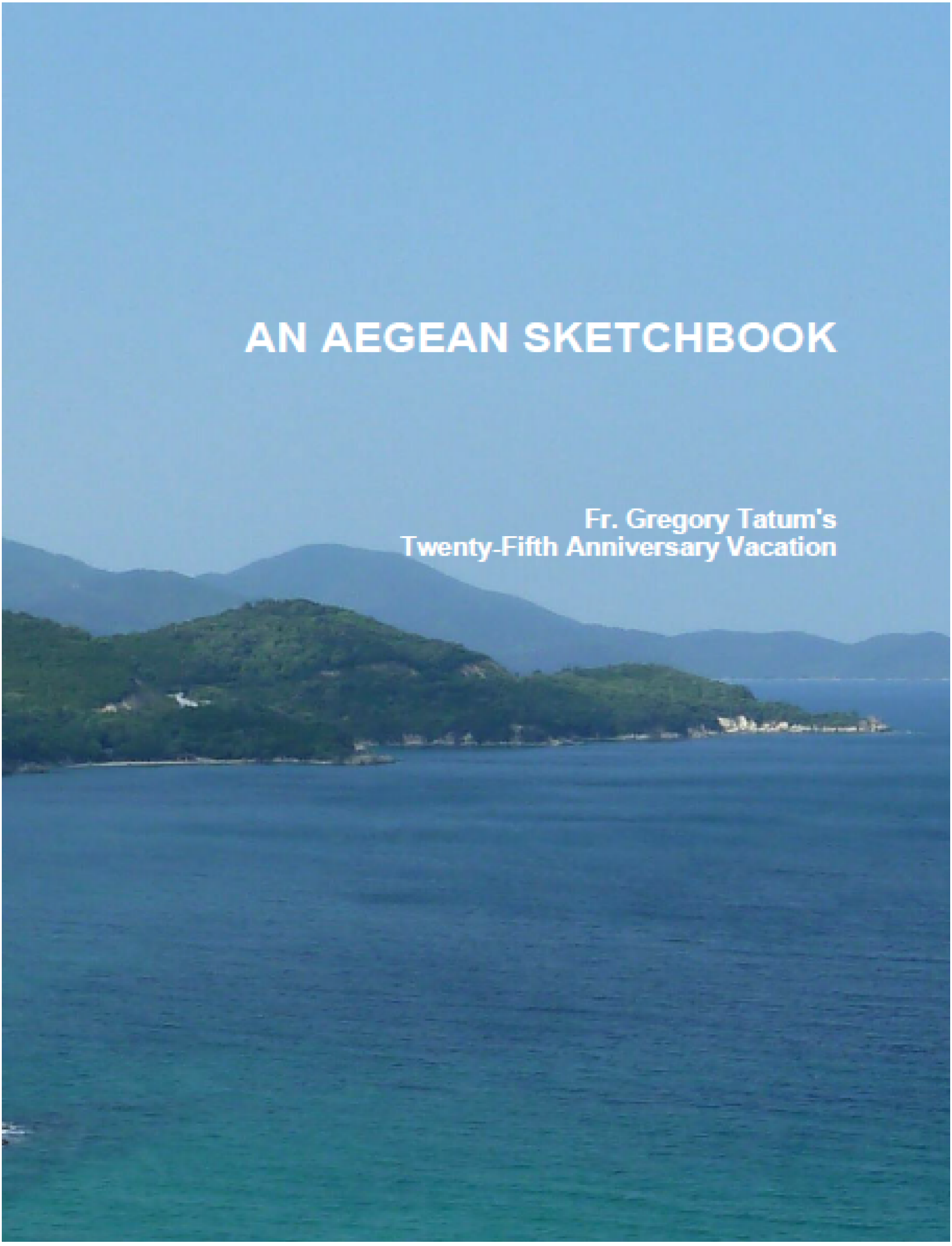

AN AEGEAN SKETCHBOOK

Fr. Gregory Tatum's
Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Vacation

AN AEGEAN SKETCHBOOK

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THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY VACATION OF FATHER GREGORY TATUM, O.P.

As Interpreted by
Augustine Thompson O.P.

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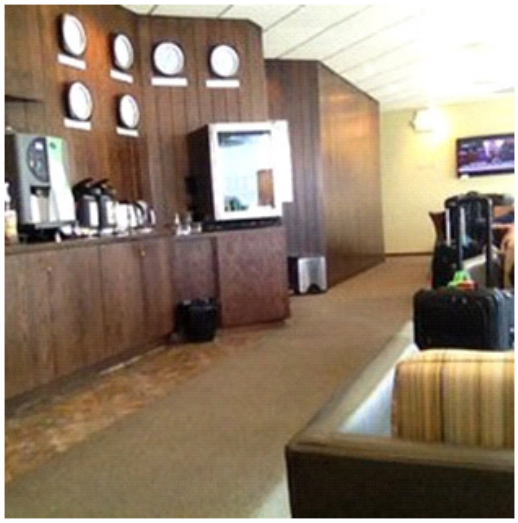
AN AEGEAN SKETCHBOOK

I. Turkey

DAY ONE: January 4—Flight to Seattle

After taking the BART to San Francisco International Airport, we did a pizza and beer (for me) and a Martini (for Reginald) at an airport café overlooking the escalators in the international terminal. Alaska had moved their flights there because of work in their usual venue. Reginald's pull got us into the VIP lounge for Alaska, which had some nice tea sandwiches and other snacks. We went down 15 minutes early to the gate, only to find that they had decided to cancel a later flight and combine those passengers with us on our plane. That they could do this suggests that they had failed in the usual over-booking by a long shot, and just cancelled the mostly empty plane. This meant endless delays, and we were finally in the air about 90 minutes late, after sitting on the tarmac for a half hour. Our flight from SFO to Seattle on Alaska was otherwise uneventful. Reginald was kind enough to let me take the window, so I got a 10 minute snooze during the 90 minute trip. We arrived at SeaTac, the Seattle Airport, in the evening and had after a longish wait until an off-brand hotel shuttle van arrived to get us to the Best Western Executel, Reginald's choice, as it is his favorite chain. What a mess. There had been a terrible storm a couple of weeks earlier, and there were photos of the destruction displayed in the lobby. Workman were packing up from their demolition projects, and a lone desk clerk checked us in after a small wait. To bed early.



Alaska First-Class Lounge, SFO

Best Western Executel, Sea-Tac

DAY 2: January 5—Flight to Europe

The next day we slept in and then had the meager complementary breakfast in what seemed a temporary "dinning room." It was the American version of a "continental breakfast." The hammering, banging, and screeching of power drills provided white background noise for our morning fare. The shuttle was waiting outside the door by the time we got down from our rooms, and just before noon we headed back to the airport for the five or so hours until the flight to London Heathrow. Baggage checked and security passed without strip-search, we were inside the "zone" with a couple hours to spare. This gave us some time to pick up a few trashy novels to fill up air and airport time. The frequent-flyer Reginald used his pull to get us into the British Air executive lounge, where there was open bar and snacks. We did some snacking, but no imbibing, and Reginald finished up some email business on the public access point.

The Boeing 747 First-Class Cabin

With relatively little fuss, we were loaded into a 747, the first time I was in a jumbo jet in a couple of decades. It was a new experience to turn left into the nose of the plane where the first class accommodations are. The joys of having an acquaintance with a surfeit of miles to burn. Each passenger got a little cubicle with arm chair, fold out table, clothes closet (yes, a little unit with built-in hangers), and an elaborate console of buttons and switches that took me about ten minutes to puzzle out. The steward came around and took drink orders (no limit apparently), explained the various amenities, and made sure we were happy.

No imperious instructions about seat backs or seat belts. Apparently those rules only apply in steerage. Once airborne, the steward returned with the menus. By mistake, we got a lunch menu, which had some really wonderful looking choices. The mistake discovered, we got the less satisfying (but still fine) dinner menu. I moved to the auxiliary seat in my cubicle and gave Reginald the arm chair. The steward set up the table, spread the table cloth and put down more cutlery than I think I have ever had before me for a meal. I had the halibut (good but a bit dry); Reginald had the

steak (no surprise there). The wine was a nice Bordeaux, 2009, if I remember correctly, "Troisième Cru," which is "third class,"but still very fine as vintage. As any refills as you wish—I had two. Then came the cheese plate, and dessert, if desired. We had been eating, etc., for nearly two hours, so we passed on the latter but had the former.

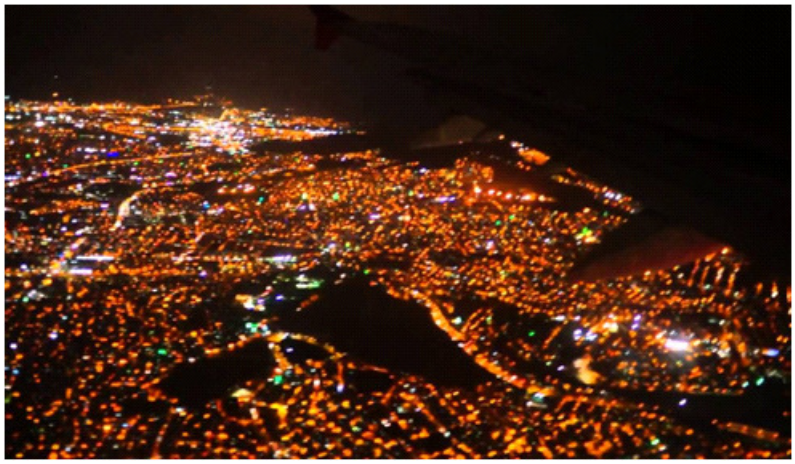
Reginald Took the "Full British Breakfast"

Time for bed. The steward came, put down the chairs, and spread out the sheets etc. to create berths. A set of pajamas was complementary. Nothing said about keeping the (now unavailable) seat belt latched "in case of turbulence." I was left wishing that the flight would be longer so that I could have a chance for more than five hours' sleep. I think I got about four.

DAY 3: January 6—Flight to Istanbul

We arrived at London Heathrow in the morning and disembarked after a hot breakfast (again with table cloth and plenty of cutlery) on the plane. I loaded my stuff (including my set of pajamas and my new complementary toiletry kit) into my computer case. And we were off through what we agreed were the unnecessary bouts of internal security screening. During which, they seized my toiletry kit because of the fluids it contained. Another passport check, and we were in the horrible rat maze that is the Heathrow Terminal. After wandering around for an unconscionable amount of time, we found the gate and the British Air VIP lounge. Nice snacks, but inferior to those in Seattle, although it did have an amazing open bar and wine sufficient to bathe in, as Reginald remarked. But the chairs were much more comfortable. So we spent a couple hours waiting, snacking (mostly on nuts), and reading our paperback novels.

Heathrow Airport, Concourse 2



Istanbul by Night from the Air

On boarding, we then discovered why there were no first class seats available on this plane when Reginald booked. There is no first class or business section. Rather "business" is simply a seat in coach with a kind of temporary shelf set into the middle seat to render it a small table between the window and aisle seats. Food was unmemorable, wine generic, but hunger is the best condiment. It was nearly 10:30 p.m. when we finally began to descend to Ataturk Airport in Istanbul. My first view of the city was thus by night. I could clearly see one of the bridges over the Bosporus and the lights outlining the city and the Golden Horn. Lovely.

British Air provided "express passes" for passport control, so we were quickly into the baggage area. After an endless wait (sadly contrasting with the rapid delivery in Seattle), our bags arrived, last in the queue. Outside in the waiting area: no sign of the pick-up driver. We paced back and forth, went to travelers' aid ("look for man with sign"), and came back. There he was, holding a sign saying "William David Martin." After changing dollars into Turkish lire (at an excellent rate of 2.98 Lira to the dollar—cf. 2.61 in the Seattle airport), we were off on our van ride to the Celul (pronounced Jelul) Sultan Hotel in the Sultanamet District, about two blocks from the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia. Wonderful gracious reception, and a reunion with Gregory, who had arrived earlier in the day, after a 90 minute van trip in from the other airport on the Asia side of the Bosporus. I don't know about Reginald and Gregory, but I crashed almost immediately.

Our Hotel in Istanbul

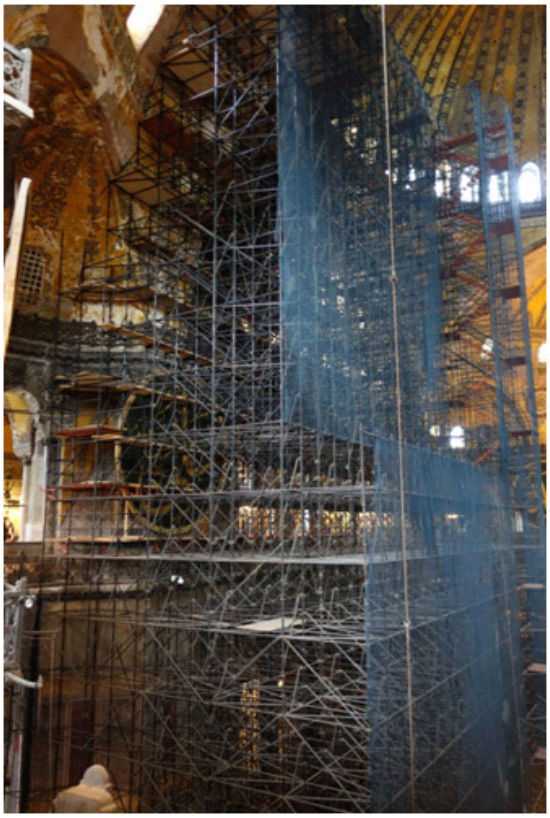
DAY 4: January 7—Istanbul I

The Celul Sultan Hotel proved far beyond our expectations, and beyond its four stars. The reservation included breakfast, which included hot (scrambled eggs, sauteed peppers, and—I think—a kind of beef sausage), as well as cold (wide choice of cheeses, fruit, sliced tomatoes, and superb black olives). Also cereals and an assortment of breads and rolls. We tucked in after Mass in my room and planned the day. This would be the day of the major local sight: Hagia Sophia, the great church built in the mid-500s by the emperor Justinian. Then a walk around the area. Fortified by a large breakfast, we were off. As we were walking, Gregory taught us the two words that every traveler should learn in the language of the country they visit: "Hello" and "Thank you." In Turkish, "hello," is "marhaba," which literally means "God is love." Nice. I got busy learning to say that. "Thank you" is "teşekkürler " which literally means "Thank you." It took me a little longer to learn that one. As we were walking along, minding our own business, the recorded call to prayer came blasting out of the minaret of the mosque down the street. LOUD! Gregory explained that this is the way the religion is impressed (imposed?) on those around, especially foreigners. The volume is a kind of strategy of control. The call to prayer in a human voice might have been ethereal, even spiritual, but this was just the opposite. The distortion caused by the volume resulted in something that was half way between off-key yodeling and high-volume gargling. We would be subjected to this many times before leaving Turkey.

The Great Church of Hagia Sophia

Hagia Sophia was reached with relatively little problem, except for the gauntlet of barkers trying to drag us into their shops. This would become the blessing and bane of the visit to Turkey: wonderful hospitality and generosity, badly poisoned by aggressive, unrelenting harassment by sellers (mostly of carpet) and their brothers, cousins, sons, and other noxious minions. If you don't want a carpet, how about a

travel guide, some jewelry, some food, etc? We made the excellent choice of following Marcy and Richard Rose's suggestion that we get a five-day museum pass for 85 Turkish lire (TL). Since the admission to Hagia Sophia was 40 TL, we were already over half-way to saving money. Entering the narthex we came face-to-face with our first Byzantine mosaic: the dedication mosaic over the main door into the nave. The Emperor Leo IV "the Wise," kneels before Christ to the left, with Mary and an angel in roundels. Christ enthroned is center, so close to the viewer, but so distant in his majesty. The preservation is excellent and we spent some fifteen minutes or so in quiet respectful awe. Then under and into the strangely shaped nave, with its elliptical shape recalling a double-apsed western basilica. For me the most striking aspect of the nave are the great arched side walls rising on the lower arches and pierced by the opening into the upper galleries.



Restoration of the Nave of Hagia Sophia

The interior of Hagia Sophia, long awaited and imagined, was a bit of a disappointment. Certainly the architecture was grand, the central dome spectacular, but the space was badly cluttered and the vistas basically ruined. This mostly by huge restoration scaffolding covering nearly the entire north wall of the nave up to the dome. Ottoman vandalism did the rest. A "minrab" (a big glue-on niche pointing the way to Mecca) defaced the southern part of the apse. The "minbar," which looks like a huge mobile staircase, but is sadly permanent, clings like a stone parasite to the south east column holding up the dome. It is the Muslim version of a pulpit. Then, taking up almost a fifth of the nave floor space toward the apse, is a kind of platform, about 15 feet above the floor that served as a reading platform when the building was used as a mosque. I guess this is not very "ecumenical," but it is painful to see one of this great ancient Christian churches defaced this way. On each of the four piers that support the dome there are also large circular shields with Arabic verses praising Allah, Muhammad, Hussain, and Ali. One crazed Wahabi fanatic and we would be rid of those at least. Those radical Muslims destroy anything that might hint at honoring a saint, even a Islamic one.

The Apse with the Mosaic of the Virgin (867)

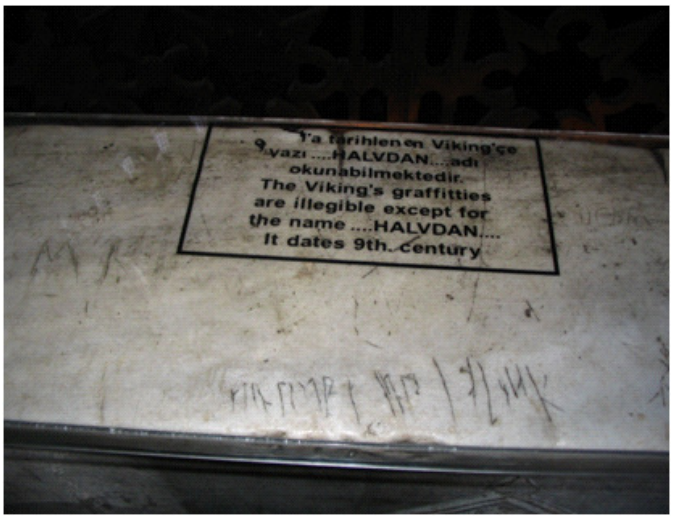
The great mosaic of the Virgin and Child in the apse (dated correctly to 867, rather than the usual twelfth-century) turned out to be just as I remembered it from my class on Byzantine Art back at Hopkins in 1974, oddly wide with a very small head. (Gregory called it the "Pin-Head Madonna.") The usual picture is taken from way up in the air, so she looks normal. No one could ever see her at that actual angle. Try was we might, we could not find a place in the building where the perspectives worked for this image. Even from the Empress's Loggia on the upper gallery level against the west facade, the proportions were bad. Still she floats in space against the gold tessera in an ethereal and otherworldly way. After a perambulation of the nave, visiting a gold-screened library in the south aisle added by some long-dead sultan, and a pause to stick a finger in the "Good Luck Column" in the north aisle, we ascended to the galleries by the spiraling stairs.

