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ADVENTURES IN ISTANBUL
by P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D.

Touch-down in Istanbul means a long drive to your hotel across a hilly landscape of layers upon layers of apartments, forming buildings topped by either domes, turrets, balls, spires, or fencing around what appears to be bedrooms – all of it in little relation to neighboring tracks, colors, designs. Nothing is flat - not roads, not walkways. Remnants of ancient Rome share space with Trump Towers. Yes, there are two of them, dramatically posh, in a thriving and prosperous giant of a city punctuated by calls for prayer from more mosques than you can count.

Istanbul is split in half by the Continental Divide. . . part in Europe, the other in Asia. . . with the Bosphorus in-between, a wide and busy waterway that connects the Mediterranean with the Black Sea. This was my third trip here. . . a chance to share material from my book *Dying to Know You: Proof of God in the Near-Death Experience* with an audience of over 2,300 people, each committed to a greater spiritual truth and the reality of God/Allah/Deity. I am grateful I listened to my heart instead of the State Department; the naysayers were wrong. Families were everywhere, people walking/playing, folks fishing from bridges, boys proud of their new motorbikes, carts of roasted chestnuts dotting busy streets.

Thanks to our tour guide who spoke perfect English, the small group of panelists I was with were treated to days of tours – like to the Blue Mosque, Aya Sophia Mosque-turned-museum, Roman Cistern, the Tower, Sultan’s Palace, both the ancient Bazaar and the newer Spice Bazaar, and a ride across the Bosphorus.

To say this was a thrill would be an understatement, yet, wherever I’ve gone in the world. . . I always met myself already there, the me I was in a past life in the sense of “unfinished business,” something “left over” that needed facing or fixing. I marvel at how strong such past-life memories are and how I always wind up in the right place at the right time with the right people. . . for deep healing.

My previous three trips to Norway were like this. Each opportunity putting me exactly where I had once lived as a proud Viking, who, because of a startling experience in “light, left tribal life to join with Father Olaf in bringing Christianity

to the masses. I rediscovered my birthplace, walked again trails I had almost worn thin with the vigor born of youth, to the place in Stiklestad where I died in battle defending Olaf. My friend took a photo of where a sword brought me down. . . now a farm yard, a tractor sitting on that very spot. I heard my voice scream “What a good way to die.” Olaf died too hardly a field away. Same time.

During my first trip to Istanbul, I connected with times of the “Three Letters Edict” in the third century when Christianity was established and the Bible took form. References to reincarnation were omitted, the gospels fashioned in accordance with the politics of the time. I was part of that, having voice in what resulted, yet caught in a teeter-totter between duty and shame. I found my pillar, that place in Aya Sophia where I grieved and cried and banged head and fists for naught, choosing death via starvation. The second time I flew there I insisted on time in Aya Sophia, at “my pillar” where I allowed grief full sway. My sense was to get it out, all out, and then to forgive – myself, my superiors, the tenor of the times, and the political shenanigans that twisted what could have been a wondrous religion into a “make-do” that would enable the Church of Rome to control the masses. This time, on my third trip there, all feelings of regret and shame, for myself and others, were gone. Love reigned and I felt good. The healing from the year before had worked its miracle.

The ancient Cistern, built to ensure fresh water, was a surprise. Like a large underground lake with ceiling supported by massive stone columns, it was dark and mysterious. A walk-way jutted out to the back wall where faces of Medusa were “smashed” beneath two pillars, she being forever cursed and vile. I saw spirits in the air as I walked along, heard voices calling. At the curse point for Medusa, vaporous streaks filled the air - so much so that I felt my heart at risk. I made a bee-line for the safety of stairs out of there and back to sunshine. Others felt “oppressive thoughts,” making my quick retreat a shared event. Outside I jumped up and down vigorously, twirled and wiggled, to divest myself of what appeared as if a “dust” that had covered me. Later on, I came to realize that curses, vile speech, plus the desperation of countless souls were what filled the space. The Cistern was not so much inhabited by spirit beings refusing or unable to go on, as it was a place where negativity, built up over countless centuries, had no outlet.

I’m home now, back in Charlottesville, blessed by a people who put up mammoth signs throughout key areas in Istanbul that read: ***We are the great nation of Turkey, terrorism will not divide us.*** May the entire world be so bold.

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