not get rich, and therefore I shall not work." No, he is as busy as a bee when he is about the things of the world, and yet he is as idle as possible when he is meddling with the things of Christ. This same man, if he has a field to sow, he knows very well that if God has ordained a harvest there will be a harvest—but he sows for all that. He can understand in his business how free-agency is quite consistent with Divine Sovereignty. He understands when he is abroad how the decree of God does not at all limit the free action of man, but when he comes to matters of godliness with regard to his own soul, then he sees a wonderful difficulty there. Ah! he sees it because he wants to see it, and a man can see anything he likes to see if he does not want to do a thing that is uncomfortable and unpleasant. If you want an excuse for going to hell, you can find a thousand, every one as bad as the other, and Mr. Evil Questioning will furnish you with any quantity of them to

suit every particular case. He has excuses that will suit the Frenchman and excuses that will suit the Englishman. He has a stock of common excuses just adapted to be sold retail to the poor, and he has many a refined excuse of every shade and color to suit the taste of the rich. No man like him. If you want to perish, you may do it logically. If you want to go to hell riding on a syllogism, he will assist you. He will give you the most rational and comfortable conveyance if you want to go there. Only to go to his shop, he will not keep you a single moment, but serve you across the counter with the most polite bow, and send you on your way rejoicing towards the depths of perdition.

You will thus detect Mr. Evil Questioning, because he uses a logic in spiritual things that he would not use in temporal things. Here is another way by which you may discover him. This man, when he is talking about the Infinite God, always measures him by the finite rule of man. When God is in the question, who is not to be limited nor to be grasped by our comprehension, he deals as freely with the matter as if it were a mere thing of ells or inches, or of ounces and pounds. Omnipotence he forgets, and omnipresence, and omniscience, and eternity,—all these attributes of God he casts away, and he talks to God, and talks about God, as if God were nothing different from the creature that his hands have made. Have you never heard him say, “How can such a thing be done?” If he did but stop and think, he would know that it is irrational to use the word *can*, when he is speaking of an Omnipotent One. He will often say, “Will such a thing that is promised be accomplished?” If he did but pause, he would recollect that to ask a question as to whether a thing will be done about a God who is true and faithful, is to put a wicked and blasphemous question. But still he will do it. He deals with God’s promises as if they were the draft-notes of a rogue. He treats God’s doctrines as if they were the utterance of a raving maniac. He will deal with substantial verities as if they were frothy dreams, the mere speculations of a deluded brain. Strange villain that he is, daring to lift his mouth against heaven, and spit his blasphemous questions against the very existence and power of the Most High.

You may know him again by another sign, for he always draws his arguments from exceptions. He meets a miserable Christian—he knows very well that where there is one miserable Christian there are a thousand happy ones—but then he puts these thousand happy ones behind. It is the one miserable one that he fixes his attention upon. If he meets with one fallen professor, he knows that there are ten thousand Christians that stand upright in the hour of temptation, and will not bend in the blast of the terrors of the world when they come against him, seeking to turn him from his upright course—but no, he forgets all these; he only thinks of that one hypocrite, or that one professor, who was overtaken in an evil hour, and then he makes a syllogism like this—“One Christian has proved to be a hypocrite, therefore, as it is a bad thing to be a hypocrite, I will not be a Christian.” Now, what an argument! And yet this satisfies some of you. There are some of you, when you have been once taken in by a man, will say, “Ah, well! I will never make a profession of religion. So-

and-so made a profession; he was a bad one; therefore I will not have ought to do with it.” Where is the force of this argument? If there are bad Christians, that is a presumption in itself that there are good ones, for if ever you see a bad sovereign in circulation, you may be sure there are some good ones, for if they were all bad we would none of us take any of them. Be sure of it, then, the name of Christian would cease to be, unless there were some good ones to keep up the current coin—the real stock in trade—on which the world grows rich. And suppose they were all bad, is that any reason why you should not be true and honest? If the church were all hypocrites, at least let me be an honest man, and serve my God truly, and with all my heart. That is the proper way of reasoning. But Evil Questioning takes exceptions, and considers them as if they were rules, and then from the exceptions draws a deduction which would not be logical even if they were the rule, but which, seeing it is based upon the exceptions, is without a basis at all, and sinks to the ground as a mere wanton wilful falsehood.

