

## POPE GREGORY

### On Moralia - Excerpt from Final Chapter

For many qualities now need to be displayed, which were not necessary in Paradise. For now we require the virtue of patience, laborious instruction in learning, chastening of the body, assiduity in prayer, confession of faults, a deluge of tears; none of which man wanted in truth on his creation, because by his very creation he enjoyed the blessing of salvation. For a bitter cup is held out to a sick man, that he may be restored to a state of health by the removal of disease. But a man in health is never ordered what to take in order to regain his strength, but what to avoid, lest he should be ill. We therefore display now greater zeal, when we do not preserve the health we possess, but endeavor to regain that which we have lost. And because all these efforts for our restoration, are supported by great opinions in Holy Church, the name of the second daughter justly smells as cassia; in order that, as the first daughter existed as 'the day' ['dies'] through the dignity of her creation, the second may be 'cassia' through the fragrance of strength by the grace of redemption. Whence also it is said by the prophet to the same Redeemer on His coming; *Myrrh and amber and cassia come from Thy garments, from the ivory steps, out of which the daughters of kings have delighted Thee in Thine honour.* [Ps. 45, 8] For what is designated by the name of myrrh, amber, and cassia, except the sweetness of virtues? What is expressed by the ivory steps, except the ascent of proficient, which shines with great strength? Our Redeemer, therefore, when He comes, uses myrrh, amber, and cassia in His garment, because He scatters forth from His Elect, with whom He mercifully arrays Himself, the fragrance of the myrrh of virtue. And in them this odour is led on by ivory steps, because, in them an opinion of their virtues arises not from the show of pretence, but from the ascent of true and solid deeds. But it is well subjoined; *Out of which the daughters of kings delighted Thee in Thine honour.* For holy souls, which had been brought forth by the ancient fathers to the knowledge of the truth, delight their Redeemer in His honour, because they claim nothing to their own credit from all that they do well. But because the human race in its third condition, even when new fashioned for the resurrection of the flesh, is engaged in that concert of eternal praise, the third daughter is called *Cornustibii*. For what is expressed by 'Cornustibii' but the song of those that rejoice? For there is that truly fulfilled which is now said by the Prophet? *Sing unto the Lord a new song.* [Ps. 149, 1] It is there truly fulfilled, where the song of praise to God will be sung no longer by faith, but in a contemplation of His Person. There does our Creator receive from us the true songs of His praises, Who both made the human race 'Dies' by creating it, 'Cassia' by redeeming it, and 'Cornustibii' by taking it to Himself. For we who were 'light' when created, and are now 'cassia' by having been redeemed, shall at

last be 'cornustibii' when engaged in the exultation of eternal praise. But before the Bride comes to the marriage chamber, she casts off from herself all filthiness of life, and preparing herself for the love of the Bridegroom, adorns and arrays herself with the beautifyings of virtues. For she studies to approve herself to the judgment of the inward Judge, and from being exalted in her inmost desires, to transcend the filthy habits of human conversation. Whence it is also well subjoined concerning the same daughters of blessed Job;

Ver. 15. *But in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job.*

45. For the souls of the Elect surpass, by the comeliness of their beauty, all the human race which lives after the fashion of men on the earth: and the more they slight themselves by outward affliction, the more truly do they array themselves within. Hence it is, that it is said by the Psalmist to Holy Church, which is adorned with the beauty of the Elect; the *King hath greatly desired thy beauty.* [Ps. 45, 11] Of whom it is added a little after; *All the glory of this daughter of kings is from within.* [ib. 13] For if she sought glory without, she would have no beauty within, for the king greatly to desire. And although many shine therein with the beauty of virtues, and surpass the merits of others by the very perfection of their conduct, yet some, because they are not able to attain to higher things, being conscious of their own weakness, are embraced in the bosom of her gentleness. For these, as far as they possess strength, avoid sins, although they do not fulfil higher excellencies as far as they desire. Yet God graciously receives them, and admits them to Himself in proportion to the recompense they deserve. Whence it also follows;

*And their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.*

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46. Because then of the merit of the perfect they are said to be beautiful; but as being a type of the imperfect they also receive, as if they were weak, an inheritance among their brethren. For the practice of life in former times admitted not females to obtain an inheritance among males, because the severity of the Law, selecting the strong, and despising the weak, studied to sanction what was strict rather than what was merciful. But on the coming of our gracious Redeemer, let no one who is conscious of his infirmity despair of obtaining the inheritance of the heavenly patrimony. For our Father has granted to women also a right of succession among males, because amid the strong and perfect He admits the weak and humble to the lot of the heavenly inheritance. Whence the Truth Itself says in the Gospel; *In My Father's house are many mansions.* [John 14, 2] For there are in truth many mansions with the Father, because in that equal life of blessedness each one obtains a different place according to his different desert. But he feels not the losses of this disparity, because that which he has received is quite sufficient for him. Sisters

therefore come to an inheritance together with their brethren, because the weak are admitted thither together with the strong; in such wise that if any one through imperfection shall not be the highest, he may not through humility be shut out from his lot of the inheritance. And these mansions Paul well teaches us are apportioned to each one according to his merits, when he says; *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differeth from star in glory.* [1 Cor. 15, 41] It follows;

Ver. 16. and last. *But Job lived after these scourges a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even to the fourth generation, and he died an old man, and full of days.*

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47. In Holy Scripture a person is not easily recorded as 'full of days,' unless he is one whose conduct is praised in the same Scripture. For he is in truth void of days, who, even if he has lived ever so long, has wasted the time of his life in vanity. But he, on the other hand, is said to be 'full of days,' whose days pass not away and come to nought, but by the daily reward of good works, are treasured up with the just Judge, even after they have been passed.

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