23rd May 2026

Wisest

**"You should look into a mirror: if you look fine, do fine things;
if you look ugly, correct by nobility the defect of your nature."**

Bias of Priene, *as reported by Demetrius of Phalerum*

I love it when I discover something I didn't know. So here's where yesterday's "Thought" took me …

Bias of Priene was a 6th century BC Greek philosopher whom Satyrus called "the wisest of the seven sages of Greece". Priene was an ancient Greek city in Ionia, on the west coast of the country, close to the Aegean Sea, and the "seven sages" lot were apparently a pretty important bunch. I didn't know *any* of that. I'd never heard of Bias of Priene. I had no idea where Priene was. So, I did some digging …

In truth, I couldn't find out too much about our friend Bias, though his contemporaries had many good things to say about him. Heraclitus, a later philosopher (apparently a man not easily pleased), praised Bias by saying, "In Priene there lived Bias the son of Teutamus, whose reputation is higher than that of the others." A stellar accolade indeed!

But I was struck by a couple of other references to Bias. Ponder the quote with which I've begun today. Is it possible that Jesus of Nazareth had access to this Greek philosophy from centuries before so that it influenced his teaching? "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." "Take the moat out of your own eye before you point out the beam in your brother's." "Do to others what you would have them do to you." If you look good when you see yourself in the mirror, that's great. Go and do good things! But if there's something wrong, you'd better sort it out first.

And … when Bias was asked by a wastrel of a man what piety was, he said nothing. When his questioner demanded the reason for his silence, he said, "I am silent because you are putting questions about things with which you have no concern." Some things matter, and some don't. Some things have answers, and some don't. Some things concern us, and some don't. So, let's concentrate on what *really* matters and not what doesn't.

And finally, Bias was once asked, "What is pleasant to men?" (That's all of humanity, of course, and not just the male of the species …) And he replied, "Hope." The wisest of the seven sages"? You can understand why!

A prayer for today

Loving God, let me be a Bias, and be inclined to wisdom, goodness … and hope. Amen

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