thought and word be brought into judgment and punished, each according to its degree of guilt, but even the least of them  
before no less a tribunal than the judgment-seat of Christ.’ The most important  
thing to keep in mind is, that there is no  
distinction of *kind* between these punishments, only of *degree*. In the thing compared, the “*judgment*” inflicted death by  
the sword, the “*council*” death by stoning,  
and the disgrace of the “*Gehenna of fire*”  
followed as an intensification of the horrors  
of death; but the punishment is one and  
the same—*death*. So also in the subject  
of the similitude, *all the punishments are  
spiritual; all result in eternal death; but  
with various degrees* (the nature of which  
is as yet hidden from us), as the degrees of  
guilt have been. So that the distinction  
drawn by the Romanists between *venial*  
and mortal sins, finds not only no countenance, but direct confutation from this passage. The words here mentioned must  
not be superstitiously supposed to have any  
damning power in themselves (see below),  
but to represent *states of anger and hostility*, for which an awful account hereafter must be given.

**Raca**] i.e. **empty**; a  
term denoting contempt, and answering to “*O vain man,*” James ii. 20.

**Moreh**]  
Two interpretations have been given of this  
interpretations have been given i  
word. Either it is (1), as usually understood, a Greek word, ‘*Thou fool*’ and used  
by our Lord Himself of Scribes and  
Pharisees, ch. xxiii. 17, 19,—and “*fools*”  
(literally “*senseless*”) of the disciples, Luke  
xxiv. 25; or (2) a Hebrew word signifying  
‘*rebel,*’ and the very word for uttering which  
Moses and Aaron were debarred from entering the land of promise: ... ‘Hear  
now, ye rebels,’ Num. xx.10. In presence of this doubt, it is best to leave  
the word untranslated, as was done  
with **Raca** before.

**hell fire**] more  
properly, **the Gehenna of fire**. To the  
S.E. of Jerusalem was a deep and fertile  
valley, called ‘*the vale of Hinnom*’ and  
rendered “Gehenna,” Josh xviii. 16 LXX.

In this valley (also called Tophet, Isa. xxx.  
33: Jer. vii. 31) did the idolatrous Jews  
burn their children to Moloch, and Josiah  
(2 Kings xxiii. 10) therefore polluted it;  
and thenceforward it was the place for the  
casting out and burning all offal, and the  
corpses of criminals; and therefore its  
name, “*the Gehenna of fire,*” was used to signify the place of everlasting punishment.

**23 f. Therefore**] An inference from  
the guilt and danger of all bitterness and  
hostility of mind towards another declared  
in the preceding verse.

**thy gift**, is any kind of gift—sacrificial or eucharistic.

**hath ought against thee** is remarkable, as  
being purposely substituted for the converse. It is not *what complaints we have  
against others* that we are to consider at  
such a time, but *what they have against  
us*; not what ground *we have given* for  
complaint, but what complaints *they*, as  
matter of fact, *make* against us.—See the  
other side dealt with, Mark xi. 25.

**24.**] **be reconciled**: i.e. **become reconciled**  
—*thyself*, without being influenced by the  
status of the other towards thee. Remove  
the offence, and make friendly overtures  
to thy brother. **first** belongs to “*go thy  
way,*” not to “*be reconciled:*” “first go  
thy way” is opposed to “then come,” the  
*departure* to the *return*, not “be reconciled” to “offer.” No conclusion whatever can be drawn from this verse as to the  
admissibility of the term *altar* as applied  
to the Lord’s table under the Christian  
system. The whole language is Jewish,  
and can only be understood of Jewish rites.  
The *command*, of course, applies in full  
force as to reconciliation re the Christian offering of praise and thanksgiving in the Holy Communion; but further nothing  
can be inferred.

**25.**] The whole of  
this verse is the earthly example of a spiritual duty which is understood, and runs  
parallel with it. The sense may be given:  
‘As in worldly affairs, it is prudent to