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The Cover

Fire has fascinated, captivated, excited, and threatened since the Stone Age. Its deep symbolism has been incorporated into many religious rituals. Catholics recognize the security of the sanctuary lamp, and Jews the candles of Hanukkah; in the Orient burning incense wafts through temples, and the ancient Aztecs worshipped the sun.

Fire has also been seen as chastening. Lightning bolts have been considered a sign of God's wrath. The hedonism of Sodom and Gomorrah was purified in a shower of fire and brimstone.

Poets have not ignored fire's potential for spiritual damnation. Milton described a burned bottomless pit in *Paradise Lost* and Dante an inferno of tortured souls in *The Divine Comedy*.

When man learned to control fire it became his agent, enabling him to migrate from the tropics to less hospitable climes. Its power was harnessed for industry, and now with the aid of fire, communities flourish in barren Prudhoe Bay in Alaska and remote Amundsen-Scott Station in Antarctica, two of the bitterest inhabited spots on earth.

But fire has never been brought to heel and subdued completely. Like jungle animals performing in a circus, it can rise and maul its tamer with savage
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