174 Fire (*Ignis*)

Fire is read to be triple, spiritual, artificial, and natural. Of which one fire gives light but does not burn as the fire of the heavenly empyrean. Some burns but does not give light as the infernal fire. Another gives light and burns as the fire of a furnace.

Again, natural and ordinary fire is fed and devours. Solar fire devours and is not feed.

Again, the fire of guilt is almost grace. First is the livid color of envy or the ardor of concupiscence, about which Psal. [57:9]: “Fire has fallen on them, and they shall not see the sun.” Second is the suffering of remorse or sorrow of sympathy, about which the Apostle [Rom. 12:20]: “You shall heap coals of fire upon his head.”

Again, in the Psal. [38:4]: “My heart grew hot within me: and in my meditation a fire.” Third is the fervor of charity, about whom Luke 12[:49]: “I am come to cast fire on the earth.”

Again, the fire of the devil, about whom Job [1:16]: “The fire of God fell from heaven” upon that is the angelic fire, [Hebr. 1:7]: “He makes his angels spirits,” it is the fire of the Lord about whom Deut. 4[:24]: “Our God is a consuming fire.”

Again, fire draws by its heat, devours by its intensity, and ascends by its vapor, so also love.

Again, fire gives brightness, heat, and color.

¶ Again, fire in sacred scripture signifies the Holy Spirit. Therefore that is given to the apostles in tongues of fire, Act. 2[:3]. The reason is because just as fire consumes and purges earthly things, so the Holy Spirit, Luke 12[:49]: “I am come to cast fire on the earth.”

¶ Sometimes it is the land which does not yield fruit nor anything namely until fire passes through it, such was our soul before the coming of the Holy Spirit, [Lam. 1:13]: “From above he has sent fire into my bones.”

Again, in Psal. [38:4]: “In my meditation a fire shall flame out.” Because to the devout prayer of man God sends the fire of the Holy Spirit as if by a necessity of nature. For in nature it is such that when there is emptiness in another lower nature. A superior nature immediately descends to fill that emptiness lest there be emptiness in nature, as is evident concerning water in respect to the earth and concerning the air in respect to the water. Rather the fire of the Holy Spirit is in between. It is above the rational water and therefore when the soul is empty by the love of the world the fire of the Holy Spirit fills it.

¶ The gentiles are accustomed to cremate their friends by fire in death believing the fire to be god, and thus through this they believed them to be deified. Such ones were the Chaldeans according to Jerome, *Super Genesis*, c. 11.[[1]](#endnote-1) Since the fire of the Holy Spirit deified, so believing we dispose ourselves so that we can be burned by this fire.

¶ Again, Gen. 15[:1-19]: Abraham by the command of the Lord prepared a sacrifice and the Lord sent down the fire which consumed it and then the Lord agreed a covenant with that one. Thus when man prepares his heart for God the Lord sends down the first of the Holy Spirit and makes a pact concerning his celestial inheritance. But there it is to be noted that before the fire descended the birds of the air had descended upon the sacrifice which Abraham drove away. Thus before grace descends upon the heart of man, winged temptation occur which the holy man is inclined to drive away, Matt. 13[:4]: “The birds of the air came and ate them up,” that is, the word of God.

¶ Note here what Josephus says on the second book of Macch. [2:10],[[2]](#endnote-2) that at the prayers of one holy man fire descended from heaven and became perpetual in the land of the Jews until the Romans came and had power over them and the Jews themselves by selling priestly rights sinned. Then that fire was extinguished and in its place was found thick water, thus it is when man sins he extinguishes the fire and there is found shaky delight. Thus note here that the crowns of the nobles of old were burned, neither were they placed on land on account of the vileness of the material, nor in water lest they be devoured by whales. Wherefore it once happened among such matters that heart of a certain such nobleman could not be burned. And the reason having been sought for by the physicians, the response was that that heart had been infected by poison, so spiritually when the heart of man has been infected by sin it cannot be ignited by the Holy Spirit.

¶ Concerning the fire below it is written of and read in Job 20[:26]: “A fire that is not kindled shall devour him.”

¶ Again note that fire has a triple effect natural, violent, and marvelous. Certainly fire ascends naturally. It descends violently as is evident in figure. Third the spirit afflicts marvelously and feeds on the combustibles as is evident in Dan. 3[:22] where the fire devours the ministers naturally. Marvelously it spared the three boys.

Again, note that in fire is the speedier motion, the nobler power, the more efficient act, and the higher region. The first is evident because it is always moving and yet inalterable, so the stable spirit gives all things to be moved.[[3]](#endnote-3)

1. Jerome, *Liber Hebraicarum Quaestionum in Genesim* Cap. XI., Vers. 28. (PL 23:956): Et mortuus est Aran ante patrem suum in terra, qua natus est in regione Chaldaeorum. Pro eo, quod legimus, in regione Chaldaeorum, in Hebraeo habetur, in UR CHESDIM, id est in igne Chaldaeorum. Tradunt autem Hebraei ex hac occasione, istiusmodi fabulam: Quod Abraham in ignem missus sit, quia ignem adorare noluerit, quem Chaldaei colunt, et Dei auxilio liberatus, de idololatriae igne profugerit: quod in sequentibus [Col.0956B] scribitur, egressum esse Tharam cum sobole sua de regione Chaldaeorum: pro quo in Hebraeo habetur, de incendio Chaldaeorum. Et hoc esse quod nunc dicitur: Mortuus est Aran ante conspectum Thare patris sui in terra nativitatis suae, in igne Chaldaeorum: quod videlicet ignem nolens adorare, igne consumptus sit. Loquitur autem postea Dominus ad Abraham: Ego sum qui eduxi te de igne Chaldaeorum. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Rabanus Maurus, *Commentaria in Libros Machabaeorum* 2 Maccab 2 (PL 1225-1226): Facturi igitur quinta et vicesima die mensis Casleu purificationem templi, necessarium duximus significare vobis, etc. Haec quippe quae Jerosolymitani Judaei scribentes ad eos qui per Aegyptum fuerunt Judaeos de igne reperto in puteo in similitudinem aquae crassae converso, neque in Esdrae, neque in Nehemiae [Col.1226A] scriptis aut dictis alicubi reperire potuimus, sicut nec illud quod in posterioribus de arcae et tabernaculi absconsione per Jeremiam asserunt, nullo modo in ipsius Jeremiae libro scriptum inveniri potest. Unde constat hoc illos aut majorum suorum traditione didicisse, aut in apocryphis eorum libris exarata reperisse. Nos ergo, quod incertum est non curiose inquirentes, ad ea quae certa canonicorum librorum attestatione esse manifestum est, calamum convertamus.

   Cf. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.1.1 (LCL 365:228-229): [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* 3 metrum 9 (PL 63:758): O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas

   Terrarum coelique sator, qui tempus ab aevo

   Ire jubes, stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri; [↑](#endnote-ref-3)