I will only keep you one more minute upon this part of my subject. You may always know Mr. Evil Questioning by this one fact, that he invariably draws his conclusions from his wishes. When I have got an argument on hand, and the conclusion is contrary to what I would like it to be, I always think there is more likelihood that my reasoning is correct; but if the conclusion is just what my carnal heart would like it to be, I say I am afraid that my logic was at fault somewhere; for if I draw a conclusion that pleases myself, I ought to be very careful, especially when it is a matter in which my soul is concerned. We draw Justice with a bandage over her eyes, holding a pair of scales: now, whenever we are trying other people, that is how our justice ought to be meted out, and so it should be when we are trying ourselves. But, my dear friends, whenever we try ourselves, we are apt to move the bandage a little up, that the right eye may see just a little, that we may manage to put, somehow or other, a little extra weight in the scale that will favor ourselves. No man is so partial a judge as the man that is trying his own character. We are very severe with others, but we are very lenient to ourselves; we keep our swords well sharpened for our enemies; but if we do hit ourselves it is with the back of the blade; we never venture to strike deep and we always wish to have a little salve ready, some kind of extenuation. Habitually almost without knowing it we shake hands with ourselves very often, and say, “You are not so bad a fellow after all, I thought there was something amiss with you, and so there certainly is; but still there is not so much wrong with you as there is with a great many people, and you are a very respectable individual taking you for all in all.” Now, if that is the conclusion you come to, suspect it, there is a flaw in the logic somewhere. Just look the reasoning through again. Cast that sum up once more, if it comes to this result, “Thou art rich,” cast it up again, there is an extra figure that you have put in; for the right conclusion is, if you are an unconverted man, you are naked, and poor, and miserable. Do not believe the arithmetic or the logic which would bring you to any other conclusion than this.

III. Having thus described this old enemy after whom I am in full pursuit; I pause awhile and go on to my third division, which is bringing him out TO EXECUTE HIM.

I must give you a bit from John Bunyan's Holy War, for it is so wonderfully suggestive, and so thoroughly worthy of its quaint author. Mr. Evil Questioning was detected harbouring four doubters, who had come to attack the town of Mansoul; when he was brought up, the indictment was that he had studied the ruin of the town of Mansoul, that he had feloniously and treacherously harboured four of the king's enemies, and that he had expressed in the hearing of one Mr. Diligence, his wish that there were ten thousand such doubters in Mansoul. The old fellow when he was brought before the bar, first denied his name, and said his real name was Mr. Honest Enquiry, but when it was proved that he was old Evil Questioning, for Lord Will-be-will in the time of his evil estate had known him very intimately, then the old fellow pleaded "Not Guilty," and he began at once to utter his defense. "I answer," said Evil Questioning "the men that came into my house were strangers, and I took them in, and is it now become a crime in Mansoul for a man to entertain strangers? That I also nourished them is true, and why should my charity be blamed? As for the reason why I wished ten thousand of them in Mansoul, I never told it to the witnesses nor to themselves. I might wish them to be taken, and so might wish well to the town of Mansoul. I also bid them take heed that they fell not into the Captain's hands, but that might be because I am unwilling that any man should be slain, and not because I would have the king's enemies escape." So Mr. Evil Questioning was true to his name, he kept on questioning till the verdict was given, the sentence of death pronounced, and carried into execution; for they hanged him, as Bunyan says, opposite the door of his own house at the top of Bad Street, Ah! but I am afraid that he is alive now, still living and going about: I wish therefore to bring him up again to trial, and we will see if we cannot bring some charges against him; we will empanel an honest jury, and I know what the sentence will be, we shall lead him out to execution.

