Warwick Class Civ Teachers Day 2022 – Greek Religion Dr Paul Grigsby

Pausanias 5.14.4-10

Now that I have finished my account of the greatest altar, let me proceed to describe all the altars in Olympia. My narrative will follow in dealing with them the order in which the Eleans are wont to sacrifice on the altars. They sacrifice to Hestia first, secondly to Olympic Zeus, going to the altar within the temple, thirdly to Zeus Laoetas and to Poseidon Laoetas. This sacrifice too it is usual to offer on one altar. Fourthly and fifthly they sacrifice to Artemis and to Athena, Goddess of Booty, sixthly to the Worker Goddess. The descendants of Pheidias, called Cleansers, have received from the Eleans the privilege of cleaning the image of Zeus from the dirt that settles on it, and they sacrifice to the Worker Goddess before they begin to polish the image. There is another altar of Athena near the temple, and by it a square altar of Artemis rising gently to a height. After the altars I have enumerated there is one on which they sacrifice to Alpheius and Artemis together. The cause of this Pindar, I think, intimates in an ode, and I give it in my account of Letrini. Not far from it stands another altar of Alpheius, and by it one of Hephaestus. This altar of Hephaestus some Eleans call the altar of Warlike Zeus. These same Eleans also say that Oenomaüs used to sacrifice to Warlike Zeus on this altar whenever he was about to begin a chariot-race with one of the suitors of Hippodameia. After this stands an altar of Heracles sumamed Parastates (Assistant); there are also altars of the brothers of Heracles—Epimedes, Idas, Paeonaeüs, and Iasus; I am aware, however, that the altar of Idas is called by others the altar of Acesidas. At the place where are the foundations of the house of Oenomaüs stand two altars: one is of Zeus of the Courtyard, which Oenomaüs appears to have had built himself, and the other of Zeus of the Thunderbolt, which I believe they built later, when the thunderbolt had struck the house of Oenomaüs. An account of the great altar I gave a little way back; it is called the altar of Olympian Zeus. By it is an altar of Unknown Gods, and after this an altar of Zeus Purifier, one of Victory, and another of Zeus—this time surnamed Underground. There are also altars of all gods, and of Hera surnamed Olympian, this too being made of ashes. They say that it was dedicated by Clymenus. After this comes an altar of Apollo and Hermes in common, because the Greeks have a story about them that Hermes invented the lyre and Apollo the lute. Next come an altar of Concord, another of Athena, and the altar of the Mother of the gods. Quite close to the entrance to the stadium are two altars; one they call the altar of Hermes of the Games, the other the altar of Opportunity. I know that a hymn to Opportunity is one of the poems of Ion of Chios; in the hymn Opportunity is made out to be the youngest child of Zeus. Near the treasury of the Sicyonians is an altar of Heracles, either one of the Curetes or the son of Alcmena, for both accounts are given. On what is called the Gaeum (sanctuary of Earth) is an altar of Earth; it too is of ashes. In more ancient days they say that there was an oracle also of Earth in this place. On what is called the Stomium (Mouth) the altar to Themis has been built. All round the altar of Zeus Descender runs a fence; this altar is near the great altar made of the ashes. The reader must remember that the altars have not been enumerated in the order in which they stand, but the order followed by my narrative is that followed by the Eleans in their sacrifices. By the sacred enclosure of Pelops is an altar of Dionysus and the Graces in common; between them is an altar of the Muses, and next to these an altar of the Nymphs.

Pausanias. Description of Greece, Volume II: Books 3-5 (Laconia, Messenia, Elis 1). Translated by W. H. S. Jones, H. A. Ormerod. Loeb Classical Library 188. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926