

topic, against Origin, Ambrosius, Hillary, Lactantius, Jerome, Lombard, Aquinas, Haimo, Alcuin, and Estius; and all these against Chrysostom, Theodoret, Theophylact, Sedulius, and Anselm. Saint encounters saint, and commentator attacks commentator: and all these, formed in a deep phalanx, explode from Paul's words the modern fabrication of Purgatory.

The searching fire, mentioned by the Apostle, is not purgatorian, but probatory. Its effect is not to purify but to try. The trial is not of persons, but of works. The persons, in this ordeal, shall be saved; while the works, if wood, hay, or stubble, shall be consumed. The Popish Purgatory, on the contrary, is not for probation, but expiation, and tries, not the action, but the agent, not the work, but the worker.

The scriptural language, in this case, is metaphorical. The foundation and the superstructure, consisting of gold, silver, and precious stones, or of wood, hay, and stubble, as well as the scrutinizing flame, all these are not literal, but figurative. The phrase, 'so as,' it is plain, denotes a comparison. The salvation, which is accomplished so as by fire, is one which, as critics have shown from similar language in sacred and profane authors, is effected with difficulty. Amos, the Hebrew prophet, represents the Jewish nation, who were rescued from imminent danger, 'as a fire-brand, plucked out of the burning.' Zachariah, another Jewish seer, in the same spirit and in similar style, characterizes a person, who was delivered from impending destruction, as a brand, snatched 'out of the fire.' Diction of a similar kind, Calmet, Wetstein, and other critics have shown, has been used by Livy, Cicero, and Cyprian, for denoting great severity, hazard, and difficulty. Paul, in like manner, designed to tell us, that he who should blend vain, curious, and useless speculations with the truths of the gospel; but should rest, nevertheless, in the main, on the only basis, would, in the end, be saved: but with the difficulty of a person who should escape with the possession of his life, but with the loss of his property, from an overwhelming conflagration: or, according to Estius, like the merchant, who should gain the shore with

the destruction of his goods, but the preservation of his life, from the tempest of the sea."

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