Lyra adopts. This last is evidently absurd,   
for how is a man to know whether  
this will be so or not ?

Our *second* canon will be, that this sin  
unto death being thus a sin leading to  
eternal death, being no further explained  
to the readers here, must be presumed *as  
meant to be understood by what the Evangelist   
has elsewhere laid down* concerning  
the possession of life and death. Now we  
have from him a definition immediately  
preceding this, in ver, 12. *“He that hath  
the Son hath life: he that hath not the  
Son of God, the life hath he not.”* Aud  
we may safely say that the words **unto  
death** here are to be understood as meaning,   
“involving the loss of *this life* which  
men have only by union with the Son of  
God.” And this meaning they must have,  
not by implication only, which would be  
the case if any obstinate and determined  
sin were meant, which would be a sign of  
the fact of severance from the life which is  
in Christ [see iii, 14, 15, where the inference   
is of this kind], but directly and  
essentially, i.e. in respect of that very sin  
which is pointed at by them. Now against  
this canon are all those interpretations, far  
too numerous to mention, which make *any*  
atrocious and obstinate sin to be that intended.   
It is obvious that our limits are  
thus confined to *abnegation of Christ*, not  
as inferred by its fruits otherwise shewn,  
but as the act of sin itself. And so, with  
various shades of difference as to the putting   
forth in detail, most of the best Commentators   
both ancient and modern.  
  
  
Our *third* canon will help us to decide,  
within the above limits, what especial sin  
is intended. And it is, that by the very  
analogy of the context, it must be *not a  
state of sin, but an appreciable* ACT *of  
sin*, seeing that that which is opposed to it  
*in the same kind*, as being not unto death,  
is described by *“if any man see his brother   
sinning, &c.”* So that all interpretations   
which make it to be a *state* of  
apostacy, do not reach the matter of detail  
which is before the Apostle’s mind.

In enquiring what this is, we must be  
guided by the analogy of what St. John  
says elsewhere. *Our* state being that of  
life in Jesus Christ, there are those who  
have gone out from us, not being of us, ch.  
ii. 19, who are called “*antichrists,*” who  
not only “have not” Christ, but are Christ’s  
enemies, denying the Father and the Son  
[ii. 22], whom we are not even to receive  
into our houses nor to greet [2 John 10,  
11]. These seem to be the persons pointed  
at here, and this the sin: viz. the denial  
that Jesus is the Christ, the incarnate Son  
of God. This alone of all sins bears upon  
it the stamp of severance from Him who is  
the Life itself. As the confession of Christ,  
with the mouth and in the heart, is salvation   
unto life [Rom. x. 9], so denial of  
Christ with the month and in the heart, is  
sin unto death. This alone of all the proposed   
solutions seems to satisfy all the  
canons above laid down. For in it, the life  
cast away and the death incurred strictly  
correspond: it strictly corresponds to what  
St. John has elsewhere said concerning life  
and death, and derives its explanation from  
those other passages, especially from the  
foregoing ver. 12: and it is an appreciable  
act of sin, one against which the readers have  
been before repeatedly cautioned [ch. ii. 18  
ff., iv. 1 ff., v.5, 11, 12]. And further, it  
is in exact accordance with other passages  
of Scripture which seem to point at a sin  
similarly distinguished above others: viz.  
Matt. xii. 31 ff., and, so far as the circumstances   
there dealt with allow common  
ground, with the more ethical passages,  
Heb. vi. 4 ff., x. 25 ff. In the former case,  
the Scribes and Pharisees were resisting  
the Holy Ghost [Acts vii. 51], who was  
manifesting God in the flesh in the Person  
and work of Christ. For them the Lord  
Himself does not pray (Luke xxiii, 34):  
they knew what they did: they went out  
from God’s people and were not of them:  
receiving and repudiating the testimony  
of the Holy Ghost to the Messiahship of  
Jesus.

**18–20.**] *Three solemn maxims of* the  
Epistle regarding sin and the children of  
God and the world, and our eternal life in  
Christ, *are repeated* as a *close* of the teaching   
of the Apostle. Ver. 18 seems to be  
not without reference to what has just  
been said concerning sin. In actual life,  
even our brethren, even we ourselves, born  
of God, shall sin, not unto death, and require   
brotherly intercession: but in the  
depth and truth of the Christian life, sin is  
altogether absent. It is the world, not  
knowing God, which lies under the power  
of the wicked one: God’s new-begotten  
children he cannot touch: they are in and