

WISDOM FROM THE SEVEN SAGES

Ancient Greek legend has it that in the sixth century BCE, there were seven sages in Greece who served the God Apollo. According to the ancient tales, at least three of their best known sayings were inscribed at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, together with the enigmatic and still unexplained *great letter E*.¹ Several other cultures, including India and China, also had stories of seven mythic sages,² suggesting a universal and archetypal quality to these philosophers and their sayings.

Scholars today suggest that from a kernel of mythic stories and sayings of sages from Asia Minor and Greece, the initiates of the mystery schools of Delphi and other centers used these legends to inspire pilgrims and students of the mysteries, probably well established by the fifth century BCE. All were in one way or another associated with Delphi.³ While over the centuries many names have been proposed, the following are the most common, gathered from the writings of Plato (fifth-fourth centuries BCE), Plutarch (first-second centuries CE), Pausanias (second century CE), Diogenes Laertius (ca. third century CE), and Clement of Alexandria (third century CE). They are listed below, along with a wise saying often associated with them in antiquity.⁴ After all the centuries, these ideas are still worthy of meditation.

“Love Wisdom Deeply.”

Bias of Priene

“Nothing in Excess.”

Chilon of Sparta

“Young Women should be educated as well as Young Men.”

Cleobulus of Rhodes

“Realities were not created to fit arguments; arguments were made to fit the realities.”

Myson of Chenae

“Mercy is better than Revenge.”

Pittacus of Mytilene

“Speech reflects Action.”

Solon of Athens

“Know Thyself, and Thou shalt know the Universe and the Gods.”

Thales of Miletus

Endnotes

¹ “Seven Sages of Greece” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Sages_of_Greece.

² See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Sages.

³ H.W. Parke and D.E.W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1956), vol. 1, 387-389.

⁴ Carlos Parada, *Greek Mythology Link*, <http://homepage.mac.com/cparada/GML/SevenSages.html#Lists>.



John Collier, *Priestess of Delphi*, 1891.