the righteousness which is of faith in  
Christ, but to *shew it described already  
in the words of the law*.—**But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on  
this wise** (personified, as Wisdom in the  
Proverbs), **Say not in thine heart** (i.e. think  
not, a Hebrew idiom. The original  
in Deuteronomy has merely, “*that thou  
shouldest’ say.*” The Apostle cites freely,  
giving the explanation of this *saying*, viz.  
*thinking*), **Who shall ascend into heaven?  
that is** (see note above ;—that imports in  
its full and unfolded meaning), **to bring  
down Christ :—or, Who shall descend into  
the deep** (or, **the abyss**)?**—that is, to bring  
up Christ from the dead.**—There is some  
difficulty in assigning the precise view  
with which the Apostle introduces these  
questions. Tholuck remarks, “The different interpretations may be reduced to  
this, that the questions are regarded either  
(1) as questions of *unbelief*, or (2) as questions of *embarrassment*, or (3) as questions  
of *anxiety*.” The first view is represented  
by De Wette, who says, “In what sense  
these questions, from which the righteousness which is of faith dissuades men, are  
to be taken, is plain from ver. 9, where  
the Resurrection of Christ is asserted as  
the one most weighty point of historical  
Christian belief :—they would be *questions*  
of unbelief, which regards this fact as not  
accomplished, or as now first to be accomplished. Thus, also, probably, are we to  
understand the *first question*, as applying  
to the *Incarnation of Christ*.” This is  
more or less also the view of many other  
Commentators. (2) The second view, that  
they are questions of *embarrassment*, is  
taken by Stuart, who says, “The whole (of.  
Moses’s saying) may be summed up in one  
word, omitting all figurative expression:  
viz. *the commandment is plain and accessible.* You can have, therefore, no  
excuse for neglecting it. So in the case  
before us. *Justification by faith in Christ*  
is a plain and intelligible doctrine. It is  
not shut up in mysterious language....  
It is like what Moses says of the statutes  
which he gave to Israel, plain, intelligible,  
accessible . . . . It is brought before the  
mind and heart of every man: and thus  
he is without excuse for unbelief.” (3)  
The third view, that they are questions of  
*anxiety*, is that of Calvin, Tholuck, and  
others: by none perhaps better expressed  
than by Ewbank, Comm. on the Ep. to  
the Rom. p. 74: “Personifying the great  
Christian doctrine of free justification  
through faith, he represents it as addressing  
every man who is anxious to obtain salvation, in the encouraging words of Moses:  
‘Say not in thine heart, (it says to such an  
one,) &c....’ In other words, ‘Let not  
the man, who sighs for deliverance from  
his own sinfulness, suppose that the accomplishment of some impossible task is re-  
quired of him, in order to enjoy the blessings of the Gospel. Let him not think  
that the personal presence of the Messiah  
is necessary to ensure his salvation. Christ  
needs not to be brought down from heaven,  
or up from the abyss, to impart to him forgiveness and holiness. No. Our Christian message contains no impossibilities.  
We do not mock the sinner by offering him  
happiness on conditions which we know  
that he is powerless to fulfil. We tell him  
that Christ’s word is near to him: so near,  
that he may speak of it with his mouth,  
and meditate on it with his heart... .  
Is there any thing above human power in  
such a confession, and in such a belief?  
Surely not. It is graciously adapted to the  
necessity of the very weakest and most  
sinful of God’s creatures.” I will now  
take up the three views afresh and state  
the objections. (1) The objection to this  
view, as alleged by Tholuck, is, that in it  
the contrast with ver. 5 is lost sight of.  
And this is so far just, that it must be  
confessed we thus lose the ideas which the  
Apostle evidently intended us to grasp,  
those of insuperable difficulty in the acquisition of righteousness by the law  
and of facility,—by the gospel. Also,—it puts *too forward* the allegation of the  
great matters of historical belief, which are  
not Here the central point of the argument,  
but introduced as the objects which *faith, itself that central point*, apprehends. (2) The  
last objection has some force as against