Men and brethren, if you have been questioning, instead of believing, if you have been making enquiries, instead of saying, "What must I do to be saved?" which is the only allowable question, let me first beg of you to drive out this Evil Questioning, because he is a traitor to the King of heaven. He does not wish your good, but your ill; more than this, he is sent by Satan to prevent your obeying the commands of God: he is come to betray you. Oh I listen not to his words, though they are smoother than butter, for inwardly they are drawn swords: the drift of all he says is to keep you unreconciled to God. The great end of all he says is to make you wander further and further from the central point of bliss, to make you forsake the cross, to make you follow the devices of your own heart, and so bring upon yourself inevitable destruction. Oh! I beseech you, drive him out, because he is a traitor to the great King to whom all your allegiance is due. He wants to make you an enemy to God, and to keep you so. Out with him, I pray you. Hang him! let a straight end be put to him at once:

let him no more delude and ruin your souls, and make you persevere in disobedience to God.

And then, again, I beseech you turn him out, for he is a liar. All the conclusion to which he has brought you are false ones, and you know they are. When you have sometimes in company bragged a little, and when a hard word has been said that has come home to your conscience, when you have put on a stout confidence and have begun to insinuate some doubts, you know very well you are not speaking honestly. You know there is a hell, though you often laugh at the idea; you know there is a world to come, though you argue against it. You are conscious that there is a God, though you yourself will sometimes deny it, you know very well that every conclusion to which this false reasoning of yours has brought you, is a downright falsehood, and a libel against the common-sense and sterling honesty of your nature. Oh! turn out, then, this wretch who is a descendant of the Father of Lies; and let us, each man of us, lay our hands on him as witnesses, and take up our stone to stone him.

Another accusation I bring against him is this: he has led you into a world of mischief. This habit of questioning has often blunted the edge of some sermon that you have heard; when the Word was coming right home to your conscience, this Mr. Evil Questioning has held up a shield and prevented the point from entering into your heart; besides that, have you not sometimes when under the influence of his delusive logic gone off to the place where your lust has been cultivated, and where your conscience has been lulled to sleep? You know if it had not been for these questions, you would not be found so often in the tavern, or in the casino, or in the midst, perhaps, of even worse associations than these. It is because you have tried to make yourself an infidel that you have been able to go into sin. You have felt that if you did behave, sin would become unpleasant; in fact, you would be too gross a fool if you professed to believe, and then afterwards run and cut your own throat, and destroy your own soul, by persevering in your iniquities. Oh! I beseech you, remember the mischief this wicked habit has done you; it has brought you low, very low, even to the gates of hell; and if you persevere much longer in it, as I pray God you may not, it will bring you within the portals of hell. And then, when the gate of fire is shut, there is no arm that can open it, there is no *question*, no subtle questioning, that can administer a drop of comfort to you; there is no puzzling particle of metaphysics that can be as a drop of water to cool your burning tongue. The questioning that damned you shall be the tormentor that shall vex you, and your brain carried through fiery speculations shall for ever be horrified and alarmed by new difficulties and new mysteries, which shall be as faggots for the flames of hell for ever and for ever. Oh! let us bring out this Evil Questioning, and hang him on a gallows high as the gallows of Haman, and God grant that we may never see him again.

I have one other charge, and then I shall have closed up the accusation. Men and brethren, this man must die, for he has been a murderer. Oh! what millions of fools has Evil

