godly should pray in vain, Deut. iii. 26.  
If therefore one who has committed mortal  
sin is brought back to life, it is from the  
mere divine purpose, reserved from us.”  
Calvin indeed holds fast the prohibition in  
all its strictness, but only in extreme cases:  
adding, “But, seeing that this happens  
most rarely, and God, commending the  
immense riches of His grace, commands us  
to be merciful after His example: we must  
pass upon any man the judgment   
of eternal death, but rather charity  
should induce us to hope well of him.  
But if the desperate impiety of some looks  
to us hardly short of a pointing it out by  
the finger of the Lord God, it is not for  
us to contend with the just judgment of  
God, or desire to be more merciful than  
He is.”

Certainly this seems, reserving   
the question as to the nature of the  
sin, the right view of the words, **I say not**.  
By an express command in the other case,  
and then as express an exclusion of this  
case from that command, nothing short  
of an implied prohibition can be conveyed.

The second point here relates to the  
difference between **ask** and **make request**.  
The *Greek* word represented by the former  
is more of the petition *of the inferior*, as of  
the conquered, or of the guilty: that re-represented   
by the latter is more general, of  
the request *of the equal*, or of one who has  
a right. Our Lord never uses the former  
of His own requests to God, but always  
the latter. And this difference is of importance   
here. The **asking** for a sin not  
unto death is a humble and trusting petition   
in the direction of God’s will, and  
prompted by brotherly love: the other, the  
**making request** for a sin unto death,  
would be, it is implied, an act savouring  
of presumption—a prescribing to God, in  
a matter which lies out of the bounds of  
our brotherly yearning [for notice, the  
hypothesis that a man sees *a brother* sin a  
sin unto death is not adduced in words,  
because such a sinner would not truly be a  
brother, but thereby demonstrated never  
to have deserved that name: see ch. ii. 19],  
how He shall inflict and withhold His  
righteous judgments.

And these latter considerations bring us  
close to the question as to the nature of  
the sin unto death. It would be impossible  
to enumerate or even classify the opinions   
which have been given on the subject.   
Düsterdieck has devoted many pages  
to such a classification and discussion. I  
ean do no more than point out the canons  
of interpretation, and some of the principal  
divergencies. But before doing so, ver. 17  
must come under consideration).

**17.**] **All unrighteousness is sin** (in the  
words **all unrighteousness** we have a reminiscence  
of ch. i. 9, “If we confess our sins,  
He is faithful and just to forgive us our  
sins, and to cleanse us from **all unrighteousness**,”   
and also, but not so directly, of  
ch. iii, 4, which is virtually the converse  
proposition to this. Here the Apostle  
seems to say, in explanation of what he  
has just written, “SIN is a large word,  
comprehending all unrighteousness whatever:   
whether of God's children, or of  
aliens from Him.” The thoughts which  
have been brought into these words,—that  
*unrighteousness* is a mild word, meant to  
express that every slight trip of the good  
Christian fills under the category of sin,  
and so. there may be a sin not unto death,  
—or, on the other hand, that it is a strong  
word, as Grotius says, “he calls unrighteousness   
not every ignorance or sudden fall  
into sin, but sin committed either with  
deliberation, or with space given for deliberation,”  
—or thirdly, as Beza, that “all  
sins are so far equal, that even the least  
thought of the least sin deserves eternal  
death a thousand times over,” and “that  
all sins are of themselves deadly,”—are  
equally far from the meaning of the words,  
whose import is, as above, to account for  
there being a sin not unto death as well as  
a sin unto death); **and there is a sin not  
unto death** (not having death for its issue:  
within the limit of that *unrighteousness*,  
from all of which God cleanseth all those  
who confess their sins, ch. i. 9).

Our *first* canon of interpretation of the  
*sin unto death* and the *sin not unto death*  
is this: that *the* **death** *and the* **life** *of the  
passage must correspond.* The former  
cannot be bodily death, while the latter is  
eternal and spiritual life. This clears away  
at once all those Commentators who understand   
the sin unto death to be one for  
which bodily death is the punishment,  
either by human law generally, or by  
sickness inflicted by God; or of which  
there will be no end till the death of the  
sinner, which Bede thinks possible, and