The Deësis: Veneration of Christ

The walls are exposed brick and rather rough. Gregory says that they would have been covered with marble facing, later removed for reuse elsewhere. We debouched into the Empress's Gallery in the back of the church, which is pretty much empty save for fragments of wall marble and a round stone marker set into the floor to show the position of the empress's throne, which would have faced the apse looking over the parapet. Coming around to the south gallery and through the marble screen closing off the Emperor's Gallery, we come to for me the most beautiful mosaic in the church, the late thirteenth-century

"Paleologian Renaissance" Deësis, showing Christ flanked by Our Lady and St. John the Baptist. The plasticity of the faces, especially that of the Savior is striking, totally the opposite of the stereotyped "flat" composition ascribed to Byzantine Art. If there is need to prove the existence of the "Paleologian Renaissance," this monument is enough. Sadly, the lower part of the mosaic has been destroyed, leaving more or less three head-and-shoulder images. This room also has a set of portraits of bishop theologians. We (i.e. Gregory) picked out some of the Greek names of the hierarchs, but I cannot remember them.

Behind the Emperor's Gallery, are two commemorative portraits. The first showing the Empress Irene with flaming red hair (she was probably Hungarian) and her husband John II Comenus, mid-1100s. She holds a diploma granting a bequest to the church, while her husband holds a bag of money for the same purpose. Closer to the arch opening onto the apse is the portrait of the Empress Zoe, and her third husband Constantine Monomachus, which is earlier, I think. You can see where the emperor's face has been scraped off and redone, perhaps twice, as the empress twice remarried. I think the best view of the apse Virgin is through the arch next to this portrait. On the way out we stopped to "admire" the graffito on the balustrade of the Emperor's Box: some Norse member of the Varangian guard scratched his name into the marble: "Halfdan [was here.]" We spent some time in the north gallery, trying to find the portrait of the emperor Alexander (who was apparently a worthless drunk and ruled just over a year), but failed to find it. Perhaps it is hidden up in one of the unlighted squinches above the arcade. The view of the Archangel (Michael, I think) flanking the apse, that can be viewed from this arcade near at the east end was, for me, just about the most awe-inspiring work in the building.



"Halfdan was here."

Downstairs we passed out through the south side, past the baptistry (with the marvelous font—now sitting above ground, thank you, long-dead sultan), and under the Justinianic dedication portrait. This, for composition, is one of my favorites. Constantine and Justinian offering the building to Christ in majesty. We had to smile

Dedication Mosaic with Justinian and Constantine

that the first view of it was in a large mirror set up so that those exiting can see what was behind them.

Now out into the RAIN! I had been afraid of this, and so it happened. And we didn't even wear coats or jackets, so pleasant was it when he went out after breakfast. So we duck into a restaurant for a noon tea to warm up. I suggested Salup, a tea made from an endangered orchid that is one of the things on a list of 26 foods you need to try in Turkey. Tasty and unlike anything I have ever had. A bit sweet and viscous. I liked it; Reginald and Gregory were less than enthusiastic.

Out in the rain, again. Crossing the square, there appeared a friendly, helpful Turkish fellow, who promised to get us to the Hippodrome amidst the rain. But first a quick drop off at the Blue Mosque. Cold rain, wet. Nice to get inside, even if you had to take off the shoes and put them into a plastic baggies. After Hagia Sophia, this was something of a disappointment. It is obvious that mosque architecture, at least when it is on a five-dome plan, is wholly derivative from Byzantine models. The blue tile in the main dome was nice, but the building was noisy and busy. Behind a barricade set up for tourist control, a handful of Muslims

The Blue Mosque in the Rain

were wandering about, some praying. On our side, tourists chatted, and groups of Turkish vsitors sat on the floor. At least we were out of the rain.

The next destination, with our friend in the lead, was the Museum of the Mosaics of the Imperial Palace, another suggestion of the Roses. These are the secular floor mosaics of the now destroyed imperial palace going back to the time of Justinian in the 500s. They are in a remarkable state of conservation. I especially liked the geometrical and floral interlace boarders. The decorative program, however, left me unmoved, save the craftsmanship. It seems that the favorite decorative motif was some animal, wild or domestic, being attacked or gored by some other, more vicious, animal. Add an occasional human getting bitten or stabbed (yes, there are some war or gladiatorial scenes) and there you have it. I guess the rabbit serving as lunch for a pack of hounds was nice, certainly bloody. Enough to give you a bad dream. But then Procopius in the *Secret History* says that the emperor Justinian was occasionally seen wandering the palace at night without his head. So I guess the program fits, in its own way, with the spirit of the place.

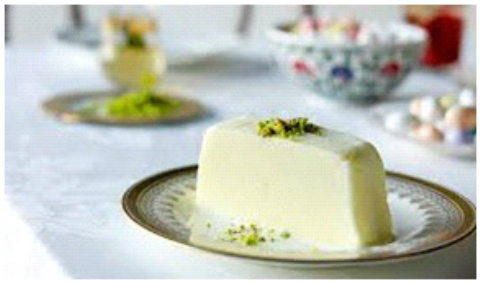
Rug Shopping in Istanbul

Outside, our "friend" recaptured us and we headed for the Hippodrome. Rain coming harder. He hurried us into—yes—a rug shop belonging to his brother. So, after Gregory admitted he was interested in a rug for a new American friar coming to the Dominican Bible School in Jerusalem, we were struck for about an hour. The owner and his minions brought out and unrolled rug after rug. This one from Anatolia, this one from Myra, this one from Armenia, etc., etc. This one 150 years old, this one 350 years old, this one . . . I liked a green one with a kind of entwined floral pattern. Gregory was taken by a similar one in red. We all laughed at one with a cartoon-like stag's head: and came close to offending the owner. Finally, Gregory agreed to buy one that could be folded up small and brought as carry-on luggage back to Jerusalem. Thus avoiding the Israeli customs nightmare. I thought the price a bit high, but we soon discovered that Gregory HATES to haggle.

We then fled: the owner gave Gregory and Reginald cheap umbrellas (to be returned later). Reginald was kind enough to let me share his as Gregory ("Homing-Pigeon") Tatum got us back to the Hotel and a well-deserved nap.

Then DINNER! The hotel has set up reservations and transport to what turned out to be one of the high points of the stay in Istanbul; the "Surplus Restaurant and Kabop," which faces the medieval Galata Tower and the Golden Horn. Splendid view. Even more splendid Martinis (properly made, large, and cold). And a mass of various dips and olives to nosh on. I chose wisely from my 26 foods to try: "Iskander Kabop." Slices of meat with tomatoes and peppers in a rich sauce served over a layer of cubed bread. And over the whole: a ladle-full of melted butter. Be still my Norwegian heart! Wow. Gregory and Reginald would each have this over the next two nights. The waiters (three of them) hovered, awaiting our requests and needs . . . but not always refilling Gregory's water on time. By the time desert came, the question was "Can we?" Yes! We had to find out what "Cut Ice Cream Maras Style" was. It turned out to be a very dense, luxurious, ice cream made from goat's milk. The "cut" was short for "you have to cut it with a knife." And you did. We had it over a kind of thin pastry. Heavenly. They then packed us into the van for the hotel and we rolled home . . . Sleep came quickly and I think I slept off most of my jet lag.

View of the Golden Horn from Surplus Restaurant and Kabop



"Cut Ice Cream Maras Style"

DAY 5: January 8—Istanbul II

The second full day in Istanbul. This day was to be the "Field Trip" to the mosaics in the churches of the Faith quarter, the north-east part of the old city, a rather working-class area and very, very Islamic observant. It was also Friday, the day

of Muslim prayers. After the usual satisfying breakfast at Celul Sultan, they called us a taxi to take us to the Church of the Chora (*Karie Cami*), with its mosaics commissioned by Theodore Metachites in the period 1305–1315. The taxi driver was determined to follow us around all day and be our driver. "NO" is not a word in the Turkish language. Finally, Gregory went back to the parked taxi and explained he would not see us again. He was still sitting there when we went around the corner to the entrance to the Church, which is high Byzantine, but most famous for the narthex mosaics—the reason we were there. The driver probably expected us back in 15 minutes, but we stayed three hours. The entire building is covered by a kind of protective roof cover and elaborate scaffolding. Makes the exterior esthetic hard to read. The main body of the church is designed in the typical high Byzantine fashion to be a model of the Cosmos. But we were unable to view this, or the famous Dormition ("Death") of the Virgin mosic just inside the door of the nave, because of a restoration.

The Narthex of the Chuch of the Chora

The major mosaics programs are in the inner and outer narthex. With Gregory and his handy Kindle guide book we traced the narratives of the Life of the Virgin (beginning with the courtship of Joachim and Ann), the Birth of Christ, and finally the works of Christ. We started with the two domes of the inner narthex showing Christ in a lunette at the top surrounded by his ancestors according to the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. These were the first Pantocrator ("Ruler of All") domes that we saw, and, although small, I was overwhelmed. The mosaic narratives were vivid, lively in color, and reminded me very much of the similar programs in the Arena Chapel in Padova. The building is small, so even the programs in the pendentives below the domes seem very close, close enough to touch (if you are about 10 foot tall). There was a lot of turning, twisting, and back tracking to find the next installment of each story, and I soon developed "Ravenna Cramp" in my neck. But for art, one must suffer. The two most striking monuments for me where the image of Joachim and Ann with the Baby Mary, the Birth of Christ, and the dedication portrait over the inner narthex door to the nave showing Theodore (with his huge Byzantine court hat) offering the Church to Christ in majesty flanked by the

Virgin. Almost a Deësis without John. Other wall mosaic icons of saints decorated the arches of the ceiling vaults of both narthex, but I only remember St. John Chrysostom. So many saints, so little time.

On the south side of the church is the Parecclesion chapel with frescoes on themes of death, judgment, and intercessory prayer for the dead. The famous fresco of Christ harrowing hell and raising Adam and Eve stopped me in my tracks for some 20 minutes. We (I mean mostly Gregory) spent some time decoding the inscriptions on the frescoes. The last judgment theme is what I remember most after the Harrowing of Hell. In the little bookshop, Gregory offered to buy me a new academic book with fine pictures of the mosaics. I begged off, not wanting him to pay for something that I would have trouble fitting in my luggage. Good thing: he later found that depending on where you buy it, it costs between 300 and 500 dollars. Yikes!

The Fresco of the Harrowing of Hell

Newly Restored Palace of the Prophyrogenitus

Outside we hiked up the hill (not far) to the great land walls of Constantinople. Our destination was the so-called "Palace of the Porphyrogenitus," which is of uncertain date and shown in the guide-books as a single free standing wall with windows. A ruin. Back and forth, up and down. No luck. Horrible map with only part of the streets. Horrible streets, most with no signs. Finally getting off in nowhere, we did our fake Turkish, hand-waving, imitation of a tourist and got clear directions

(pointing and a pantomime of "not far") back up the street. And there it was: no longer a ruin, but a whole rebuilt building with glass windows and a roof. Lovely, but not at all like the guide. Obviously it was being turned into a music hall or other public structure. And some ratty houses had been raised in front to make a park-like area. Always something new in the Old City.

The Pammakaristos Church

So began the next hike, over to the Pammakaristos Church, the "Church of the Most Blessed Virgin." Or as the guidebook translated it the "Church of the Very, Very Happy Virgin." It is now known as *Fetiyeh Cami*, "Victory Mosque," because some long-dead sultan seized it from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate (which had moved there after some other sultans had confiscated the Church of the Apostles and then the Church of the Cora, the previous Patriarchate cathedrals). Along the way we discovered that not all Turks like the "Call to Prayer." As a loud speaker began to provide noise pollution, someone in a café across the street cranked up the volume of the Turkish pop music they had on and it drowned out the yodeling. My, my. The church itself was mutilated by knocking out the interior walls, defacing the mosaics, and putting in rugs. It was in use for Muslim prayers, and an officious teenager warned Gregory off when he tried to peek in. Fortunately, the Parecclesion Chapel on the south side of the church was only partially defaced. These mid-fourteenth-century frescos were among the finest we saw in Constantinople. The church was also without any restoration scaffolding or coverings so we could see the elegant lines of the building.

The mosaics of the Pammakaristos center on a Christ Pantocrator in the apse, which was among the most moving images so far for me, perhaps because is is so close to the viewer, and the expression of the face is so subtle and plastic. Icons of holy monks and doctors decorate the arches of the domes and we had fun identifying them from the some-times only partially preserved inscriptions: John Chrysostom, Athanasius, Cyril, both Gregories, and Basil. Reginald was very pleased that he could decipher the Greek inscription on one, St. John Climacus, which neither Gregory nor

I could make out. I don't remember the monks as they were not household names for me. Gregory quickly and easily translated the Greek dedication inscription, which is preserved on the north wall of the Parecclesion nave. It was now time for some tea, so we headed down the hill toward the Golden Horn, passing by the door of that crowed mosque, where Gregory had been so rudely rebuffed.

Down the warren of streets to find a café. First attempt: turned out to be a men's social club where older Turks are smoking and (it looked like) gambling. They didn't look friendly. Continue down the street. Nice place on the corner. Typical wonderful monoglot Turkish host. Three nice cups of tea and eclairs! All for 8 TL (about $1.60 total). Refreshed, we reached the park along the Golden Horn. Our goal is to see the nineteenth-century cast-iron Church of the Bulgars, a gift from the Austrians, fabricated in Vienna, and built after the Bulgarian Church broke with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and became independent in the 1800s. As we are approaching it, we are accosted by a friendly shoe-shine man who looked like a street person. "Help you find Church? Church closed. Patriarchate open. Me show." Cannot shake him. Finally, he appears to be ready to let us leave. But as he is walking off he dropped one of his shoe brushes. Gregory retrieved it and then ran after him to give it back. Overjoyed, he then insisted on shining my (water-damaged) shoes. Big mistake. Insists on shining everyone's shoes. Then declares: "Pay 120 TL!" That comes to over 11 dollars each for a hasty shine. Okay, I pay, and then he grabs an extra 20 TL note out of my hand; "Children at home!" Okay, I am learning: if a friendly Turk wants to help you, don't answer, just run the other way. Robert Christian later explained that the dropped brush is a common ploy. Well, now I have an experiential confirmation. After a glance at the frame of the Bulgar church (only the tower has its iron facing, nicely painted), we find a taxi and get home for, yes, that essential element of tourism, the late afternoon nap.

Shoe Shine in the Park . . .

That night back to "Surplus" for dinner. As we left for the restaurant, we saw the only refugees on our trip so far. A well-dressed couple (she in heels), with a baby

Traditional Turkish Pide

in a stroller, were on the sidewalk with a nice printed sign that said "Please help, Syrian Refugees." At the restaurant, we were greeted like long lost relatives by the charming young woman who is the maître d' (maitrêsse d'?). Another superb dinner. I had the Pide, a kind of Turkish pizza that was on my list of 26 foods you have to eat in Turkey. That evening we were given complementary dessert, including a kind of sweet morsel made of what seemed a root vegetable. It was not on the menu, and they wanted our opinion as to whether it should be. We said yes, but the "Cut Ice Cream" and pastry did outclass it, in our humble opinion. Again, the minivan service home to Celul Sultan. But this time, the desk clerk called me aside to give me a message that "Mr. Scalt" had called, and that it was important. I figured out this was "Scott." my nephew, and that the "important" must be my sister's health. He let me call the U.S. from the desk, and I got Scott. My sister had been moved to a rehab/hospice center. I then found his email to the same effect. After much consideration, we decided that I would check email each morning for email news (none yet, as of Jan. 13 when I write this) and call my sister each night (about 2 p.m. her time) to check in. I have done this every night since then, but that is not really part of this narrative. I admit that I did not sleep very well that night.

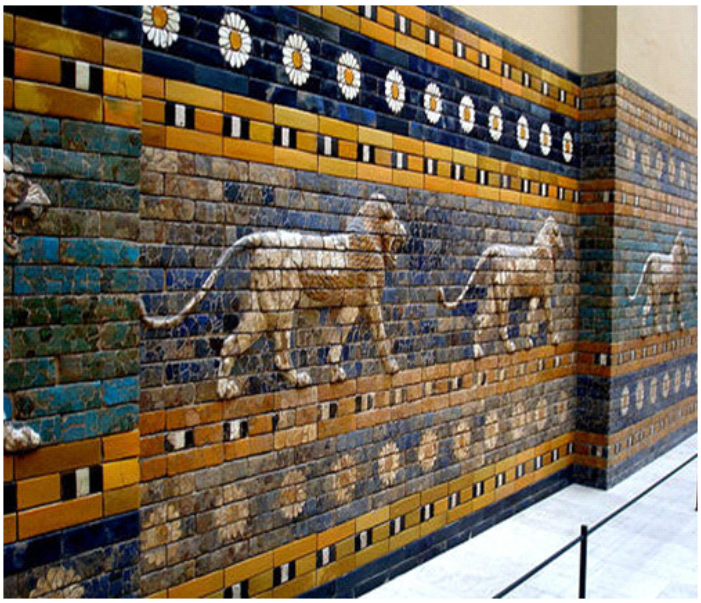
DAY 6: January 9—Istanbul III

Our third full day in Istanbul was to be a full one, visiting the Archeological Museum and the Topkapi Palace, both just around the corner from our hotel. So after we had the usual fortifying breakfast, we set off for the museums. We got there with minimum badgering to buy rugs or trinkets. Again, nice to have that five-day museum pass. Another day of bright sun and low 60s. Almost too nice to go inside. The museum is of moderate size (by my New York standards), but the collection was interesting. The focus is on the Istanbul area since the Greek archaic period. Gregory guided us through what my old friend Katherine Christensen would call the "Dead Bats and Potsherds Period." Real old. Lots of shards and other bits. Then through the equally "shardy" levels of the Troy excavations. Finally the more classical period. Lots, and I mean lots, of sarcophaguses. Many with exquisite carving. The most

The "Alexander" Sacrophagus

impressive (immense) is the so-called "Alexander Sarcophagus," which is not his, but I can see why someone made the mistake. This was no low-budget item. I only later realized that I probably walked by the two famous statue bases of the monuments by the Blues and the Greens to the legendary charioteer of the Hippodrome, Prophyrius. He was probably the best paid athlete of all time. Another reason to return to Istanbul.

After some fortifying tea in the garden of the museum, we took in the Ancient Near Eastern Museum. This was small, but had a remarkable collection of carvings and glass artifacts. The major monument, however, is the Ishtar Gate, enameled bricks from the ceremonial way in Babylon. The color and images (mostly lions and other wild beasts marching along) are quite striking, but the whole is less impressive than it must have been *in situ*, as these represent only a fragment of the whole. Out of the museum, we walked up the hill to the entrance of the Topkapi. Again, the wonderful museum pass! As we were going through the palace kitchens, the screw fell out of the bow on one side of Gregory's glasses. Fortunately, it was still in his glasses case. High anxiety set in, so he went off to find an oculist who would fix it. Reginald and I marshaled on through the palace of the sultans. I will take up Gregory's adventures after I finish the description of the Topkapi.