Questioning sent to hell! There are many gates to hell, but this is one of the widest and it is one of the most frequented, because it is a respectable gate. Men do not like to go on to perdition without having some reason, some logic to back them up, so they carry a lie in their right hand, and then they go there quietly, to meet their damnation logically, and to reason about the flames of hell when they are lying in them. Oh! my dear hearers, let us have done with this Evil Questioning, for if not, he will ruin us, as surely as he has ruined others. Be satisfied with "Thus saith the Lord." Take the Bible as it stands. Do not for ever be raising these doubts. Do not be busying yourself with *secret things* that are no business of yours whatever. Do not for ever be quibbling and putting these hard knotty points to us, while your poor soul is perishing for lack of that grace which alone can save you from the wrath to come. "Well," says one, "but I mean to ask questions a little longer." Ah! but my dear friend, remember the habit of evil questioning grows upon a man; and at last God will fill you with your own devices. Draws there nigh a day when you will want to believe and you cannot—when questioning will come to be a strong delusion, so that you shall believe a lie—when from merely trying to be an infidel, you shall become at last a master in the arts of Belial. Yea, you shall take your degree of Doctor in Damnation, and shall sit in the seat of the scorner, condemned, already hardened in your sin, and ripened for the fire, as those who are ready to be burned. God grant that may not be the consequence; but it will be unless Mr. Evil Questioning be speedily brought out, given up to the gallows, and never more harboured in your house.

I have thus spoken in the form of an allegory. If I have put in some words of pleasantry, it was that I might engage your attention. I feel the subject to be awfully solemn, and it is necessary that we should all think of it, and I hope you will think of it none the less because it has been clothed somewhat in an allegorical form, and because I have tried to represent this evil habit as though it were an evil being that sought your destruction. My concluding head is especially addressed to the people of God, and to them I hope it will be very interesting.

IV. Old Mr. Evil Questioning is the father of a large family, and John Bunyan tells you about his family. He says, he married one called Miss No-hope, she was the daughter of old Dark, and when old Dark was dead, her uncle Incredulity took her and brought her up as his own daughter, and then he gave her to old Evil Questioning, and he had by her several children. I will give you the names of them, because it shall be my earnest endeavor to fire a shot at them this morning, as well as at their old father. Their names are these—Mr. Doubt, Mr. Legal Life, Mr. Unbelief, Mr. Wrong Thoughts of Christ, Mr. Clip Promise, Mr. Carnal Sense, Mr. Live-by-Feeling, and Mr. Self Love. All these were the offspring of the father, and against all these a warrant was issued by the prince Immanuel that they should be hunted down, and every one of them given to the sword.

Now, I will take the eldest son, there is Mr. Doubt,—Is he not the child of Evil Questioning? Why, you can see his father's image in his face. You remember Mr. Doubt called one day at the tent of Sarah, and his father with him, and Sarah said, "Shall I who am ninety years of age have pleasure? shall these breasts afford nourishment for a child?" Here was Evil Questioning; and then Sarah laughed. That was Mr. Doubt that played off a bit of his satire, and set her laughing. Ah! had she but believed, she might have attained a nobler commendation. It almost tarnishes her fair reputation that we must remember this of her—she was the woman who laughed at God's promise, as though it were impossible. Brothers and sisters, Mr. Doubt has often called at your house and made you cast reflections on the promise. He has said, "How can it be true? Such a sinner as you, so weak, so vile, so unworthy." Oh believer, the promise is true; God has pledged his word and stamped his covenant with his oath. When you see a promise, never doubt it; for Doubt is the descendant of Evil Questioning, and he is a Diabolian from the birth up. However, I am rather apprehensive, though I publish his name to-day, and though I were to give you his portrait in the Hue anti Cry, he will not get arrested just yet, or if he be arrested, I am afraid he will break his prison, and be at liberty again. For this Mr. Doubt is everywhere about the country; and I find him in many a secluded nook by the way-side, troubling some poor woman on her dying bed, and I find him, too, in many a hall where the rich man is thinking about Christ, but is kept back by this troublesome intruder, who whispers a doubt as to whether Christ will receive him. He is everywhere—but drive him out; make him hide his head, let him not be pampered and fed as he is by some people, lest Doubt grow into Despair, and you should lose your comfort, and bring sorrow into your heart for ever.