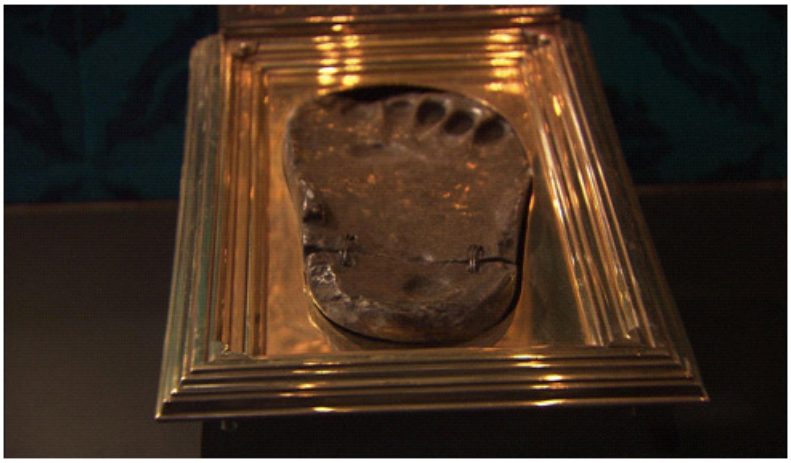


Fragments of the Ishtar Gate

Gate of the Topkapi Palace

We returned to the kitchens, where at one point meals for over 5000 bureaucrats and harem inmates were prepared daily. Interesting service wear, table cloths, nappies, and other kinds of dinning goods. But no knifes or forks, as these were not in use in the tradition-bound palace. We then visited the treasury, where most of the exhibit consisted of diamond-encrusted "orders" given to the sultans by various European potentates. I could understand the Order of the Garter and the Bath from England, the Order of St. Michael from the Tzar, and some miscellaneous French baubles. But what does one make of the Order of Saint Gregory from the Vatican, complete with cameo of Pope Pius IX? What did the sultan ever do for Catholics, anyway? Perhaps he gave the Franciscans some privilege at the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

Then into the former harem, were the "real stuff" is kept. This section was actually crowded, perhaps the only real crowds during the trip, and nearly all Muslims. They were there to see, among other things, Abraham's turban and his sauce pan (I am not joking), King David's sword (looked sixteenth-century to me), Moses's staff (one dead branch near the top), three swords belonging to Muhammad (also looked sixteenth-century), lots of hair from his beard (perhaps authentic), and even his footprint on a rock. When Reginald started laughing, I became nervous, but the other visitors were too intent on their devotions to notice. Then a walk about the pavilions



Islamic Relic: Muhammad's Footprint

and gardens overlooking the Bosporus and the Golden Horn. What a stunning view. The Byzantine emperors and the sultans knew that, in housing, location is everything. Wistfully we considered the café with tables overlooking the water and wondered if our earlier choice of tea in the museum garden was the right one.


The Bosphorus from the Topkapi Coffee Shop

Then off to the hotel, or at least that was what we expected. Having no internal homing device and having lost my landmarks about half way home (i.e., after about four blocks), we found ourselves lost. I was convinced that the further we went the further away we were from the hotel. Reginald insisted that we were very close, perhaps just around the corner. He was placid, but I went into panic mode. Finally, he let me hail a taxi and ask for lift to the hotel. The driver said "No far. No car needed." I explained that we were lost. In we go. After much round-abouting, including his assistant driver stopping to ask directions, we arrived home. Seven TL, and I don't think I have ever thought any better spent. The driver looked at us and said, "I love you!" And I returned the complement. Then off to NAP!

Meanwhile, Gregory had found an oculist, who fixed his glasses gratis. Love Turkish hospitality! And then he decided to get a Turkish haircut. Gregory goes high and tight, and I guess his (to me) short crew cut was getting shaggy. What follows is his report. Monoglot barber is found, and he goes to work. Meanwhile, wife appears and begins a manicure. Then comes electric massage of Gregory's calves (I guess the barber figured tourists walk a lot). Then comes a steam facial and some kind of skin treatment that involves wrapping up your face. The crowing glory was waxing: hot wax in the ears and hot wax on Q-tips up the nose. Ouch! But no more ear and nose hair. Then the various ointments and oils. I was not there, so this is probably only part of Gregory's adventure. All done with minimum of verbal communication. In the end, Gregory declared the surprise price reasonable. If I have problems with just getting lost in the neighborhood, I think sheer panic would have been my response when they started doing the hot wax job . . .

After our naps, again off to Surplus for dinner. Wonder where they got that name. Perhaps a Google translation of however you say "Something Extra" in

Turkish. Well, this our last dinner in Istanbul, had to be special. I got the acclaimed (by Gregory and Reginald) Lamb Kabob. Fine. Special dishes and treats seemed to just appear (but not on the bill), and finally, the staff circled the table and delivered flutes of complementary champagne. A wonderful way to say "Good Bye" to the City of Constantine.

DAY 7: January 10—Flight and Drive to Selçuk

Up early for Mass today. This day is our flight to Izmir and then the "transfer" to Selçuk (Ephesus). After a last breakfast at Celul Sultan Hotel, with a bit of melancholy, our van arrived to take us to the airport for the local flight to Izmir (ancient Smyrna). Our very helpful driver got us through the first security check, helped with the baggage fees, and pointed us to our gate. The flight left about an hour late, so we spent some time reading trash novels in the waiting area. Gregory napped. Then boarding: What a concept! The Turks have TWO agents taking your tickets as you board the plane. And they let you board through BOTH the front and rear doors. And they don't do the silly "privileged classes—all five kinds—first" nonsense of American carriers. So we were on board and ready to fly in one-fourth the time it takes in the U.S. The fight was short, only about an hour. This time the pick up was right outside after baggage area. Nice guy. The three hour ride from Izmir to Selçuk was peaceful, the scenery lovely. Gregory read us passages from a book on the excavations at Ephesus, and we enjoyed the scenery, open plain, framed by mountains. No snow, sun shining, temperature in the high 50s.

Izmir (Smyrna) Airport

In early afternoon we arrived at the Hitit ("Hittite") Hotel in Selçuk. This was a "four star," but in comparison to the Celul Sultan we seemed to be slumming.

The Hitit Hotel

The rooms were small but serviceable. Not much in the way of amenities, but I didn't find much to complain about, except for the banging and pounding in the room next door to Reginald where they were replacing the bathroom fixtures. While Gregory took a nap, Reginald and I went for a walk down the main drag of Selçuk, past the Ottoman castle: really medieval looking, on the top of a hill with what an Italian would call Guelph crenelations, but with the red Turkish flag proudly flying from the ramparts. We passed by the gate to get into the Church of St. John, but decided not to buy a ticket for this until Gregory was with us. So we wondered a ways on, past the Ephesus Museum.

Up the street a bit, we found the dirt road to the site of the Artemision, the Temple of the goddess Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Now it is just a muddy depression with broken marble slabs and column debris. To "give tourist an idea" someone had pieced together a single ramshackle column. But never fear, there was a friendly Turk ready to give us a tour for only 5 TL, and another trying to sell postcards and little statuettes of the Lady of the Ephesians. Sheesh, even in the drizzling rain. The drizzle stopped, so we took a leisurely hike back to the hotel to find Gregory for dinner.

The Artemision Today

The hotel restaurant was closed. Although some kind of event (a wedding reception?) seemed to be going on. We were directed to what looked like a kind of snackbar / fast-food place immediately next door to the hotel. We were the only patrons. Yes, this did not resemble the Surplus. Not a great selection. This was a kabob place. You could choose: chicken kabob, meatball kabob, sausage kabob, lamb kabob, with all the various kabobs also labeled in English, except for an undefined kabob that proved to be beef. Reginald and I had the local beer—not bad. I had the lamb kabob. Actually not bad. But my bean salad is best forgotten. My travel companions regretted their beef kabob. Tasteless and tough. Well, not every meal needs to be an occasion of sin. Right? Then, home to the hotel, and to a little planning for tomorrow's adventures, and rest.

DAY 8: January 11—Selçuk

Breakfast at the Hitit Hotel was a missed opportunity. The breakfast plates were ample, and the presentation was okay, but they arrived covered with cling wrap. As did the single brown hard-boiled egg in its holder. Coffee or tea had to be requested, no self-service. Had they taken the cling off, it might have been attractive. But the selection (with black olives!) was satisfying, and the coffee (and tea) kept coming. After a short time, the taxi arrived to take us on the day's adventures. First, to the House of the Blessed Virgin Mary, high on the hills overlooking the valley. The taxi driver had decent English and explained that he hoped to move to Albany, N.Y., where he had a friend who had emigrated to the United States. The winding road up to the House provided spectacular views of Selçuk and the valley. This shrine dates to the 1800s when it was discovered after revelations to the German mystic St. Catherine Emmerich. On the spot she described, they found the foundations of an early Byzantine house. Local Christians had gathered there are on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, each year. So the house was rebuilt in a elegant Byzantine style, small as it is. Gregory made sure that we understood that the tradition of the Virgin dying in Jerusalem is older than that of her dying at Ephesus, but then perhaps she only lived here for a while and then returned to Jerusalem. These things are hidden in the mists of time. We spent some quiet time there and recited a decade of the Rosary for my sister's health and well-being.

The House of the Blessed Virgin, Ephesus

The taxi then delivered us to the upper (southern) gate of the Ephesus ruins. On entering, we saw first a gymnasium, probably second-century, if I remember correctly. The way out to the famous Magnesian Gate (and the Cave of the Seven Sleepers) was closed off. Another reason to visit again. Gregory serving as guide, we wandered about the Upper Agora, which is mostly a field with rubble on it, and which post-dates St. Paul's visit. It faces an elegant small theater, the odeon, which served for music and meetings of the "Boule" or city council. I found this compact structure

among the most suggestive of those in Ephesus. Down the "Street of the Curetes" (that is youths who ritually banged spears on shields during a ceremony in honor of Artemis), we passed numerous, usually reconstructed, monuments to various first- and second-century emperors and local notables. Gregory deciphered many of the Greek ones, I was relieved to find one, dedicated to Trajan, in Latin that I could read. It was interesting to see that the name of the donor was effaced, probably because of *damnatio memoriae* ("cursing of memory") for some delinquency. After turning down the wide and splendid "Marble Street," we came to the "Houses on the Slope," a group of upper crust dwellings only excavated in the last 15 years or so. And worth every penny of their extra entrance charge.

Street of the Curetes, Ephesus

Ceiling Frescoes in the "Basilica Room"

These first-century condos had amazing mosaic and marble floors and a good number of intact wall frescoes, mostly white with geometric frames and images of birds. But one room had portraits of philosophers. We climbed up the hill from one condo to the next on modern metal stairs and walkways that gave excellent views. One really got the sense of how the Roman "one percent" lived. This was especially the case in the "Basilica Room" of what I think was Condo Unit 7. This was a small church-sized room with an apse in the back for the *pezzo grosso* (big guy) to sit in and receive his clients. I found the geometric and decorative floor mosaics fresh and lovely. Perhaps we can get some of them moved to the refectory at St. Albert's, where

the floor needs work. Coming down the side of these excavations, which are covered by protective roofing, we came out through the "Trajan Gate," which is monumental and ceremonial, rather than practical. This opened onto the Marble Way for its descent past the (enormous) theater and the Lower Agora.

Library of Celsus and Another Trajan Gate

But before that, we stopped to visit what is probably the most famous structure in the whole complex, the Library of Celsus. This was apparently the third most important library of the Roman imperial period, second to third centuries. This Celsus was not the philosopher whose attack on Christianity was refuted by Origin, but a fabulously wealthy Roman senator who was one of the patrons of Ephesus. It was his "gift" to the city and is his tomb. The three-story structure of the reconstructed facade is similar to the proscenium of a classical theater, with various levels set off by columns. Flanking the three doors (much like those of a church) are statues representing, if I remember correctly, the "Virtue (*arete*) of Clesus," the "Wisdom (*sophia*) of Celsus," the Knowledge (*episteme*) of Celsus, and (I think) the "Prudence (*sophrosyne*) of Celsus." I finally got a chance to "out-Greek" Gregory! When I asked what "Kelsou" meant in these inscriptions, he was at a loss. But then I got it: the genitive, that is the possessive, of "Celsos." Yippie! After scouting this monument and another monumental gate (again in honor, I think, of Trajan), we went into the Lower Agora. Gregory had to run off to tend to nature.

Reginald and I took our time circling the Lower Agora, where St. Paul would have preached, checking out the remains of the shops. Nothing out for sale, so Reginald was not distracted. Sadly, the way to the former temple of Sarapis, the healing god, which had been redone as a church after Constantine, was blocked off. So we took our leisurely stroll down Memory, I mean Marble, Lane. We viewed the mammoth theater and the gymnasium of the theater (less impressive) and met up again with Gregory, who had also taken care of his dehydration. We took the equally wide and impressive street down toward what was in the first century an artificially mantained harbor (not open to visits). This is where St. Paul would have come into town. The last major monument to visit was the "Counciliar Church." Traditionally

The Theater of Ephesus

identified as the Church where the Council of Ephesus met in A.D. 430; it is now known to be more recent, late-fifth-century. It seems the Council actually met in the stoa (market meeting place) that was later transformed into this church. The current form of the church is early Byzantine: the original basilica is truncated about half way down the nave, where a cruciform module was created in the early Byzantine period. So the structure has an apse, a basilica nave, transmuting into a domed nave with domed transepts, and finally a grand atrium, high above the harbor, supported by towering retaining walls. Off to the north side of the nave are the clear remains of the baptistry, with a (much too small) reconstructed font. Sitting in the apse at the site of the cathedra gives a powerful sense of what it was like for a bishop to "preside," especially since the columns of the open chancel screen have been reconstructed.

After a refreshing tea, we took a longer than expected walk down out of the excavations to the road leading past the Artemision to the museum. It was a lovely day for a walk, sunny and cool, but the minor highway going into town was not the best place to stroll. After a short stop for Gregory to see the Artemision mud pit, we reached the museum and ICE CREAM! This is a small museum, but the artifacts are very rich. There was much very high quality Greco-Roman carving and sculpture. I was especially impressed by a bust of Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher emperor that was mirror-like in its polish and might have been carved yesterday. Gregory and Reginald were taken with the numerous images of Priapus. There were also a huge number of votive and household objects. Among them, a silver spindle for thread that I would have called an art object, not a domestic tool. Finally, there are the two great cult figures of "Diana of the Ephesians." Pretty odd, even if famous. The archaic aspect is obvious in the rigid tapered torso and legs.

Diana of the Ephesians

The cultic element in the bull's scrota, which used to be thought multiple breasts, hanging off the upper body. Now we know they are votive offerings to the goddess after sacrifices.


Tomb of Saint John the Evangelist

At about 4 p.m., we caucused, and it was the consensus that a taxi was better than hiking the two miles home to the hotel. This let us stop off at the tomb of St. John the Apostle and gave a chance to see the ruins of the fifth-century church. Mostly just walls, and those mostly broken down, but the sanctuary area has a marble slab over the tomb, which is clearly in a crypt below the ground. We found a narrow stair to the crypt, but it was locked off by an iron grating. In a taxi, two miles is over like nothing, so there was 30 minutes to clean up and then off to the snack-bar / restaurant. All three of us played it safe and got the lamb kabob. With the six or so miles of walking today, sleep came pretty quickly.

DAY 9: January 12—Drive to Pammukalle


On the Road to Pammukalle

Today was another travel day. This time from Selçuk to Pammukalle, which is way out in the country, the real boonies. After another standard cling-wrap covered breakfast, we were out waiting for the van pick up at 10 a.m. The van arrives and says they are here to take us to the airport. Nay! A series of phone calls in agitated Turkish clear that up, and our driver, whose name means "Happy" in Turkish (Simhi, I think, was the Turkish form) was a bit surprised to hear that he had a four-hour drive today, not just a 20-minute trip to the airport. And so were are off, enjoying the cool air and the sunshine. The trip was uneventful. The mountains got more and more impressive as we went inland and

upland. We were in and out of a couple of towns, one involving a convoluted detour, and it was obvious that this area, while rich agricultural land and very green, was not a clean modern shinny city like Istanbul. Some of the farmhouses were even a bit run down. And weaving between the chickens on the roads in the little towns on the way up to Pammukalle was a cute change of pace. Passing through Pammukalle, we got a very good view of the famous white calcium deposits on the sides of the mountains around the city. Turkey's version of the "White Cliffs of Dover."

Finally, we arrive a the Colossae Thermal Hotel, which is very fancy and has its five stars under its name over the door into the lobby. Thank goodness that Happy was with us. It at first seemed like no one in the hotel spoke English, French, Italian, or German. But after checking in, a helpful young woman arrived who took care of internet codes, explained services, etc. The rooms here are the largest we have had, and the bathrooms are palatial. But there are lots of oddities. In this five-star, you get a coffee pot, but you pay extra to get instant coffee. There is internet, but I quickly found out the it does not work most of the time. There are a good number of tourists, but nearly all are Japanese or Korean. Gregory needed a little nap, so Reginald and I walked down the hill about a mile and a half to the upper gate of the ruins here, the ancient city of Hierapolis. What we could see was the road into the site that goes for about a mile, with tombs dating from 300 B.C. to A.D. 400 on both sides for the whole mile. Very great variety, but we didn't pay the entrance fee, so we just gazed down the route. More on the ruins later. Then a nice walk back to the hotel, again with sunny skies and high fifties. Just in time for a short clean up and down time before checking out the offerings for dinner.

The Colossae Thermal Hotel

Dinner, a buffet, was a real disappointment. No kabob here. The meat choices were dried out chicken and "meat" floating in brown water. There was a pasta with unidentifiable sauce. The huge salad bar was probably the best part of the meal. I skipped the desert choices: cornmeal with Karo syrup, shredded wheat with Karo syrup, gelatinized almond milk without Karo syrup, and (I am told by Gregory) tasteless pastries. Big disappointment. On the other hand we had a chance to teach the bartender whow to make a Martini. As one often finds, here and in Italy, "Martini" means vermouth, usually red and sweet. Also got his views on the terrorist attack in

Istanbul, which happened this morning: "Other countries have to do something about this."

I spent the evening planning our trips to the ruins and excavations at Aphrodisias, Hierapolis, and Laodicea over the next couple of days, and then arranging transport with the hotel desk staff. All seemed to be fitting together, so I turned headed to my room at 8 p.m. Rain scheduled for tomorrow, so we planned a quiet day in the hotel. I then settled down in my room to write up this journal, something I had been postponing far too long. I am now finishing it to this point, just before going to bed at 9:30 or so. But my quiet day was only the tip of the iceberg of events to come.

DAY 10: January 13—Pammukalle

Breakfast Buffet at the Colossae Thermal Hotel

Up for Mass at 8:30 and then down to the buffet breakfast. An improvement over the saran-wrap plates in Selçuk. A man was there to make omelets to order, Gregory's choice. I had fruit, bread, butter, and (yes, I kid you not) honey in the comb. All the coffee or tea you can drink. Sure beat the dinner last night! Gregory spent the morning in the spa. He did the hot thermal bath, the tepid thermal bath, and the super hot Jacuzzi bath. Then a cold shower. For all of which he had to prepare for by spending 50 dollars on a bathing suit. Afterwards, he had scheduled a pedicure: complete with sanding off his callouses using a new power sander. Then, in the afternoon, he and Reginald did the mud facial treatment. They looked relaxed and clean when I met them for dinks before dinner.

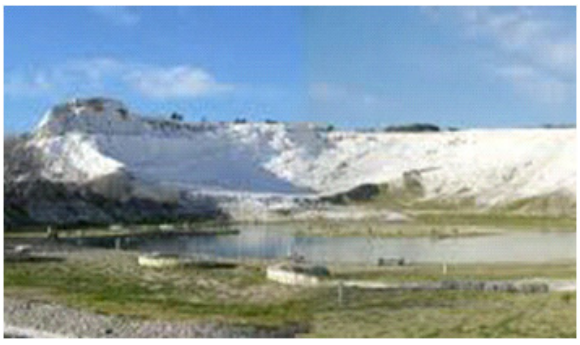
But not before disaster struck. For reasons I don't understand, the tourist agency called direct to Gregory's room and asked for me. He came and rang my doorbell (yes these rooms have doorbells), and I got the phone. Well, it seems, I am told, that the weather for next Monday is forecast to be so bad that the ferry to the Island of Rhodes, Greece, is going to be cancelled. According to "Weather.com" the forecaste is "some showers." I suspect the real problem is that there were not enough

reservations to make the trip worthwhile for the ferry company.

In any case, after international calls back and forth from Gregory's room phone and then from the lobby phone, the result is that we have to leave for Marmaris on the coast tomorrow afternoon at three. Then, onto the ferry the next day. So suddenly we have four extra days in Athens, but no more in Turkey. Reginald thinks Athens worth perhaps two days max. Sheesh. So I decided to take an extra day in Rhodes and then we delayed flight to Athens by a day. What we will do with the extra time in Athens we shall see. Apparently it was "impossible" to re-book all the reservations already made for Greece and take advantage of the extra days. Well, after some fretting and fussing to myself, I let fate take its course. So tomorrow, after Hierapolis, the nearest archeological site, just down the road, we will be off on the three-hour van trip to Marmaris. I hope I get a decent night's sleep after all the touristic run-around this evening.

DAY 11: January 14—Drive to Marmaris

Due to the cancelled ferry, this is our transit day to Marmaris where we will stay over night and get the earlier ferry to Rhodes. I guess they put lots of credit in long-term weather forecasts here. We could have waited until the next ferry, on January 20, but they could not promise it would run. I guess better safe than sorry. Still, we could at least visit one archeological site before leaving, Hieropolis here in Pammukalle. A driver arrived and we asked (with a little language help from the desk clerk) that he stop at a pharmacy on the way to the ruins. Gregory and Reginald were both under the weather with allergies and minor colds. In town, we realized that we didn't know the Turkish word for "antihistamines." I suggested "Sudafed." In any case, the result was what I was expecting from my experiences in Italy: antihistamine is a prescription drug in Turkey. Perhaps we will be able to find it in "duty free" at the port . . .


Calcium Deposits at Hierapolis

On the way to the Hierapolis ruins, we got a splendid view of the calcium deposits on the side of the hill where the ancient city was. They are truly amazing and look like snow. From above, the water flows over them creating blue pools on the white deposits. Gregory explained that formations like this were considered a sign of divine presence by the ancient Greeks, and it is the reason that Hierapolis ("the Holy City") was built here. In the parking lot,

we asked the driver to return for us at 2 o'clock, so we had almost four hours to visit the ruins. As we were entering the area, a Japanese group passed with a local tour guide speaking in English. He explained that they were about to enter the archeological area through "the Roman gate that was built to stop the Persians." Head scratching all around. Sure looked Byzantine (sixth-century) to me. Sure enough, that was what the sign said. Best to get guides that can read the information signs . . .

Temple of Apollo, Hierapolis

The ruins are concentrated in the center of the large site, so we spent most of our time just after entering walking among the paths and gardens that are on top of the calcium deposits. Finally, we got to the museum (an extra 5 TL, $2, charge). The exhibits were mostly broken sculptures from the Greek and Roman periods, some had clearly been of high quality and expense, especially some of the sarcophaguses. There are a lot of tomb remains in the "necropolis," or cemetery area, which is over a mile long. We did not visit it, but contented ourselves with what was in the museum.

After a little refreshment at the stand outside the museum, we headed off to the most important part of the ruins, the Temple of Apollo and the theater. But not before by passing the "ancient bath" where, for about $12, you can float around in the calcium water (not today). Outside was a twelve-foot high metal rooster, brightly painted. What on earth? More on that later. As we were hiking up the hill, we realized that we were on the route to the top of the hill, the "Martyrion of St. Phillip," that is his site of martyrdom and his tomb. It would be easier to se ethe other

Road to the Martyrion of St. Philip

sites coming down the hill. This Phillip is probably the one from Act of the Apostles, called "the Evangelist," not the apostle who is named in the Gospels. He is recorded in Acts to have had four virgin daughters, each with the gift of prophecy. The hike up the hill turned into a real mountain climb as the "road," or better paved path, was built in the 500s, and the condition of the "paving" was not the best. Lots of broken pieces, up ended slabs, and steep, I mean really steep, steps. Finally, the "top." Well, not really, actually just the remains of the ancient church and the tomb. Mostly just some low walls, but the tomb itself was in excellent condition, a kind of little stone house in the north aisle of the basilica. They had reconstructed the chancel screen, and the effect was very suggestive.

The Tomb of Saint Philip the Evangelist

The Plutonium

After a rest, I hoofed it up another VERY steep stair to what Gregory thought was another cemetery. It was not: it was the remains of the huge church that marked the spot of the saint's martyrdom. It is star-shaped with eight transepts, and the remains of the choir area for the clergy remains in the middle. On the edges, are the low walls of the "incubation rooms," where pilgrims could sleep overnight praying for a vision of the saint or for a cure. After I explained this to Gregory and Reginald, they too did the mountain climbing thing up the steep stair. Even Reginald, whose knees felt all of their nearly 70 years, said it was worth it.

Down the hill, we passed the theater (huge and impressive) and the broken remains

The Pammukalle Rooster, Hierapolis

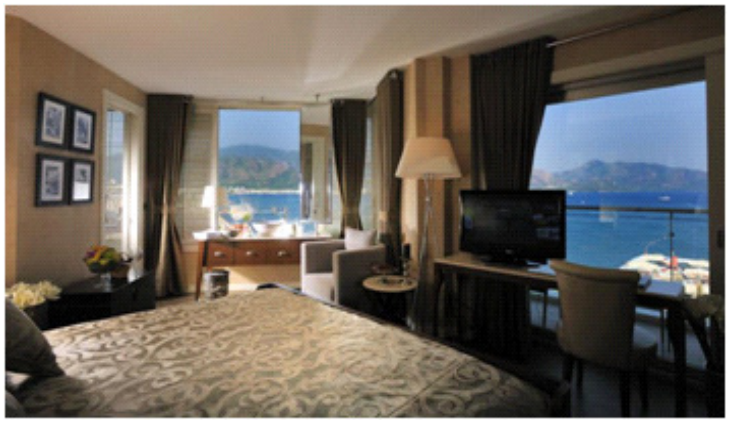
of the temple of Apollo, with the "Plutonium" next door. This was a decoratively framed shaft to a hole in the ground. In ancient times it emitted poisonous fumes, which killed the animals put down it as sacrifices. But the "sibyls" who gave the oracles could breath the fumes and get high. Then they gave messages in ecstatic speech. Reginald took a few sniffs and said, "Nothing here, move on." I thought it a suitable oracle as the day was getting late.

Back at the hotel, after some confusion about the driver, we headed off on the four-hour drive to Marmaris, but not before a series of confusing backtracks and stops for the driver to get some kind of papers he needed. Then, finally on the road. Passing through a city (I didn't get the name), we passed a public monument in the middle of a traffic circle: a giant steel painted roster. We later learned that this is the Pammukalle Roster, famous for its endless cock-a-doodle-do! It is the symbol of the district. The scenery was lovely. First, over hill passes linking one rich agricultural valley to the next. As we rose in altitude, it got a little less dry, and the hills were covered with a mixture of small trees. Then the hills became stony mountains. Finally we were on a very winding mountain road going through very high rough country. The driver seemed to have been trained as a racer: he cut every curve on the short side of the turn, sometimes weaving back and forth on the S-curves. But he had the sense not to try and pass slow-moving vehicles. Thank goodness.

The Road Down to Marmaris

The descent from the mountains to the coast had numerous switch-backs and

coming around one, the driver made a broad gesture: the sea! Like the ancient Greeks in Thucidides, we cried out "Thalassa, thalassa!" "The sea, the sea!" Marmaris proved to be a spectactularly beautiful, but busy, little town. Tucked into a bay surrounded by steep mountains dropping to the water. It reminded me of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington, or the Alaska Panhandle. We arrived at our hotel, which proved to be the most fancy of the entire trip so far. This was truly a five star in name and fact. The Elegance (pronounced by the Turks "elly-gan-say") was right on the beach. Each large room had a wide unobstructed view of the Bay of Marmaris, which faces west. And as we looked out we saw the sun setting over the Aegean Sea. It seemed we were the only ones there. When we came down for a drink at the bar: no bar-keep. Finally she arrived, but had to go to the store to buy ice. Then she needed a lesson on how to make Martinis. All's well, however, as they tasted fine. Dinner was included in the bill, and was a sit-down with seven courses. My only disappointment was that nearly none of it was Turkish. Our last dinner in Turkey was to be "international" food. Reginald and I shared a bottle of local red wine with dinner, and then we all rolled off to bed early. The trip to the ferry and the crossing were to be early the next day.



Room at the Elegance Hotel, Marmaris

AN AEGEAN SKETCHBOOK

II. Greece

DAY 12: January 15—Ferry to the Island of Rhodes

The royal treatment by the Hotel Elegance continued the next morning. I walked into my bath barefoot and noticed that the floor was heated. Shower water pressure undescribable. Breakfast at Elegance was in the same dinning room as dinner, but the curtains were now open. The room looked directly onto the beach, giving a spectacular panorama of the bay, with the sun rising in the east, framed by the mountains that form the two peninsulas closing the harbor from the sea. I had gone down early to check out and pay my bills and found Reginald and Gregory eating breakfast. I had the best scrambled eggs on the trip so far and fresh fruit. The only thing missing was a side of bacon, not to be had in a Muslim country.

We quickly finished our meal and went to get the 7 a.m. transfer to the port to board the ferry to the Island of Rhodes, part of Greece. Our very generous and helpful driver stayed to make sure that me got through security (two screenings) and through passport control. He was really gracious. I have to admit, I was surprised when he praised Greek food as superior to Turkish. No chauvinism here! The ferry was small, and there were perhaps 60 people total on board, including the crew. The weather was simply splendid, sunny and in the high 50s. As we passed out of the harbor, Gregory and Reginald dozed off. I enjoyed the scenery. As we had seen on the trip down into Marmaris, the rocky mountains drop almost perpendicularly to the water. Some small villages hide in the bays between the promontories. After clearing the

Marmaris-Rhodes Ferry Ticket Office

estuary of the harbor, we had a clear view of Rhodes. I had not realized how close the island is to the Turkish coast, perhaps 30 miles.

The Entrance to Rhodes Harbor

The crossing was calm and serene. I went up on the observation deck and admired the views of the coast and the island. The crossing took about two hours. Reginald and Gregory came up to see the entrance into the harbor of Rhodes, which is framed by fortifications going back to the days of the Knights Hospitallers, now known as the Knights of Malta, for which Reginald is chaplain of the Western Region of the United States. After docking, the next project was to clear "customs" and passport control. It took nearly an hour for the twenty non-Greek nationals to get though the screening. The agent spent 10 minutes on Gregory alone, scrutinizing his passport with all his exit and entry stamps. Clearly a possible terrorist. Welcome to Greece. A transfer was waiting to take us to our hotel, the Mediterranean.

Again, a claim of five stars, but what a come down from the Elegance in Marmaris, Turkey! Nice rooms, but facing directly south. After a day of bright sun, I found myself in a stifling hot room, without any cross ventilation, even with the balcony sliding door open. Nice view of a car rental shop below. I went and explained that the rooms were roasting hot, and that it would be silly to turn on the air conditioning in the middle of winter. Oh, yes, after a long phone call, the clerk said he could give me an alternative room. I went to check it out. Half


The Mediterranean Hotel, Rhodes

the size, still facing south (but partly shaded by another wing of the building), facing a noisy courtyard with trucks blowing horns and doing deliveries. And only a couple of degrees cooler. Looking at the floor plan of the building, it was clear that this "improvement" meant moving to the worst rooms in the hotel. This, when the hotel seemed nearly empty, and any other room would but the ones offered would have faced north: but they would then have a "sea view." Heaven forbid they give that view to people who booked a cheaper room. Reconciled to fate again.

The Bank of Greece, Rhodes City

After settling in, we went off to change money and get some Euros. First stop was a small bank, perhaps a saving and loan, in the commercial district as suggested by the desk clerk as a place to change money. "No, we don't do exchange for foreigners, go down the street to another bank." Fifteen minutes on line there: "No, go to the other line." At the correct counter: "No, we don't change Turkish lira, we will only change American dollars for you." Gregory, who was trying to get the money changed, marched off to the Bank of Greece. Reginald and I trudged home. Later we learned that at the Bank of Greece, Gregory found no line at the exchange window and a clerk doing nothing. "Can you change Turkish lira?" "Yes, but not now, because it is after 12 noon. Come back on Monday." So much for getting money to spend in this country. Meanwhile, Reginald and I decided to take a walk around the walls of the Old City, in what was once the moat. Beautiful park, but we soon discovered that it is not easy to get out of a moat. After a half-hour hike, we found a gate to

The Moat of the Old City of Rhodes

City Gate above the Moat

which we could ascend by a narrow stair. Inside the walls of the Old City we found a warren of picturesque tiny streets. Soon we were lost. Finally we found our way out of the city through a gate near the Palace of the Masters of the Order of Malta. We were back to the hotel in time for a short rest.

Dinner continued the disappointments. Like the previous two hotels, dinner was "included," but this time was served at our table, not buffet. No choices. The main course was a hamburger, yes, a hamburger, with french fries. I ate the soup (not bad, creamed carrot) and the one part of the meal that was actually Greek, a kind of braised vegetable medley. As I bit into the dry, cold, hamburger patty, I started to feel nauseated. I guess it was a combination of the day's stress and the unappetizing fare. I asked to be excused and went up to bed. So ended the day of our arrival in Greece.

DAY 13: January 16—Rhodes I

Rhodes smiled on us with a partly cloudy, pleasantly cool, day in the mid-50s. The Mediterranean Hotel had a surprisingly varied and interesting buffet breakfast. Reginald was especially complementary about the bacon. As in Turkey, Gregory set us to work learning how to say the two most important words for travelers. Hello in Greek was a delightful surprise after Turkish, I even understood what "Kalimera" meant: "a beautiful day [to you]." The word for "thank you," that is, "efcharisto," was a bit more opaque, but I did recognize "charis," which means "grace" or "kindness."

Palace of the Masters

Having already spent enough time in the moat the night before, we settled on a direct trip to visit the Palace of the Masters of the Order of Malta, a large imposing structure set into the walls of the old city near the main D'Amboise Gate, much restored, or perhaps better, much rebuilt, by Mussolini during the

1920s, when Rhodes was under Italian control. It was to be an impressive backdrop for visits by Il Duce or by King Victor Emmanuel, but neither of them ever visited. The palace has a large courtyard in the middle, which is impressive, if mostly empty, and, after paying for tickets, we mounted a steep stair to the main floor, passing a small chapel on the way up. It was obviously decommissioned, but still basically a Latin, not Greek, room. Gregory remarked on the anachronism of putting a chapel on what would have been the most likely place for fighting, if the Turks tried to rush the palace.

Room in the Palace with Ancient Mosaics

Travel guides usually take the trouble of saying something slighting about the "impersonal" quality of the "Fascist" architecture, but we all agreed that here it certainly outclassed the sterile "Futurist" architecture of the Fascist constructions in Rome. The rooms were heavy on what appeared to me to be nineteenth-century versions of baroque angels and archangels, often serving as holders for lighting fixtures. Nearly every room had a huge fire-place, none of which was in use. We all agreed that the most striking artistic elements were the ancient mosaic floors (some complete with the standard wild beasts eating less wild beasts) and the choir stalls that served to decorate the walls of many of the rooms. I personally preferred the geometric floor mosaics. We made the circuit of state rooms around the main floor, admiring the views of the city and courtyard from the windows. This would certainly have been a marvelous setting for displays of art or historical materials related to the knights, but the Order of Malta seemed strangely absent, except for some heraldic elements.

Leaving the Palace we wandered through the streets of the old city. To our surprise, there were no shops open and virtually no cafes or restaurants. It was obvious that the old city of Rhodes shuts down completely during the non-tourist season. There were, indeed, residents in the old city, but this was evident mostly from lights on in the houses or intermittent arrivals and departures on mopeds and motor scooters. Many of the side streets resembled for me the more suggestive alleys of Siena. Eventually we found our way to our destination: the ancient Hospital of the Knights, now a museum. This building began as a hospital, became a military storehouse under the Turks, then a post office under the Greeks, and finally, about

Hospital of the Knights

twenty years ago the principal museum in the old city. The museum is mostly dedicated to ancient sculpture and pottery. The sculture is mostly fragmentary or badly damaged. More interesting was the nicely displayed collection of ancient ceramics. We began to learn to recognize the changing styles from "geometric" (white with geometic designs), to "archaic" (white with painted figures and designs), to "black figure" (red pots with human figures in black), and finally "red figure" (black glaze with human figures in red). Gregory pointed out some examples that had well-known mythological themes. I was surprised to learn that these artifacts, like most from the pre-classical and classical period, are nearly all grave goods. This was a lesson I relearned several times during our time in Greece.

For me, the most interesting aspect of the building was the large "ward" for the sick, which had been left open and mostly empty, although there were placards and other materials from a temporary exhibit that was now closed. There was no artificial light in this (unused) space, and one could get an idea of what it would have been like when it was filled with beds or cots for the sick. There was a small apse-like alcove for an altar for daily Mass (now gone). Gregory noted that in the heyday of the knights the sick poor were royally treated, getting their meals served on silver plates. Along the sides of the hall were small "private" rooms about eight by twelve feet, entered from the hall through low doors. They were very dark, but Reginald and I did enter the gloom and allow our eyes to adjust. The little rooms seemed ample enough, but a window would have been nice. Sunlight coming in from the windows near the ceiling of the main hall illuminated one double room with two doors. Plain stone walls, floor, and ceiling. Before leaving the museum, we stopped for a break in what must be the

Hospital Courtyard

most grandiose restroom in Greece: cubicles in a huge barral vautled chamber, perhaps originally a great ancient storage room.