Another child is Mr. Clip-Promise. Do you know him? He does not doubt the promise, but he clips the edge of it. He makes out that it will not all be fulfilled, only a part of it. Now there is a proclamation issued against Mr. Clip Promise, that whoever will arrest him shall be greatly honored, for he is a notorious villain, by whose doings much of the King's coin was abased, therefore it was expedient that he should be made a public example. And, Bunyan says, "They did take him, and they first set him in the pillory, and afterwards they tied his hands behind him and they whipped him through the streets of Mansoul, bidding all the children and servants whip him, and then at last they hanged him. And," says mine author, "this may seem very hard treatment, but when one considers how much loss the town of Mansoul may sustain by the clipping of the promises which are the coins with which they trade, I can only say I hope that all his kith and kin may be treated with the like severity." Oh! if you have attempted to cut the promise down, have done with it I pray you; and do take it as it stands in all its plenteousness of grace and all its sufficiency. Judge it not by your own notions, but take it as it comes from God, shining and glittering from the mint of heaven. Take it at its full current value with the merchants, and you shall surely have its equivalent in the fulfilments which God will work to you in his providence and his grace.

Moreover, I will say this unto thee, the more thou tradest with this precious coin the more thou wilt prize it, as Eskine sings—

“Let thy experience sweet declare,
If able to remind,
A Bochim here, a Bethel there,
Thy Savior made thee find.”

Then there is Mr. Wrong-thoughts of Christ. Do you know him? Well I do not know that I have met him very lately, but there was a time when he and I had a great battle, and I think he had the worst of it, for by grace I was enabled to strike him very hard. Do you know what this fellow had the impudence to tell me? He said, “Oh! Christ will never receive such a sinner as you are.” And when I had come to Christ, and he received me, he said, “Oh! Christ will not hold you fast.” He will it you let him, but then you will not let him, for you are such a sinner he cannot hold you, and he will not. He has often made me doubt my Master’s immutability or his faithfulness, or his power to save. But as far as I am personally concerned of late, I was able to seize him, and I have laid him in prison; I think he is dying of a consumption, for I have not heard much of him lately. Glad enough shall I be to have him buried once for all. And if any of you are troubled with him, lock him up, do not let him keep abroad, for Wrong-thoughts of Christ is one of the worst spirits that ever came up from the pit. What! to think badly of Christ, to think of him who is all goodness, as if he were hard-hearted or unkind. Begone, Wrong thoughts of Christ, we will not harbour thee but will put thee in durance vile, and there shalt thou starve and die.

There are two others whom some of you may have known, Mr. Legal Life, and Mr. Live-by-Feeling. I think they were twins. Mr. Legal Life sometimes gets hold of the Christian and makes him judge himself by legal evidences, and not by evangelical evidence. When the Christian has kept a commandment, Mr. Legal Life will say, “There now you live by your works.” He knows that Christians would die by their works, and that the best of them can only live by faith. And when a Christian has made a slip, and has not kept the commandment, in comes Mr. Legal Life, and he says, “You are a lost soul, for you have not kept the commandment;” though he knows right well, “that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Yet he tries to make his life by the law which no Christian ever did do or ever will do, for the law is of death and not of life.

Then there is Mr. Live-by-Feeling, who makes us judge ourselves according to what we feel. If we feel happy and devout, “Oh,” he says. “now you are in a blessed frame, the Master will accept you,” anon you feel unhappy, and dull, and cold, and dead. “Oh,” says Mr. Live-by-Feeling, “you are no child of God, or else you would not be like this.” Now catch both these fellows, if you can, and away with them; away with such fellows from the earth. It is not fit that they should live. Come, ye Christians, and crucify them, nail them up, they are relatives of the old flesh, and let them die with the flesh; they will never bring you any good;

they are the down-right direct opponents of the gospel. Away with them, for “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;” and if we believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ, neither our feelings nor our efforts can ever save our souls in any measure whatsoever. Legal Life, and Live-by-Feeling must be put to the death.