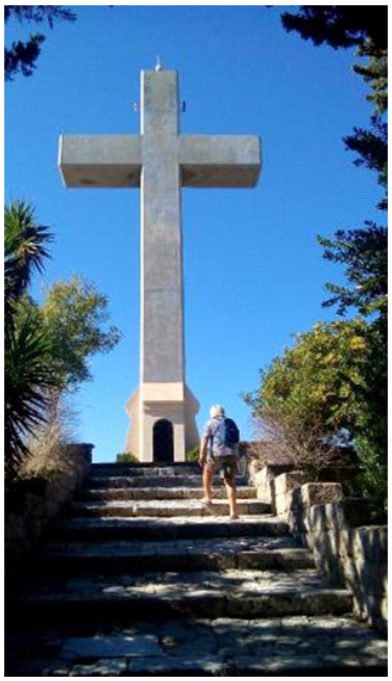
The Street of the Knights

Leaving the museum, we passed the (closed) Church of Mary, and took a walk up the "Street of the Knighs," so called for the well-preserved or well-rebuilt palaces of the knights' various language groups or "langues." The service of the city walls was divided up by national groups, and so the architecture of each section of wall is diverse, reflecting the culture of the group responsible for it. The largest and most impressive, with armorial shields decorated with fleur-des-lays, is that of the "Langue de France," since the early 1900s the offices of the French consul general. The Way is very suggestive of a medieval European street, but perhaps a bit too clean and a bit too Hollywoodish. As with the museum, we were alone, not another tourist (or local resident) in sight. Reginald remarked: "Don't you really hate these horrible crowds in peak season?"

Mount Filermos above Rhodes City

After relatively little hunting, we found our way back to the palace and the gate out of the city. Fortified by a snack at the one little place we found open (where the owner proudly told us that "locals eat here all year round" and "our dishes are all traditiona."), we took the little hike back to the Mediterranean, where Gregory retired for a nap. Reginald and I decided that since our time was short, we needed to see as many of the knights' monuments as possible. Above all, we needed to make a little pilgrimage to Our Lady of Filermos, on the hill outside the city. We hired a taxi and off we went. What a climb! The mount of Filermos has spectacular views of the straits and of Turkey, a mere thirty miles away. The desk clerk who called the taxi spoke enthusiastically of the monastery and the "cross." When we arrived, we found the monastery closed. It was after the 3 p.m., winter closing time, but I doubt the monastery is ever open in off-season. Then we were

quickly surrounded by—a flock of peafowl! Apperently they live off the offerings of tourists and day visitors. Very pretty, but very loud when vocalizing.


The Cross on Mount Filermos

The monastery looked very western and modern, for what you could see through the gate. It is: built by Mussolini for a community of Capuchins in the 1920s. Now, it seems, there is one Orthodox priest who lives there. There is supposed to be an authentic copy of the icon of Our Lady of Filermos in the church. The original, lost for a 150 years, is now in the national art museum of Montenegro. The Orthodox bishops there have even discussed returning it to the knights as an ecumenical gesture. The "cross" turned out to be a Way of the Cross, with 1920s modernist stations labeled in Italian. More work of Il Duce. We made the climb and found the cross, which is on the top of the mountain and affords splendid views. I was delighted that I could decipher the plaque in Greek, placed there by the local Lion's Club invoking God's help for bringing understanding between nations. After praying for the Western Regional Association of the Knights, we piled back into the taxi and set off the the ancient Acropolis of Rhodes. This proved much larger than expected, and also afforded a fine view. There were three and a half columns from the classical temple standing, and Reginald got his "column fix" for the day. The two of us enjoyed a drink on the hotel patio, watching the rough water and the light rain that had begun during our drive back. A nice rest after the day's hikes, but not as good as the naps that followed.


The Arcopolis of Rhodes

Dinner we took as part of our board in the hotel's cramped eating area. Uninspired food of "international" cuisine. I found the one "traditional" item on the menu, Moussaka, which was not memorable. The most vivid memory of dinner was a woman at a nearby table shouting into her cell phone in Greek. Gregory's evil eye had no effect. But Reginald, in an unusual fit of temper, yelled "shut up!" in German. That seemed to work.

DAY 14: January 17—Rhodes II

Today, our second day in Rhodes, was Sunday and we "slept in" and, after Mass, began with another excellent buffet breakfast. I though that the fried eggs were just about the best I have ever had. Reginald remained uninterested in them. We also had a pleasant alternative to the muezzins in Turkey: church bells, ringing on and off all morning from the various local churches. None was amplified, all "real." Today we had decided would be a day excursion to the second most famous site on Rhodes, the ancient citadel of Lindos. This was a 40 or so minute taxi ride down the coast, so we arrived in the modern little town at the base of the citadel at about 11 a.m. The ride down the coast was delightful, with ever changing views of the bays and promontories. The weather was fine: sunny and eventually in the low 60s. Our taxi driver was very friendly, pointing out geographical, architectural, and even industrial, points of interest. He was also very interested where we were from and what we had seen during our trip, especially after getting to Rhodes. He let us off at the little piazza before the modern town.

Arriving at Lindos

If Rhodes City seemed deserted, Lindos village was a ghost town. The streets were lined with shops, all closed and interspersed with "mansions," which are marked by their elaborate carved door frames. This projection of status goes back several centuries and continues still today. I noted one fine carved portico dated 1992. So we began the ascent through the alleys and narrow byways of the town, and headed for the top of the promontory where the ancient temple complex was. Along the way, we found one open place, the parish church. This building is typically Greek and early modern. The interior is frescoed from floor to ceiling with images of saints and biblical scenes, of eighteenth-century origin, but rather high quality. One could smell the incense from the morning Liturgy. The church was being guarded by a dour

Inside the Parish Church of Lindos

elderly woman, who scowled at us and followed us into the church. We made proper respectful gestures to the sanctuary and spent some time in prayer. She stayed with us, frowning and pursing her lips. Finally, she said to Gregory "open here." By which she meant "help me move this table." Gregory obliged and got a head bow in thanks. The frescos included a program of Eastern saints from ancient times till the modern period. My favorite was the image of St. Christopher with a dog's head: reflecting the ancient tradition what he was a member of the "cynochephaloi," the dog-head race from the antipodes.

We each expressed our appreciation by putting a small offering in the collection box at the door. Under the matron's careful gaze, I decided to make a real gesture of thanks by putting in a 10 Euro note. It got stuck in the slot, and our hostess pushed it through, scowling at me. So much for ecumenical relations. Then began the hike up the steep hill. Out of nowhere there appeared a scrawny light brown cat, who approached us, vocalized, and began to lead us up the hill, something like the reverse of Tobit's dog. Climb, climb, climb. On a paved path with no railing on the seaward side. You would never have seen this in the U.S.: an unprotected several-hundred-foot drop to the rocky beach. At the top, we paid our admission and entered. Our guard cat remained outside the inclosure.

Palace of the Hospitaler Governors

The acropolis is an interesting mixture and works by the ancient Greeks and the military order. The top is surrounded by an early modern crenelated wall, the result of the knights. The ancient propylaeon had been turned into a palace for the Hospitaller governor. We passed through the site gate and found more steps, the Sacred Way, to ascend. At the base was a finely carved relief showing the prow of a trireme, an votive gift in memory of the naval defeat of the Persians at the Battle of Salamis. The ancient remains have been carefully and modestly reconstructed. A series of monumental steps rose from a stoa to the podium of the temple dedicated to Athena. This was small, but on the top of this lofty craggy mountain very impressive. A windowless cella opened on the east and west to Doric porches. Sadly, and commonly, as I would find, the temple was fenced off by what I eventually called "you cannot go here ropes." There was no one around, but I didn't have the nerve to jump the rope (only about two feet above the ground). Later in the trip, I would become less law-abiding. We spent about 90 minutes on the summit, drinking in the 360 degree views up and down the coast, and hunting out the secrets of the ruins.

Temple of Athena, Lindos

Finally, we descended the "sacred way" to the site entrance, and there was our guard cat, who led us back down the steep path, occasionally vocalizing his concerns for our safety and warning of the precipitous drop off. Again, we passed through the vacant streets of the town, finding absolutely no sign of human life, except a second matron entering the church. We did not. Our friendly taxi driver continued signaling points of interest along the road, stopping for outlooks, asking about the U.S. and what we did for a living. When he found out that we were Catholic priests, he became silent for a spell and finally asked, "Oh, you're not married, right?" No, we said. Taking this in, he asked, "Are you aiming for higher office in the Church?" This made us laugh; he was obviously thinking on Orthodox terms, in which bishops are only chosen from among the monks and celibate parish priests. We assured him that we had no desire to be bishops. God forbid. This seemed to leave him a bit perplexed.

When we gathered for drinks before dinner, we found the whole bar and


Lindos Bay from the Highway back to Rhodes City

reception area of the hotel crowded with loud tourists, yelling and even singing in heavily accented English. Our consensus was that they were Dutch. Dinner was again part of our board, but served in the large dinning area where we normally had breakfast. I broke down and ordered "international," chicken cordon bleu. Okay, but the Greek soup was very good. The noise increased as the tourists poured in, and reached its height, so to speak, when one table broke out in an off-key version of "Happy Birthday" for one of the children. The waiter later apologized for the noise and explained that these were people stranded at the airport because of storms at their destination. We found little reason to linger over desert.

DAY 15: January 18—Flight to Athens

Today was our day to leave for Athens. We agreed at breakfast (again far superior to dinner) that a third day in Rhodes would have been very welcome. We packed, checked out, and gathered for our "transfer" at the time suggested by the desk clerk, 120 minutes before flight time. No transfer. Twenty minutes later we finally asked them to call a cab. We were later to learn that we had just missed the "transfer," and that the Homeric Tours representative at the hotel in Athens was not pleased. In any case, the trip to the airport was long enough for Gregory to read us the introductory section on Athens from his *Blue Guide*. The flight was quick and easy: the Greeks are not quite as efficient as the Turks when getting you into the plane (loading from front and back, but only one


The Waiting Area of Rhodes Airport

person checking tickets). Gregory got moved (we were in an exit row) and ended up to the front of the plane where he had a whole row to himself. In less than a hour, we were descending to the cradle of Western culture. This time the "transfer" was waiting for us with a large sign saying "William David Martin."

The Athens Gate Hotel

The ride into the city was very long and went through the periphery and a maze of city streets. These proved something of a let down. Dirty, noisy, and fronted by un-inspired modern buildings. And everything covered with ugly graffiti and spray paint tagging. On arriving at the Athens Gate Hotel, we were met by the agent of Homeric Tours, who provided mineral water and snacks. He gave us a long, detailed introduction to Athens and its sights in good but machine-gun-speed English. I have to admit that I had forgotten nearly everything he said by the time he finished. Reginald and Gregory retired to their rooms for naps, I to mine to try and plan out the projects and excursions of our Athens stay.

Refreshed, we took a walk around our neighborhood. The Athens Gate is right in the center of the historical section of Athens, overlooking the Roman Agora and the remains of the Temple of Zeus. We were only a few blocks from the entrance to the Acropolis. We walked over that way, passed the entrance to the Acropolis (closed at this hour) and circled around and up to a huge outcrop of rock, the famous Areopagus, as we would discover. At the base was a modern plaque with a long Greek inscription, which I immediately recognized as

The Areopagus

biblical (it ended with a reference to the resurrection), and which Gregory easily identified as Paul's sermon on the Areopagus. We then realized were we were. We did the climb, with Reginald grumbling all the way and clearly enjoying it. The top of this rock is very uneven and on all sides drops a couple hundred feet straight down. No railings, no fences, no security wire. Yikes! What a health hazard on a rainy day. It was hard to imagine what this peak was like in ancient times when the Areopagus (city council) meet here, and there was some kind of plaza where Paul could give a sermon.

We descended from the rock of the Hill of Ares and wandered through the Plaka area back to the hotel. The Plaka is a dense shopping district catering to tourists, and we got some laughs at the kitsch and soft-core porn tchachkes on sale. No one tried to sell us any rugs, but we did get invitations to buy things we did not want. On return to the hotel, we asked suggestions for places to eat, to supplement the list (as we could remember it) from the agent from Homeric. I did some internet research and the combined list seemed to have been crafted for tourist fare. Several fish places advertizing "Mediterranean cuisine," two with "live bands," several that proved to be very pricey "international cuisine." This left two restaurants, both seemingly not far away. Dionysiou, which seemed very expensive but boasted a view of the Acropolis, and Stofi, which seemed more traditional Greek, and also had a view. We set off through the dark streets with the aid of the hotel-provided map. Confusing alleys and much longer a walk than expected ensued. And no Stofi. Up and down, back and forth. Finally a helpful native pointed it out to me: closed.

Tourist Shops in the Plaka District

We ended up at Dionysiou, one block away. Stupendous view of the Acropolis. But a relatively uninspired menu. We didn't order full meals. I had Greek soup (very good), risotto (okay), and desert (chocolate souffle); Reginald and Gregory had lamb. It was my night to pay for dinner: just under $300 with tip. Yikes. We would learn that restaurant food in Athens is about twice the price of elsewhere in Greek, but this would be a record. Gregory flagged a taxi for the trip home, and we were all asleep before we knew it.

DAY 16: January 19—Athens I

Today, our first full day in Athens, began bright and early with Mass in my room. As our hotel rooms have no desks, and even the television is mounted on the wall, Mass was celebrated on the only available solid flat surface: a round end table about two and a half feet across. The cruets and lavabo were on the foot stool for the chair. We then took the elevator to the roof garden for the complementary breakfast. Wow, what a view! The hotel roof garden restaurant provides a 360-degree panorama of the city, although the serving area in the center means that you have to choose which 180 degrees you want. On one side is the Acropolis and the Parthenon, on the other is a view of the standing columns of the Temple of Zeus in the Roman Agora, a project started in the classical period, but only completed in the second century through the subventions of the emperor Hadrian, a committed Graecophile. The selection was excellent, one of the best so far. Reginald got all the bacon he could eat, Gregory had the scrambled eggs with sausage, I had eggs over easy and fresh toast with butter. It took a while to find the milk for the coffee (delivered to your table), but otherwise splendid.

The View from the Athens Gate Roof Restaurant

Fortified for our day of walking, we headed off to toward the Acropolis. Passing by the ascent to the Areopagus (we held Reginald back from running up the steep steps there for a second view), and began the less strenuous, but still serious, climb to the Propylaeon (columned entry way) to the Acropolis itself. Gregory explained the various elements of the structure, its progressive, ever more elaborate reconstructions in to the Roman period, and what was missing: the hundreds of votive and commemorative statues and monuments. What you are missing in the "modern" versions of ancient Greek ruins is the clutter of such trophies and self-commemorations. This lack is probably second only to the missing paint and polychrome on the now bleached white marble columns and lintels. Passing the fifty-

foot-high pedestal that was once crowned by a massive equestrian statue of some minor Asiatic monarch, we entered through the nicely restored court and five-doored portal to the sacred way leading across the top of the Acropolis. We were kept away from the ancient stones by "you cannot go there ropes." At one point we were close enough to reach out and touch them. Something one an Asian tourist made the mistake of doing. A guard descended on him immediately, yelling "No touch the marbles!"

The Propylaeon of the Arcopolis, Athens

I especially liked the view of the Propylaeon from the Acropolis side. The five door ways, framed by colonnades looked very much like, in overall form, the western doors one of the large Gothic cathedrals in France or Italy. On the Acropolis proper we found ourselves in the first tourist crowds of the trip. All Asian and, as far as I could tell, Chinese. They were in groups of about 40 or so, each with a guide giving long explanations of the monuments. The listeners were all very attentive. Each group was being escorted around the temples and also into the Parthenon itself. Since this space is strictly forbidden to plebeian tourists, this was a surprise. And it was clear that we could not tag along. Gregory smiled and remarked, "Sometimes it helps to be the child of a high Communist party official."

We, on the other hand, barred from the Sanctum, went off to find the Mycenaean period Cyclopean walls that are supposedly visible between the Parthenon and the lovely little temple of Athena Nike that is perched on an outcrop of rock jutting out from the Propylaeon. Unable to find these walls, I spent some time contemplating the Athena Nike. This was for me the perfect "victory" monument:

The Temple of Athena Nike

out in space, in your face, brilliant white from cleaning and restoration. Only the last quality would have been absent in Antiquity when colorful polychrome would have covered the columns and carved lintals with their trigliffs and metopes. The temple was remarkably like that at Lindos on Rhodes, and just as imposing. Which is amazing because of the monument's small size, at least in comparison to the Propylaeon and the Parthenon.

Barred from entering, we walked around the Parthenon. The western porch is completely covered in scaffolding because of repairs and restoration. The outer side is also under repair and so inaccessible. So we could see uncovered only one side and one porch, about half the exterior. Gregory pointed out the remains of the base of colossal statue of Athena Promachos that in Antiquity stood on the north side of the structure. It would have towered above the temple, and the top of the goddess's spear would have been visible down in the port of Peireus, and to all the ships entering the harbor. Now you have to have a guide or guide book to even notice the remnants of the base. On the east, that is front, side of the Parthenon we found the remnants of the small round temple of Roma that, in the Roman period, would have blocked a front view of the temple. The current front view into the area of the cella sanctuary was somewhat reduced in dignity by the Chinese tourists darting around among the columns and hooping up and down the steps of the podium. Ah, to be the child of a Party official . . .

The East Porch of the Parthenon

The Acropolis affords spectacular views of the modern city, and some of these are even beautiful. The area of the Greek agoras were especially impressive: in particular, the view of the almost wholly intact (even roofed) Temple of Hephaestus on the bluff over the Old Agora. For me, however, the real pleasure was the Erechtheion This is the temple with the famous caryatid columns (now replaced by

The Erechtheum (Olive Tree Visible)

copies as the originals are in the Acropolis Museum). It is whimsically asymmetrical, and there are whole sections on the outward side that are not blocked off by "you cannot go here ropes." The coffered ceilings of the portico are amazing, almost suspended in space. Something remarkable as the coffers are of solid stone. There were some modern copies in finely cut marble next to the Parthenon, probably waiting to be installed in the reconstruction of the western porch. We walked down through the northern portico and out into the open space where you can look into that was once a central space containing an olive tree. This olive tree was supposedly Athena's offering to the Athenians as an alternative to a hole in the marble of the Sacred Way provided by a blast from Poseidon's trident. I think they chose wisely in making Athena their patroness. Olive trees beat holes in marble any day for me. There is even an olive tree growing there now, planted by modern Athenians about 1905.

We then descended by the carefully marked and well guarded path down the side of the Propylaeon. There we ran into three African-American tourists from Baltimore who had just arrived from Rhodes by way of Santerini. Gregory immediately started up a conversion. We had some fun comparing our experiences. They were a bit dismayed to find out how much of what you see at Greek archaeological sites is actually modern reconstruction meant to give the tourists more to see than a field of rubble or broken, downed columns. After a stop to look back up at the towering Propylaeon, we took the

Street to the Arcopolis Museum

foot path down to the road to find the new Acropolis Museum. On arrival, we decided that we deserved a snack, it being just about noon. There is a fancy restaurant in the museum, which was filled with Chinese tourists, so we choose the almost empty snack bar. The fellow behind the counter was not busy, so we go individualized attention. He suggested various deserts to go with our tea and coffee. Reginald had ice cream (vanilla), but Gregory risked a sweet that the host described as very traditional Greek. It turned out to the something very much like Turkish "cut ice cream," served on a wedge of shredded wheat soaked in Karo syrup. We all tasted it and agree that it was actually not all that bad. We also agreed that it would have been improved by using honey instead of Karo. I guess Karo is traditional in Greece.