And now I want your attention, because here is a fine opportunity for some of you to become celebrated and rich, if you are able to fully the commission. One of the children of old Evil Questioning was Mr. Carnal-Sense. Now John Bunyan tells us, and I believe that he is right, at least I have his authority for it, and that is no mean authority, that there is a proclamation set up in the market place at Man-Soul, that whosoever shall bring Mr. Carnal-Sense, dead or alive, to the King Immanuel, shall be made a nobleman, shall have a right to sit at the King’s table every day, and moreover, he shall be made keeper of the treasury of the city of Man-Soul. There you see is a noble opportunity for you. But, with John Bunyan, “It is rather unfavorable if you are ambitious; many there were that spent much of their time in endeavoring to discover him, but they have never been able to find him; still it is well known that he is abroad, and that he frequents poor men’s houses by night very much to their sorrow and grief.” Now if you can but lay hold of him, see how you shall be exalted; you shall have daily fellowship with your king, and you shall have the whole treasure of God to make you rich. Well, blessed be God, we do know one thing, that is, that if we cannot kill Carnal-Sense, yet we can starve him a little, and if he will come abroad it shall be by night, for we will not let him come abroad in the day. Old Carnal-Sense, what mischief has he done!

“Judge not the Lord by carnal sense,
But trust him for his grace,
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.”

Oh! Christians, get rid of the thought that thou canst judge thy God by carnal appearances, do not take the promise by the providence, but the providence by the promise. Do not read the book of life by thy life, but read thy life by the book of life. Have done with Carnal Sense and thou shalt be happy, thou shalt have daily fellowship with God and all the riches of his treasury.

There remains another one upon whom I must speak just for a minute. It is one called Mr. Self-Love. Ah, he is one of the biggest of the children of Mr. Evil Questioning. Now Mr. Self-Love was tried and condemned to die, but he had so many friends in the city, that they did not like to hang him outright. There was, however, a brave man in the king’s army, a common soldier, a man that was need to sleep out in the fields at night, and to do much hard work—his name was Mr. Self-Denial, and coming out from the midst of the crowd, just when the prisoner was going to be acquitted, he said, “If such villains as these are winked at in Man-soul I will lay down my commission.” He then took him from the crowd and had

him among the soldiers, and there he was put to death. For this, the king made the common soldier a lord, and he was honored in the town of Mansoul. "Though," says Bunyan, "there were a good many people in the town that did not like it, and they used to mutter at it, but they did not say much as long as king Immanuel was there. Oh, do you know that old Self-Love? You will never get rid of him unless you get Mr. Self-Denial to help you; unless you are ready to deny the affections and lusts, to pluck out right eyes, and cut off right hands, and to yield up one delight after another, that so self may be trodden under foot, and Jesus Christ may be all in all.

There is one other child. I have left him to the last; and then I have done with the family—Mr. Unbelief "Now," says Bunyan, "Unbelief was a nimble fellow." He was often caught, but he was like the hero of the wicked Shepherd, he always broke his prison and was out again. Although he has often been kept in hold, he has always escaped, and he is every day about somewhere or other. Oh, brothers and sisters, Unbelief is abroad to-day, he will be attacking some of you, seeking to rend your jewels from you. I beseech you, do not harbour him, but do live by faith, remember you how many die by unbelief; therefore cling ye—cling to Christ.

"And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
And at his footstool bow the knee,
So Israel's' God thy peace shall be."

When thine evidences are dark and thy joys are gone, still throw thine arms about the cross; and remember, thou canst never perish trusting there.

And thou, poor sinner, this last word to thee. Have done with thy questionings, end thy questions all of them, at the cross of Christ. Look to my Master now: a look will save you. Trust him, and you are saved—saved now and saved for ever. Cast yourself on him. Have done with your own wit and wisdom; take him to be your wisdom, your righteousness, your all, and he will not cast you away. Poor soul! he will take you in, though you are black as Satan himself. He will wash you and make you clean; he will take you to himself, and put the crown of immortality upon your head; he will robe you in the garments of glory; and you shall be his in that day when he maketh up his jewels.