The Acropolis Museum was built to prove that, if (when?) the Elgin Marbles are returned the Greeks, they will have a suitable place to display them. The exhibits start with the archaic period, and there were plenty of Cycladic Chickens to admire. Climbing the monumental staircase to the second level, we reached the showcase display floor. This is dedicated to the carvings of the Parthenon. Although Lord Elgin took most of these to London, and other "visitors" took some to Paris and Berlin, casts were made of all of them so that the entire extant program can be displayed as a whole. The fragments and pieces from the friezes and metopes still in Athens are incorporated into the whole. They are identifiable, even without reading the tags, because they are darker and more "antique" looking than the casts.

Parthenon Marbles Exhibit at the Museum

The result is very informative for the viewer. I admit that my first surprise was how repetitive the program of the frieze and metopes is. The metopes present three series: Athenians fighting Amazons, Lapiths fighting Centaurs, and Greeks fighting Trojans. These are basically images of two fighters each. Sometimes the Lapith, Greek, or Athenian is winning and downing his foe. At other times, the Amazon,

Models of the East Pediment Statuary

Centaur, or Trojan triumphs. The panels are impressive mostly for the bravura carving, which is in very deep relief, almost in the round. The narrative element is less exciting. The frieze, although it was protected by the columned porches, is less well preserved, heavily damaged with something missing from many of the scenes. The subject is mostly a ceremonial procession to the temple to offer sacrifice. Gregory pointed out some of the ritual elements. The exhibit also includes what remains of the pediment sculptures, either in real fragments or casts. I was surprised how much has been lost. One pediment shows the birth of Athena, the other the Athenian choice of Athena over Poseidon. I actually got a better idea of the programs from the small models elsewhere in the Museum, where the missing figures have been redone from ancient descriptions. If these reconstructions are correct, the figures were very animated, almost baroquely theatrical.

Entrance to the Odeon

The effect of all these carvings must have been even more baroque when they were all painted in their original vivid (garish?) colors. We got some sense of this in the section dedicated to the archaic sculpture from the original temple of Athena and others of the earliest buildings on the Acropolis. This material was preserved after Athens had been burned and looted by invaders. The materials were all considered sacred, and so they were buried to preserve them on the sacred site. The current buildings were constructed over them in the classical period. At 3:30 we decided that six hours of tourism was enough for one day, and we headed home for the de rigeur nap. Along the way we

slowed down to reconsider the odeon and the theater, which we had looked in on the evening before. We did not go in, as the monuments closed at 3, and rest was calling us home. At home, Reginald and Gregory napped, while I did some tourism planning and then followed them to the land of dreams.

We gathered for drinks in the hotel's roof-top restaurant and tried to decide what to do about dinner. Gregory had found out that Stofi is closed during the winter season, so we plopped for Arcadia, one of the suggestions of the Homeric Tours guide, tagged as "more traditional Greek." We found it with ease on a street near the museum lined with nearly empty, but open, restaurants. To get to it we had to run a gauntlet of barkers trying to capture patrons. Shades of Istanbul. We were the second group in the restaurant. Well, sort of. Actually, the other patron was a singleton American from the Bay Area doing a tour of Greece. Gregory struck up a conversion, and we shared notes on Oakland and San Francisco. The waiter was very, perhaps too, helpful. We were talked into two starters, which proved very good, but also very ample. And then came the main courses. Reginald choose the "Rooster in Sauce" which turned out to be a very good coq au vin *à la grecque*. Gregory had Moussaka, which was chunks of beef wrapped in eggplant. Not your grandmother's Moussaka. I choose the *piatos hiermeris* (plate of the day), which were meat dolmas with cream sauce. Rich but excellent. We allowed ourselves to be talked into ice cream for desert. And so we waddled home to bed.

The Arcadia Restaurant

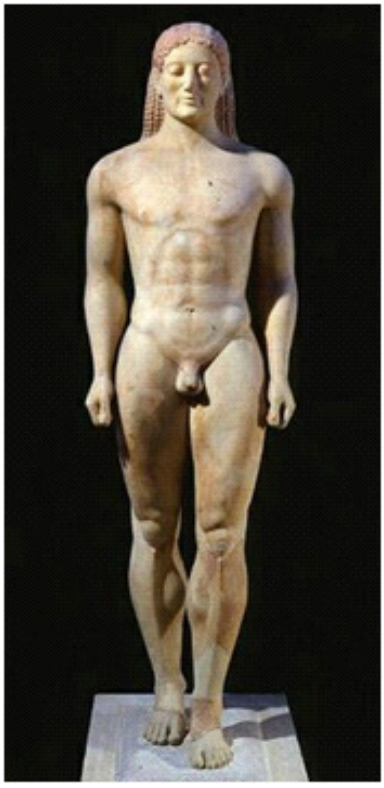
DAY 17: January 20—Athens II

As the weather reports predicted rain today, and it was drizzling out, we decided to make this a indoor day and go to the National Archeological Museum. It would actually clear up by the afternoon, but the choice was a wise one as ruins and rain don't really mix. After a breakfast in the roof-top restaurant, I returned to find the maid making up my room. I did a quick in and out, found Gregory and Reginald, and we had the desk clerk call a taxi. It arrived within two minutes, and we were off and running. This taxi driver was determined to show us how fast he would drive on the

main thoroughfares and back streets of Athens. It seems that political protests, one-way streets, and driver's whims always mean the most round-about routes in this city. And this at high speed. I was gripping my back seat arm rest with one hand and my seatbelt with the other. We were deposited at the gate to the grounds of the museum. We hoofed it across the park in the rain, fending off three or four beggars on the way. Finally, inside and dry (more or less).

National Archeological Museum, Athens

This is a huge museum, but we discovered that in winter about half the galleries are closed. You can look into them and see that they are completely normal, no construction, etc., merely devoid of tourists. And of nanny docents. The most logical explanation, later confirmed, is that the drop in tourists during winter means less money from admissions. Less money from admissions means less money to pay the nannies that sit or stand in each room and keep the tourists from stealing or defacing the national treasures. So we marched on to see what was open, and it was plenty. Perhaps because it was raining, the museum was also crowded with . . . Italian elementary school kids and their guides. Heck, how did they get here? So we worked our way around the *bambini* and took in the sculptures. These began with archaic kuroi, some very large and very well preserved. Others more fragmentary. We asked Gregory why this mass production of static images of young men (nude) and women (clothed in identical smocks). It seems that well into the classical period everyone who could afford one of these for a tomb or garden commissioned it. Gregory explained that we simply don't know what they mean. Perhaps some minor change in the face made them a portrait of the purchaser's children. But more likely not. The best



Archaic Koros

A "Cycladic Chicken"

guess is that they represent a stylized version of beauty, inspired by similar statues in Egypt. We also did a few rooms of archaic carving, with plenty of what I call Cycladic Chickens (technically "Psi Idols"), one of which was memorable for having an easily recognized female private part.

After the kuroi, the program of the museum moved on to early classical funerary sculpture. Again, the program was surprisingly repetitive. Lots of bas reliefs of family members shaking hands with the departed, who are usually sitting formally in an elaborate chair. But sometimes they are in other poses. What is constant is the hand-shake beyond the grave. The other type is the free standing memorial that looks much like a large vase with inscriptions. One of these had an additional figure carved in well after the original commission, as could be seen from its having been being carved into what would have been a smooth blank section of the vase. For me the most memorable display of classical Greek sculpture was the two rooms of bronzes that preceded and followed the funerary sculpture. The first room was dominated by the magnificent fifth-century standing figure of a god, identified as either Zeus or Poseidon. The god is caught in the act of hurling a thunderbolt, spear, or trident (now lost). His body is charged with divine power, and yet, it is a human body, neither colossal nor ethereal, but wonderfully natural. This is probably one of the most famous Greek statues, and I can see why. But, even it paled before the centerpiece of the post-funerary room, the bronze of a horse and (very young) jockey. Like the Zeus-

The Famous Bronze of Zeus or Poseidon

Poseidon this was also found in a shipwreck, but it was in several thousand fragments and had to be reconstructed. The effect is extraordinary. The horse rears on his hind legs and is now supported in the air by a modern support strut in front. If it were able to stand without support originally, this would have been extraordinary, as modern bronze casting only managed to cast equestrian bronzes with only two hooves on the ground in the nineteenth century. The jockey, who looks about seven or eight years old, is riding bareback and holding on to the horse's mane for dear life, yet his expression is passive and undisturbed. An amazing combination of terror and poise.

Bronze of Horse and Young Rider

In this museum, one famous or breath-taking piece seemed to follow another. Gregory continued off to look at more of the classical sculpture while Reginald and I took the opposite turn and found ourselves in the galleries dedicated to the treasures of Mycenae. We had all seen numerous photos of the so-called "Funeral Mask of Agamemnon," and, with only a little hunting, there it was. The object is almost schematic and impressionistic, but like almost every second object in this gallery, a monument of gold smithing. I can see why Schliemann's discovery of these artifacts created a sensation in nineteenth-century Europe. The simple bullion value of them is staggering. And the workmanship, especially of the gold filigree jewelry, is eye-stopping. There was just so much here that I went into memory overload. I think proper viewing would require

Mycenean Gold with "Mask of Agamenon (Top Center)

at least a full day, not the 45 minutes we could afford. After the death masks, the gold vessels and drinking cups caught my attention by their proportions and detail and, I would venture, their weight. Again, I was shocked by how much of ancient art is only with us because it was buried as grave goods.

This exhibit ended with Mycenaean wall frescoes, which had been reassembled to create the programs of the two adjacent rooms in the original dwelling house they decorated on Crete. One showed two wrestlers, a young aristocrat (fair skin, jewelry) and a boy perhaps his slave (darker, no jewelry) caught in first grapple but still upright and looking into each other's eyes. Reserved, balanced, schematic, yet poised for action. The other room, probably a bedroom, had floral motifs and geometric forms. Reginald, always a connoisseur of the decorative, had to be pulled away from it.

Mycenean Wrestlers

The afternoon was getting on, but, perhaps sadly for those wanting a nap, our route to the exit took us pass the exhibit that I had most wanted to see, but assumed was closed: the Antikythera Mechanism. This bronze many-geared device for calculating the positions of the heavenly bodies and the progression of the seasons was found in 1900 in a shipwreck off the island of Antikythera by sponge divers. It mystified scientists and the general public after its discovery. Although the scientists almost immediately recognized it as an astronomical calculator, popular

The Antikythera Mechanism

lore, still alive on the internet, knows that it is really a device dropped by ancient astronauts from other planets. The object itself is odd, but not all that impressive: a clump of badly corroded bronze gears and cogs. And it is only the guts of the machine, as the wooden case and much of the cover plating are gone. The focus of the exhibit, however, is not the little gizmo itself. There are 3D video loops (the glasses were in use by some fellow who hogged them for the 30 minutes we were there) and displays of three or more attempts to reconstruct the item. There was actually more about these reconstruction attempts than about the artifact itself.

Gregory and Reginald finally tore me away with pleas for a late afternoon siesta. A dash across the park in the rain brought us to a major artery, and Gregory hailed a taxi. We hopped into the back seat, and he tried to explain to the young driver that we wanted to go to the Athens Gate Hotel. Complete confusion. Finally a card from the hotel got the address across. The driver plugs it into this G.P.S., and off we go, again at high speed, and again suddenly off the main road onto side streets. Soon we are seeing signs that say "Peireus," the port of Athens some 20 miles out of town. I start to do my slow "we are lost" panic. Round and round, seemingly farther and farther from the center and our hotel. Suddenly there are signs pointing to the Acropolis: but we are now on the other side of it from the museum! We have taken the Great Circle Route. The driver latches on to the landmark, and suddenly we are in a maze of one-way back streets. All the time the driver keeps up a rapid monologue in Greek. Finally we find ourselves behind the hotel, and the driver makes it clear that he does not know how to get to the front. Well, it's just around the block, so we pile out and I try to pay him. He refuses to take the money. He is just too embarrassed.

Hadrian's Gate, Front and Back

So we return, a bit later than expected, but all in one piece. Gregory is ready for siesta, but Reginald and I are so energized by the road race that we decide to check out the Roman Agora with the temple of Zeus just across from the hotel. The rain has stopped and the sun is out. With weather conditions like that, who needs a nap? We walk around the enclosure, stopping to take in "Hadrian's Gate," a second-century triumphal arch marking the boundary between the ancient city "of Theseus,"

"Greece Loves Byron"

and the modern" city "of Hadrian," as the inscription explains. The Latin is even readable under the grime. As we walk up to the ticket office on *Dromos Bironis* (Byron Street), we pass a modern sculptured monument. It shows a frock-coated man being embraced by a classical female figure dressed something like Athena. Sure enough, the Greek inscription is easily deciphered: "Greece loves Byron." The only oddity is a reclining male nude on the back of the monument. Never figured out what that was about.

Silly us. Didn't we realize that it is after 3 p.m., and the archaeological site is going to be closed? But never fear, Greek taxi drivers with Turkish persistence corral us and insist that we need to see the first modern Olympic stadium or the highest hill in the city ("great view, must see"). We flee in panic back to the hotel, lest we end up someplace very far away after a very circuitous trip. When we get back to the hotel, it is just about time for drinks and dinner. So after washing up and finding Gregory, we relax in the roof-top restaurant. A short discussion, and we settle on a second night at Arcadia, where, after the gauntlet of barkers, we are received like long lost relatives. The food again is good, ample, and chosen by the waiter. But our faithfulness is rewarded by free desert and coffee. They now seem to recognize us as regulars.

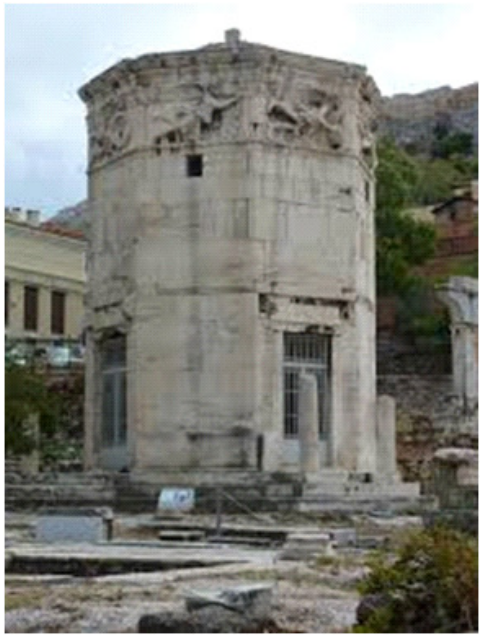
DAY 18: January 21—Athens III

This turned out to be a splendidly beautiful day. Clear skies, no rain expected, and temperature in the high 50s. I had also found the "do not disturb" tag (hidden under the phone) and put it up to keep the maid at bay until we got through with breakfast in the roof-top restaurant. I also had a piece of good news from the desk clerk. We had intended to visit Hosios Loukas monastery, with its famous Byzantine mosaics, on the way to Delphi, but conflicting information on the internet suggested it might be closed during the winter. After several attempts at contact, the clerk got

hold of the monastery and found out they are open every day from nine to five. Excellent. Today was to be our visits to the various agoras, classical, Hellenistic, and Roman, in that, the chronological, order. So, after breakfast, the desk clerk called a taxi. A complicated conversation ensued between Gregory and the monoglot driver, helped out by phrases from classical Greek. At first the driver thought we wanted to go across the road to the Roman Agora and refused to take us. Finally he understood that it was another "agora" we wanted to see, and we were off on another wild-mouse ride through the back streets of Athens. This again proved a long confusing trip, and when we arrived we were not at the oldest, Classical, Agora, but rather at the Hellenistic one. Well, give up while you're ahead. At least it was one of the day's anticipated sites.

Hadrian's Library

Another delight today: the multiple-site pass that we had bought at the Acropolis, which had not worked at the National Museum, did work at the agoras, so we happily found ourselves with free admissions all day. The remains of the Hellenistic Agora were, oddly enough, virtually all Roman. In fact, they were entirely the remains of a huge library constructed (no surprise) by the emperor Hadrian. The site amounted to a large wall with some attached columns and a very large field studded with broken masonry, foundation stones, and column and cornice fragments. Leaving this section of the Agora, we walked down a side street, populated mostly by barkers trying to get us to come in and buy tourist junk, to the second section of this agora, where the centerpiece is the round building known as the "Temple of the Winds." This is actually a classical building, restored by Hadrian, that contained an elaborate (and now poorly understood) water clock. The



The Temple of the Winds

exterior of the building had at least two sun dials, and was topped by a large weather vane. That, and carvings of deities representing the four winds, give the structure its name.

It was now late morning and time for tea, which we took just outside this part of the agora. We then headed off, on foot, to the Classical Agora. Along the way, we passed a large dingy Orthodox church where services were going on. We (mis)identified it as the Orthodox Cathedral of Athens. It was actually the church of the Panagia Grigorousa, dedicated to the Holy Angels. Before going in, however, having escaped the barkers, we had to run the gauntlet of beggars. And very persistent they were. Inside, it was dark, cavernous, and incense-flavored. A two-man choir was chanting the responses as a priest in cassock and stole perambulated the building, incensing people and leading the litany. It seemed to be Matins, not the Divine Liturgy. Gregory and Reginald popped inside while I assisted from the narthex. I was noticed, and the priest came out into the narthex to incense me. I bowed and made the sign of the cross like the good Melkite I fancy myself. The priest looked, in Gregory's words, "horribly bored." I spent a little time praying and then went to look for Gregory and Reginald. Gone. So I left the church to hunt them up. Immediately, I was accosted by a very, very persistent beggar, whom I finally bought off by a small Euro note. Only to be stopped by an even more persistent beggar, who was obviously upset that I had given alms to the other and not to her. I was saved by the first beggar, who sent the second packing and pointed up the alley where I could see Gregory and Reginald waiting. Sometimes it pays to give alms.

Church of the Panagia Grigorousa

The older agora is dominated by the ceremonial way that extends out and up past the Areopagus to the entrance of the Acropolis. Gregory led us around, explaining the remains, the most impressive of which is the facade of what was originally a gymnasium. It was reworked (by Hadrian of course) into a theater and the remaining wall has embedded in it the remains of some giant (male) caryatides. Thus

its name: "The House of the Giants." We followed the path up the hill past a couple of temples now only foundation rubble, to the Temple of Hephaestus, which I could never pronounce, so I made do with the Roman name for the god, Vulcan. This was, for me, probably the signature Greek temple of the trip. That it had been turned into a Christian church in the fourth century and continued in use, without being turned into a mosque or otherwise damaged, means that it is intact, even to the (probably often repaired) roof. Walking around it (entry was, of course, forbidden), gave me a real sense of the classical aesthetic. It was made suitably more romantic by being surrounded by trees, almost a grove. In antiquity, it stood out in the open, surrounded—I kid you not—by potted plants. I spent a good deal of time sitting and absorbing the moment, as Reginald and Gregory went off to identify some of the less-well-preserved monuments and to read the informational placards. I caught up with them as they were descending to the Sacred Way.

Temple of Hephaestus

Statue of Hadrian, Agora

As we approached it, we passed over the Roman period water main, now uncovered and clearly visible, and the foundations of a monument that once had 14 statues for the "Eponymous Heros" from which the various "tribes" of the Athenian people took their names. Again, this statue clutter, so typical of classical open spaces, is now gone. All that remains of the monumental self-commemorations is the torso of a over-sized statue of . . . Hadrian. Turning up towards the Acropolis on the Sacred Way, we reach the upper part of the Agora, which was originally shops and houses. There we dropped into visit a small Byzantine church, one of the few medieval monuments in any of the Athenian archaeological

parks. The small building had some poorly preserved eighteenth-century frescos that were worth a short visit. Leaving there, we walked over to the Agora Museum, which is built on the foundations of, and is generally a modernized reconstruction of, one of the stoas that once framed the agora.

The first floor presented mostly fragmentary sculpture in chronological order, as well as some interesting household instruments in bronze. But the most striking was a cabinet containing actual ostraka from the classical period, the pieces of pottery used as ballots for voting into exile citizens considered dangerous to the republican government. Two things stuck out for me. First, that most of the "shards" looked like they were cast pottery disks intended for use as voting tablets, neatly glazed in red and back. The names were also clear and easily legible in block white capitals. Second was the large percentage that carried the name Themistocles, the famous Athenian politician and general who was exiled by ostracism about the year 471 B.C. Gregory, on the other hand, was fascinated by the many small vials that were supposedly used to store the hemlock extract which was the usual way for executing condemned criminals by forced suicide. The most famous of these, of course, being Socrates.

Display of Ostraka, Agora Museum

Church of the Panagia Kapnikarea

As the weather was fair and we had the energy, we decided against another taxi adventure and walked back to the hotel through the tourist-shop district of the Plaka. More shops were open than on our walk through the previous time, but we were mostly left alone by the shop-keepers. During this walk we passed and visited the one significant Byzantine church in the city of Athens, the Panagia Kapnikarea. While it has some interesting, if fragmentary, mosaics, the church's chief claim to

fame is that it constructed almost completely, at least for its decoration, from *spolia*, that is, fragments of older buildings. These fragments date from the ancient Doric period to the early middle ages. The eclectic mix seems improbable, but holds together. After a brief pause to pray, we kept on walking, eventually reaching, quite by accident, the modern Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Athens. It took a moment to recognize it because nearly the entire exterior was covered with scaffolding for restoration and repair. The church itself is nineteenth-century, large, and lavishly decorated with mosaics and frescos that are modern interpretations of traditional Byzantine ones. The influences of Italian devotional art are quite obvious. Even the inside was almost completely obscured by restoration platforms and scaffolding.

Around the Cathedral we discovered an ecclesiastical shopping district that we had quickly passed through on the taxi ride in the morning. Ecclesiastical goods shops and tailors alternated with fur and jewelry stores. We guessed that this was so the Greek priests' wives would have someplace to shop while their husband looked at vestments and church plate. Much of what we saw, in both kinds of shops, was very high end and, doubtless, very expensive. Lots of silver, silk brocade, and precious stones. Reginald was fascinated, and we ended up window shopping at virtually every store we passed. There were even shops catering to Russian Orthodox and Antiochians, identifiable from their names in Russian and Arabic. We arrived back at the hotel in time for drinks on the roof and dinner at Arcadia. This time, it was obvious that we were considered regulars: they had prepared an off-menu special starter for us. And there was again complementary desert and coffee. Back home, we went immediately to bed as we wanted to get going early on the field trip requested by Gregory, a drive down the coast to Eleusis, the site of the shrine of the famous Eleusinian Mysteries. The hotel clerk on duty that evening promised she would find us a driver at a good price for a departure at 8 a.m. the next morning.

Shop Window near the Athens Orthodox Cathedral

DAY 19: January 22—Eleusis

After the usual nice breakfast in the roof-top restaurant, we checked at the desk and discovered that the clerk had found us a car to Eleusis at a excellent rate. And so we were off and traveling on main streets or good highways all the way. This was the second trip that afforded a look at the suburbs of Athens and the road down the coast. Perhaps it is a bit harsh, but we all agreed that Greece, at least as much as we have seen, is a land of beautiful scenery, especially on the coasts, but the populated area around Athens is a dirty graffiti-covered dump. With the exception of the government and some historic buildings, the architecture is a modern brutalism, mostly made of aging concrete stucco in the most uninspired pseudo-Bauhaus construction. It just sucks the soul out of you. We hope that this is just the Athens sprawl. As we rode down the coast highway to Eleusis, on the other hand, we were all taken by the lovely views. The coast is very irregular, interspersed with promontories jutting out into the gulf. The hills are sparsely wooded and covered with scrub and brown grass, much like the countryside of Bay Area California.

An Oil Refinery near Eleusis

Eleusis is the major center for oil refining in Greece, and we knew we were approaching the archeological site because the road was lined with cracking plants and the sky framed by industrial chimneys and other high-raise industry. But after passing through a few side streets of modern Eleusis, we found that the monuments were screened from the petroleum processing area by trees and neat private homes. We parked, left the car to wait for us, and entered the shrine area. The entire ancient cult center, which is quite large, is included in the park, and we quickly had a sense how ancient Pagan pilgrims would have experienced the arrival at the shrines. Much of what you see today is Roman, but this expansion of buildings did not change the layout of the shrine. Today, on entering, the most visible remains are

the foundations and broken columns of a large temple dating to the age of (no surprise) the emperor Hadrian. Behind it is a below-ground cult center that was dedicated to the chthonic (underworld) gods. Today it is a pit in the ground surrounded by the remains of the shrine foundations. Ancient sacrifices were not burned here but cast down into the ground.

Podium of Temple Dedicated to Hadrian

Passing the podium of the Roman period temple, not surprisingly dedicated to the emperor Hadrian as a god, we reach the propylaeon, of which what still exists is Roman. It is a near version of he same structure on the Athens Acropolis, but much smaller and on level ground. To the left of the gate is the first stop on the pilgrim way to the central shrine, the Well of Demeter. According to the myth, which is probably later than the shrine and cult rituals that it explains, Demeter was searching for her daughter Persephone, who had been taken into the underworld to be the spouse of Pluto for half the year. Her absence brings on winter, so one imagines that her mother stopped at the well on a cold dark day. She sat crying by the well until some nymphs came and did a dance to cheer her up. The well is surrounded by the square foundations of the original shrine. You can see the well, however, but, try as I might, I could not find a position from which I could see down into it. But it seemed quite deep. I tried to find a stone to toss down it, but, much to Gregory's relief, I failed. "Tossing things down a well always means bad luck in ancient lore," he dryly remarked.

Demeter's Well

Walking up the Sacred Way above the well, we reached the "Mirthless Rock," which is really a shallow cave. In ancient times, a temple blocked the view of the cave, but of it nothing remains. The myth recounts that Demeter stopped here (Washington slept here?) while looking for Persephone and sat lamenting her loss on a kind of stone seat at the mouth of the shallow cave. I went up and sat down, attempting to look as mirthless as possible. This got a faint smile from Gregory and Reginald, who then went up and touched the rock, so that he could say that he had done it. At this point, we saw another tourist, or we thought we did. Actually it was one of the nannies, whose job it is to make sure the visitors don't deface the monument or take it home with them. After watching us for twenty minutes or so, he decided that we were harmless and wondered off. The next part of the monument is also the oldest, the parts that date back to the pre-Classical period and are made of mud adobe brick. Amazingly, quite a large section of this structure, mostly retaining wall, still exists. It was originally covered with plaster (now gone), but at some point in antiquity it was buried and so preserved from the elements. The remains are just visible under the modern protective structure built to protect archeologists from the elements.

The "Mirthless Rock"

The Telesterion, Eleusis

So we continued up the Sacred Way to the huge Telesterion, or assembly hall, where those to be initiated into the mysteries heard sermons explaining the cult. It was here too that they "heard something, saw something, and touched something." What they heard, saw, and touched, is completely uncertain, Gregory explained. Although the ancient Christian writer St. Hippolytus says that what they saw was a ear of fresh wheat, which would make perfect sense as the Mysteries were concerned with the return of spring and promised a kind of immortality in the ever-verdant Elysian Fields. Reginald's comment was, "An Ear of wheat? If they showed me that, my response would have been "Big woop!" In its current Roman form, the structure has room for thousands of new initiates to the mysteries. What remains are the "bleachers" carved into the bedrock of the uphill side, which are flanked by stairs, also in the solid rock. The outer part of the platform of the Telesphorion is just a platform, a late Roman extension of marble flagstones. This later is perhaps the most artistically impressive part of the complex. I seem to remember that Gregory told us that it was the work of the now famous to us Herodus Atticus.

Ninnian Tablet: Only Representation of the Mysteries
Reproduction at Eleusis (Original in Athens)

We ascended by the stairs on the right, past the podium of a now gone temple to one of the wives of some Roman emperor, and arrived at the site of what had been a temple dedicated to some other emperor's wife, now a small church dedicated to he Virgin Mary. There was an American couple there (the only other tourists), whose dog was ready to defend them against any aggression by the three of us. It turned out that it was just a stray that had attached himself to them, much like our guard cat at Lindos on Rhodes. We crossed over to the other side of the complex on what was like a raised

Yet More Cycladic Chickens

walkway. It offered an excellent view of the panorama of the gulf, happily unblocked by oil refineries and simply spectacular on this sunny warm (low 60s) day. This brought us to the small museum. It contained marble fragments from the shrine and copies of the famous ceramic plaque (which we saw in the National Archaeological Museum) that shows the mythological story of the cult being viewed by some initiates. There were also some Cycladic Chickens, none especially memorable. For me the most impressive artifact was a huge caryatid from the Hadrianic temple. Reginald's choice was a small ceramic votive piglet. He asked if a duplicate were available for purchase at the tiny museum store and was told no. The search for such a piglet became one of our quests for the rest of the trip.

We returned down the sacred way to the exit and met our driver at the gate. I had found a small rock to toss down the well. I missed when I tried to throw it in, much to Gregory's relief. The return home again impressed us with the splendid coastline, sadly marred in part by industrial zones. At the hotel, Gregory retired for a well-earned nap. Reginald and I, having gotten a second wind on the way home, walked down to the Avis car rental shop, a block from the hotel, to make sure that we would have a car on Sunday, and that the car would be delivered to the hotel. We found we had been rented a huge SUV, which neither of us wanted to drive. The rental agency was happy to

Votive Piglet, Eleusis Museum

downgrade us to a moderate sized sedan, so long was we paid the original price. Thinking of the narrow streets of Athens, we accepted the swap. Then, finding that it was not yet 3 p.m., we hoofed it over to the ticket booth for the Temple of the Olympian Zeus, avoiding the gauntlet of taxi drivers by fancy footwork. Inside (again the multi-pass worked) we found ourselves in a large grassed enclosure. The only way to describe the temple (again the work of Hadrian) is HUGE. Only one corner remains, actually original, not reconstructed by archeologists. There are also three separated columns, one fallen, that looks just like a line of pushed over dominos. And it too is not a reconstruction. It fell over in the nineteenth century during a storm. As we circled the structure we were over-awed by the scale, just as Hadrian intended. Then home, with time for a short siesta.

Temple of Olympian Zeus, Athens

Mount Athos Cabernet

That evening, while trying to decide what to do about dinner, we found out that, contrary to our earlier impression, the Athens Gate Roof Restaurant was open in winter. As this avoided a walk or taxi ride, we took the elevator to dinner. The food proved to be mostly international cuisine, with not much traditional Greek. We did agree that the black olives served with the starter and bread were excellent. I ordered the one traditional item among the entrees, Greek pasta with sausage, which was pretty good. The one surprise was that all the available wines were Greek, including a Cabernet from Mount Athos. Made by the monks, it was also the cheapest bottle on the list. The choice of beverage was thus easy and proved quite good. Desert was large servings of vanilla ice cream for Gregory and me, but chocolate with cayenne pepper for Reginald, always the adventurous one.

DAY 20: January 23—Athens IV

Today, our last full day in Athens was cooler, much cooler, but still partly sunny. We tried to decide whether to make it a half day and only visit one of the two remaining museums on our list of things to do. We postponed the decision and decided to play it by ear. That decided, we headed off to the Benaki Museum on foot. This museum began as a private collection of a very rich Greek family and was given to the state in the earlier part of the twentieth century. It has antiquities, medieval and Ottoman artifacts, and an extensive collection of clothing and room interiors. As we hiked along, passing the presidential palace, Gregory became progressively unhappy with the hike, which proved much longer than expected. Once inside, we found that that the archaic materials were again heavy on Cycladic Chickens, one of which, to my delight was riding the tail of a horse. Unlike other museums, where the medieval and Ottoman period was represented mostly by sculpture or building fragments, here the collection was heavy on jewelry, in particular, gold jewelry. None of it stands out in my mind, but the impression was lavish. The second floor was dedicated to clothing and household furnishings from the seventeenth to late nineteenth centuries. Reginald explained that to understand clothing properly you have to see the articles themselves to understand the cloth and workmanship; and then look at drawings and paintings, to see how it looked

Benaki Museum, Athens

Another Cycladic Chicken

when worn. As both articles and images were included in the exhibit, I think we got a good idea of what the well-uniformed early modern Greek or Ottoman looked like.

The final part of the collection was a floor of Greek Orthodox altar goods and vestments from the seventeen and eighteen centuries. Frankly, even for me who likes this stuff, the material seemed repetitive and busy rather than impressive and elegant. So we retreated to the snack bar for a light lunch. This was in a room with interesting sketches of artifacts, views of Athens, and historical events, seemingly drawn by school children. The effect was whimsical. The food was also tasty, the service prompt and helpful. The restrooms rated among the best public ones we encountered in Greece. Reginald decided he needed some down time and headed off to the hotel. Actually—we later found out— he had stopped off in the very elaborate museum shop. It filled two whole rooms and included reproductions in the originals in precious metals as well as cheap knock offs. You could tell the latter as they had prices. Reginald ended up buying a copy of an eighteenth-century English cup in silver.

Byzantine Christian Art Museum, Athens

After a short caucus, Gregory and I decided to take in the Byzantine Museum which was (really) only two blocks down the main road from the Benaki. The initial impression was a bit of a disappointment. As at the Benaki, half the galleries were closed, probably do to nanny docent shortage. The first rooms were sparse. Small numbers of Paleochristian fragments with large explanatory displays. The best part of this section, for me, was a treasure trove of gold coins and silver service buried during the Muslim invasions of the 700s. Then we reached a small alcove dedicated to the reworking of the Parthenon as a Christian church of the Virgin in the 400s. The artifacts were few, mostly parts of the ambo and some decorative carving, but the explanations and floor plans gave a good idea of how the space was redone and how it functioned liturgically.

From here on the exhibits improved markedly. There were abundant early medieval Christian textiles from Egypt, but the best part of the exhibit was that

Byzantine Frankish Fusion Icon, Venetian Crete

dedicated to wall and ceiling frescos salvaged from thirteenth-century provincial churches in Attica. These were of extraordinary quality, visible even in their damaged state. Clearly, provincial elites of the high Byzantine period had the wherewithal to employ the best Constantinopolitan craftsman and painters. The last open gallery was dedicated to what is best called Byzantine-Frankish Fusion art. The icons were remarkable for the Byzantine themes and Frankish stylistic influences. Much of this material came from Crete, where Venetian governors and Greek Orthodox (and unionist) populations freely intermingled and shared patrons and artists. The central focus of this gallery was the work of the "Pre-El-Greco" Dominico Theotokopoulos. He is represented by two very traditional icons, one of the Virgin and the other of St. Luke. There was nothing about them to suggest the work of the famous painter during his later life in Spain.

St. Luke Paints the Virgin, El Greco

Satisfied with our museum slog, Gregory hailed a taxi (no walking home today) for our return to the hotel. And, for once, the route was direct and quick. Gregory retired to his room for a siesta. I spend my time on the hotel computer printing the collection of road maps that I had downloaded from the internet: the "excellent" roadmap supplied by the rental agency proved to be just a schematic of the major highways. Dinner was again in the hotel restaurant, but this time all of us choose the vanilla ice cream for desert.

DAY 21: January 24— To Delphi by way of Hosios Loukas


BMW Four-Door DIESEL Hatchback

Up early for a breakfast in the hotel restaurant, where we relished our last panoramic view of Athens. We then packed and went down to await the rental car that was supposed to arrive at 9 a.m. At 9:15 we asked the clerk to phone up the rental agency. The car was "on the way." At 10 a.m., we had them call again. "On the way." Finally at 10:15 the car arrived. The agent explained that they had some trouble finding a medium-sized car (even with three days to do so), but that he had found us a "wonderful nearly new car, a BMW!" Furthermore, he explained this car was a DIESEL, with better milage and cheaper to fuel. "It's a diesel!" he repeated two times, making sure we understood. Great. We packed in our baggage, a tight but adequate fit, and were off. The maps seemed simple, but a wrong turn put us on the coast highway going the wrong direction. After a long trip to find a turn around, we were finally headed toward our destination, Delphi.

All seemed to go swimmingly on the ultra-modern toll road, until we were about two-thirds of the way to the turn off for Delphi. Suddenly, police cars and flashing lights indicated that they were closing off the highway. We were shunted off onto a side road (with an exit toll) and found ourselves in nowhere land. Attempts to get back on the highway resulted only in views of a perfectly good, but perfectly empty, four-lane superhighway. We would later find out why this happened, but at this point we were mystified. We took a secondary (two-lane) road toward our destination and passed through small towns, the largest of which was Thiva (ancient Thebes), which Gregory's *Blue Guide* described as "run down, with little or


Highway 3, Thiva (Thebes)

nothing to see." We agreed, and would have added "dirty and graffiti covered." But it allowed us to pick up the road to Delphi and our scheduled stop, the famous Byzantine monastery of Hosios Loukas, just outside of Distomo. Before arriving there, however, we had, it seemed from the map, to change highways in the town of Livadia. So we turned into town and found ourselves in a maze of one-way streets. And it seemed that the whole town police force was out, their cars often blocking entrance to side streets. Round and round we went. Finally, with little help from confusing direction signs, we discovered ourselves back on the same road we came in on. As it turned out that road turned into the highway that we were looking for, just about a half mile after the road we took into town.

The Village of Stiri, on the Way to Hosios Loukas

As we traveled toward the cut off for Distomo and Hosios Loukas, the mountains become more majestic and we rose in elevation. Soon the mountains were snow covered, and there was evidence of plowing along the side of the road. It really started to look like winter. The Distomo exit was easy to find, even if we initially got off going the wrong direction. Turned around, it was a short ride on a very small country road into town. We were hoping for a quaint village, but the burg was a dirty, graffiti marred, version of suburban Athens, just way out in the country. We squeezed through the main street and took a left toward the next, even smaller, village, the home of the patron saint of the monastery, St. Luke of Stiri.

After Stiri (which got a C+ on the "quaint village" scale), we drove up the long monastery driveway to the ample parking lot. Gregory bought the ticket and we were in. The major monuments are the two Catholika (monastic churches). The older has fairly well preserved frescos of the 900s, and newer, the famous Macedonian Renaissance

The Catholikon of Hosios Loukas

mosaics. There is also an even older crypt dedicated to St. Barbara, which boasts the tomb of the patron saint. We spent over three hours contemplating the mosaics. They looked like they had been assembled only yesterday. Brilliant colors, balanced symmetrical composition, and easy-to-read programs. The frescos paled after this display. They would themselves have been indeed memorable, if only they were not overshadowed. They had only minor deterioration and were readable with ease. Unfortunately for us Latins, however, they were mostly dedicated to Greek monastic saints unknown to us. It was clear from the lingering incense that we had arrived just an hour or so after the Divine Liturgy. In the narthex, there were candles, so I dropped in a Euro coin and lit one for my sister. Reginald discovered a large glass container filled with what seemed to be Turkish (Greek?) Delight. Next to this was a plate with fragments of blessed bread from the distribution after the Liturgy. He tried one: wow, this was unlike any Turkish Delight he had ever had! That usually tastes like tough insipid Jell-O with a dusting of powered sugar. These were wonderful creamy sweets. We dropped in a few more Euros and each had two. After Reginald and Gregory went on, I dropped in another Euro and took more for us to snack on as we drove on to Delphi.

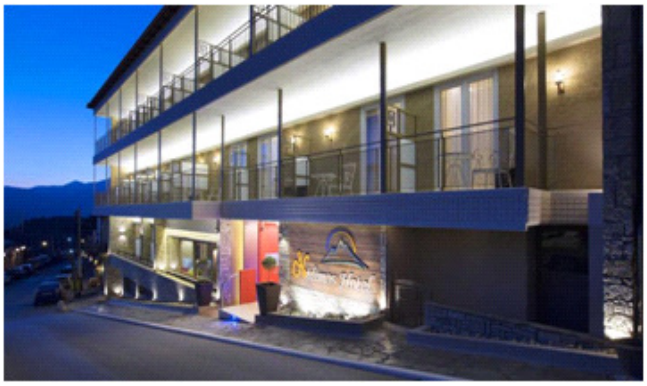
Apse Madonna and Pentecost Dome
Hosios Loukas

Reginald and I went around to the crypt, where the frescos were badly deteriorated, but the ambiance was very impressive. We prayed at the saint's tomb (he

is pre-schism), and I lighted a candle for my friend Barbara Gordley since the crypt is dedicated to her patron saint. Outside the crypt, we met up with Gregory and toured the monastery grounds. The living quarters of the monks (of which there are currently five) are behind the medieval buildings. These are open to visitors: the warming room, the stables, the storehouses, and the refectory. The last was destroyed during World-War-II bombing and has been rebuilt as a museum from the fragments of the original structure and other remnants of the medieval complex. As we were headed back to our car, we stopped at the gift shop. The hand-painted icons were exquisite and bargain-basement priced. I bought a small one of St. Luke of Stiri for my office. Reginald and Gregory bought patronal icons for friends and other friars. Outside, a non-aggressive barker coaxed us into this shop with a promise of hot chocolate. As it was rather cold up in the mountains, this could not be resisted. He plied us with various sweets and tried to sell us some local wine. We resisted, but enjoyed the hot, excellent, chocolate. On the road again, we backtracked through the small towns and were soon on the highway.

Tomb of St. Luke of Stiri (Hosios Loukas) in the Crypt

The half-hour drive to Delphi was uneventful, except for a bottleneck in a small ski resort town just before Delphi. No snow on the ground here, but plenty of people, and cars and trucks, on the barely two-lane road through town. Actually it was often one-lane because of parked cars. At one point we had to wait for on-coming traffic to come through before our side of the road could pass the intersection. The trip into Delphi was easy, save for one wrong turn, and we arrived at the Nidimos Hotel. I ran in to find out where to park the car: in the garage under the



Nidimos Hotel, Delphi

hotel. A too-sharp turn into the garage caught us up on the curb. At last, the kind manager of the hotel arrived to get the car off the curb and drive it down the narrow descent to parking. *Deo gratias*. Our rooms proved very nice, with splendid balcony views of the Gulf of Corinth framed by mountains. The couple who managed the place could not have been kinder and more gracious. Their pre-school children charmed us with their practice of English. The manager suggested dinner across the street at Το Πατρικό μας, which means "Our Homestead." We where only the second party in the restaurant and got a table right in front of the blazing fire. Sadly, it was dark outside, so the views from the panoramic windows opening on the mountains and gulf were hidden from view. I had stewed rabbit that was so good I knew I would have it again the next night. We all passed a restful night, turning in early so we could get an early start in the morning.

Το Πατρικό μας

DAY 22: January 25—Delphi

Mount Parnasus from Delphi

We were up early today, but not too early (the site does not open until 9 a.m.), and, after the manager retrieved our car from the underworld, we drove two miles down the road to the remains of the shrine of Delphi. Gregory had explained that the ancient Greeks chose sacred sites because some natural feature, like the calcium deposits at Hieropolis back in Turkey, had singled them out. The superb views of the mountains and Gulf of Corinth certainly marked out Delphi as a place chosen by the gods. The shrine is high up on a spur of Mount Parnassus, above the deep river valley of the Phocis, which flows

down to the gulf. It is no surprise that it was venerated from pre-classical times. It also helped that it is so far out in nowhere that it did not fall under control of any of the militarily important city states. After a little trouble finding parking, we walked down to the site entrance, seemingly just about the only visitors so far today.

The Sacred Way, Roman Forum, Delphi

Inside, we found ourselves in the Roman forum section, with its Sacred Way. This is marked by massive retaining walls and column bases. In antiquity, Gregory explained, this would have been a giant religious goods and paraphernalia market. Shops would have sold votive articles, souvenir statuettes, and other tourist bric-a-brac. Apparently they did a very good business, as the shops were nicely built of cut stone. From the shopping district, the Sacred Way rose to the temple of Apollo. This broad way might best be called brag way. Although they are mostly nothing but crumbling foundations and broken column bases now, this was a area of votive monuments to city victories, usually over the city whose monument was across the road. A sort of in-your-face one upmanship. One monument had a collection of something like 36 larger-than-life statues of the city's famous general-politicians and warriors. Some foundations were semi-circular, the remains for pavilions to shelter heroic statues of worthies or votive offerings (e.g. a giant bronze bull) dedicated to the god Apollo.

Treasury of the Athenians

As you go up the hill, you reach the first of the "treasuries." These temple-like structures were storage places for each cities votive offerings, trophies from defeated armies, and money. Only that of Athens exists today, and it is a reconstruction from the early twentieth century. On the other hand, it does give a good idea of what kind of buildings the pilgrims would have

passed on their way up to the temple. The one thing lacking is the ancient garish polychrome. Also missing is the massive clutter of votive statues, memorial monuments, and dedication plaques that would have filled just about all the free space. In the museum, there is a reproduction of a nineteenth-century French painting that gets this right. So different from the chaste open white marble vista of the neo-classical imagination. As you climb past the Stoa of the Athenians, where column bases of five of the six columns of the colonnade remain, you can see a fragment of its marble facing, covered with inscriptions. Here too, we miss an important element of ancient shrines and pubic buildings: the legal, votive, and commemorative texts that were carved into just about every flat space on the marble. That was writing for the ages.

Stoa of the Athenians

The Temple of Apollo and the Pedestal of the Sphinx

After passing one of the last easily identifiable votive pedestals, some 60 feet high and once topped by the huge sphinx preserved in the museum, you turn to the left and face the podium of the temple with the four restored columns of its original six that held up the eastern porch. With some imagination, one can picture the facade with the central door to the cella, behind which was (in some place now unknown) the seat of the Pythia, the oracle of Apollo. Pythia comes from "Python," the mythical snake killed by Apollo on this site according one of the half-dozen or so foundation stories told of the shrine. Another

has two eagles sent by Zeus meeting here. Some combine versions of both stories. The extant temple is essentially a podium, whose huge marble stones are marred by gouges where later salvagers hacked out the iron clamps that held the stones together. The temple had become more valuable as a stone and metal quarry than as a building.

Theater of Delphi from Above

Directly up the steep hillside from the temple is the theater. Cut into the hillside, many of the original seats are intact, although even they are fragmented. The orchestra is open to the public and gives a splendid view of the valley over the ruins of the temple. This view would, in antiquity, have been blocked by the temple itself. From here on, the climb became even more precipitous. Reginald, the usual mountain goat, began to grumble. But the arrival of a large group of elderly Asian women tourists urged him on. "Well, if those old ladies can do the climb . . ." The goal of our climb was the stadium, high up the hill. This and the theater reminded us that music and plays, as well as sports, were essential parts of the ancient cult. The stadium is perhaps the best preserved part of the site, at least on its uphill side. There are seats for spectators, special benches for judges, starting gates, and a finish line. Again, however, the "you cannot go here" ropes kept us out. On the way down, we reached the temple again, and, in a fit of law-breaking mania, I stepped

The Stadium of Delphi

over the rope and stood on the side steps of the podium. Take that you nanny docents! We retraced our steps and took the road down toward the lower parts of the complex, in their own way, as important as those already seen.


Sacred Spring, Delphi

The first and most ancient is the Sacred Spring, still flowing today. The three periods of construction are clearly visible, although none of these has water flowing today. Rather, it is diverted to a small spigot near the road. I took some of the water and sprinkled it on Reginald. At least one of us had to be purified before the day was done. Down the road, we passed the area of the ancient gymnasium, where athletes trained outside and inside (on rainy days) before competing in the stadium up the mountain. This large open field, with broken stones and column fragments, was closed because it was off-season. But we got a decent view from the road. Further down, we took the descent to the temple of Athena Pronaia, that is, the "entry temple of Athena." This was the first structure encountered by pilgrims who had made the extremely strenuous climb from the valley. It was, for me, something of a disappointment. The buildings—three of the five are treasuries—are very fragmentary, except for a round temple with columns, and all are modern reconstructions. It was easy to miss the temple of Athena, as it is just a few broken foundation blocks. In addition, there was a crowd of French tourists, as Reginald called it, a veritable "Egyptian plague of frogs." We fled the noisy talking and uncouth youth, and scaled the climb back to the road.


Sanctuary of Athena Pronaia

There we found something new since our passing an hour earlier: a car that had somehow been backed off the cliff on the downhill side of the road. It was caught up on its drive train, and the back end balanced in the air. No driver was in evidence.

One last climb of the day awaited us, that up the road to the museum. On arrival, it being afternoon, there was time for a break with water and a rest. Reginald decided that he needed a sugar boost, so he had orange aid. We spent about a half hour recuperating and enjoying the view, but soon the brisk breeze threatened to blow our cups away. As expected, the museum exhibits began with Cycladic Chickens and koroi. The later, in this case, being the most intact classical specimens in existence and very famous. I think I might have begun to appreciate these fellows. The same exhibit hall showcased the museum's enormous collection of bronze fragments, these like many of the other artifacts, saved because they were buried on the site after being damaged in a fire. For me, the centerpiece of this part of the exhibit was the collection of metopes and the frieze of the temple destroyed in the fire. These were pre-classical and a bit stiff, but they preserved much of their original paint job. This was what Greek sculpture is supposed to look like.

Colossal Sphinx

But the collection so far paled before what came next: the giant sphinx that once graced that great pedestal before the temple. A strange human-faced lion with wings, almost completely intact. It even had a tiny bit of its paint. Next to it, was a room of the most unexpected artifacts. First, a reassembled life-sized silver bull, a votive offering to Apollo. The original was silver plate over a wooden frame, the hooves, eyes, and other decorations picked out in still-extent gilding. Even in its mutilated and crushed condition, one can sense the absolute otherness of classical

Chrysoelephantine Sculptures

Greece. But that otherness was nothing compared to that of the "chrysoelephantine" masks of the wooden cult statues of Athena, again saved because of the fire. The gold plating is mostly intact and bright; the ivory that represented the flesh of the deity is carbonized, but in one case restored with wax to give an idea of the original shape. The result is eerie and weird. But one gets some idea of the effect made by the giant cult statue of Athena in the Parthenon, which was also of the same ivory and gold composition. In the end, we all agreed that no other museum on our trip had such a concentrated collection of this quality. Nor was it rivaled for the diversity and otherness of the objects.

Tired, we piled into the car and took the short hop back to the Nidimos Hotel. The manager parked the car, and we all went up to siesta. Mine was a bit short because of the need to print more maps for tomorrow's drive south. Another superb dinner followed at our "Homestead." Then I was asleep before I could remember it.

DAY 23: January 26—Drive to Sparta

Today was to be the longest road trip of the entire vacation. From Delphi to modern Sparta is about 220 miles, perhaps, in theory, something a little over four hours. But things turned out to be very different. After a fortifying breakfast from the hotel buffet, the manager retrieved our car from the depths of the earth, and we were off by 8:30 a.m. on the

View from Highway 3 from Delphi

nearly empty streets of Delphi. The traffic was non-existent as we passed the ruins and reached the open road east. Even the passage though the narrow streets of the ski town of Arachova was easy. The vacationers seem to have slept in. It took about an hour of driving, passing the cutoff for Distomo, to exit the mountains and all signs of snow. As we traveled eastward, we encountered some fog and low lying haze, but not enough to slow down the light traffic As in our journey over to Delphi, we found this stretch of road very picturesque, especially as it meandered through the snow-capped hills and narrow valleys. At about 11 a.m., we reached again the town of Thiba. The maze of city streets presented only a minor delay in our finding the road south. After a bit of confusion from unclear road signs, we stopped, and Gregory, using his best New Testament Greek, got some help from a pedestrian as to the "way to Sparta" (*odos dia Sparti*).

As we left the city limits, it seemed time to fuel the car, which had under a quarter of a tank. We pulled into the Papakos BP service station, and a woman came running out to fill the car. She quickly understood that we wanted a full tank, but seemed a bit confused that we wanted diesel. "Diesel?" she said twice. And we assured her that was right. Reginald paid for the fuel, and we were off on the increasingly picturesque country road south. Suddenly, the engine began to knock. The knocking got worse and worse, and then the car lost power. Some kind of problem. We did a U-turn and made it back to the service station. The kind service station couple brought us into their warm office, gave us mineral water and Greek coffee, and helped us get phone contact with the rental office in Athens. The contact there quickly identified the problem: the rental car had a gasoline engine, not a diesel. I went out to the car, and sure enough in clear French, German, and English the instructions on the fuel door said "benzine without lead." The Athens contact was very interested in identifying the agent who told us that the car was a diesel. We then learned that there would be three hour wait while

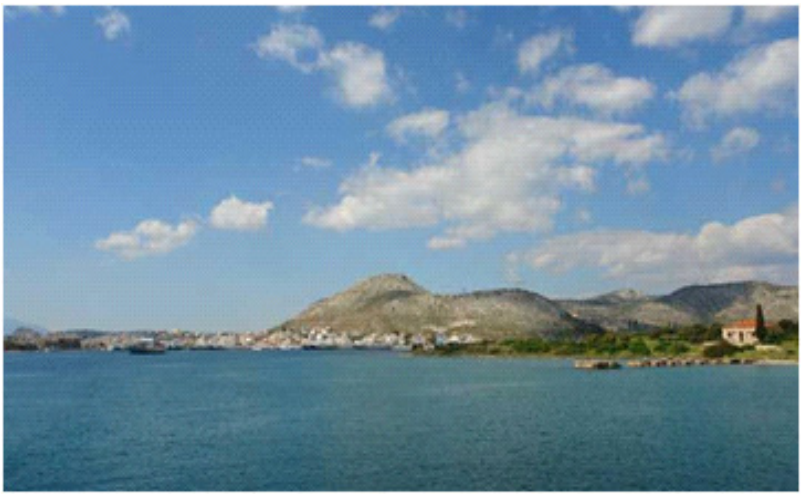
Papakos BP Service Station outside of Thiva

they found us a new car and delivered it from Athens. Our wonderful hosts tried to offer us pastries, more coffee, water, and finally homemade spirits that tasted just like Italian grappa. The older member of the family, who had distilled the spirits himself, turned out to have passable English. He had been thirty years in the merchant marine and even spent a month in San Francisco during the 1960s. Eventually we ensconced ourselves in the more comfortable seats of the defunct rental car and passed the remaining couple of hours reading paperback novels (Reginald and I) or books on kindle (Gregory). I also took some walks up and down the road to stretch my legs.

Finally, after the long wait, the new car arrived. A Toyota, somewhat smaller than the BMW. After finding a way to fit all our baggage into the back seat and the area under the hatchback, we were finally back on the road to Sparta. As it was now well after two in the afternoon, we regretfully decided that a stop in Corinth to see the ruins and Acropolis there would be impossible, if we were to get to the hotel in Sparta by nightfall. Everyone being hungry, or at least thirsty, we stopped in the next small town to get some lunch. Local cheese, ham, mineral water, and olives were found at a well-stocked delicatessen. There, the very helpful clerk helped Reginald make his selection and gave us advice on where to find bread. A stop at the local bakery provided a baguette. We pilled into the car, and Reginald used the removable "rear window shelf" as a table on his lap so he would whip up some sandwiches as we rolled down the road through flat farm country most of the way. I would continue feeding Gregory left-over sandwiches and sesame brittle for the rest of the drive. Coming around the western ring-road around Athens, we

Greek Deli, Cheese Selection

picked up the super-highway along the coast. Soon we were flying along, making up a little bit of time. Again, as on the day trip to Eleusis, we enjoyed clear skies and sun, which made the Gulf of Salamis even more spectacular.



Gulf of Salamis from the E94 Highway

The drive was made even more pleasurable by the lack of traffic. Then, after perhaps 45 minutes of smooth sailing, traffic appeared, and we were bogged down. And then it happened: police cars were blocking the highway and forcing everyone to exit onto a narrow secondary road along the coast. Bumper-to-bumper traffic in both directions suggested something wrong, as we paralleled the empty super-highway. Finally, when we reached the Corinth toll booth on the highway, we could see that the main road was blocked by tractors, cars, tables, and tents. A crowd of angry men lined the secondary road (sometimes blocking it too) and shouting at the passing cars. The natives definitely looked unfriendly. We managed to escape the mob, but were still on the secondary road all the way across the Isthmus of Corinth, passing well away from both the new and ancient city. Later, checking the internet at the hotel, I discovered that this blockage was caused by striking farmers protesting the government's austerity plans implemented to satisfy the E.U. They had blocked the highway a week earlier and were still blocking it when we left

Protesting Greek Farmers Block the Corinth Tollbooth

Greece a week later. I also found out that the earlier diversion on the way to Delphi was caused by striking truck-drivers. They had blocked the major highway to Thessalonika just north of our diversion a week earlier, and, it seems, still had it blocked when we left for home.

Finally, well past Corinth, we were allowed back on the superhighway. This route passed through the highest mountains we had seen so far, very steep, rocky, and heavily snow-covered. Splendid, to use Reginald's term. When we passed the town of Tripoli, about half way from Corinth to Sparta, the highway ended, and we were on a secondary road, which was, if anything, a more spectacular drive than the toll road. The mountains become more rugged, the snow mass deeper and more vividly white. The highway began to wind and sometimes turn back on itself. I found myself uttering quiet prayers of thanks for Gregory's safe driving. Reginald napped in the back seat.

The Taygetus Range in the Peloponnesus

It was after dusk when we finally entered modern Sparta. It was hard to read the road map in the dark, and we were soon lost. Gregory parked, and I trotted back to a well-lighted supermarket for directions. The girl at the checkout proved to have perfect, unaccented, English. She stopped processing shoppers and took me outside to point our the directions. In fact, we were almost at the hotel. "Go three blocks to the light, turn right, go to the main street, Constantinou Paleologou, and you are there.

We did the U-turn, followed the directions, turned on to Constantinou Paleologou. At that corner, I was about to hop out and get more directions, when eagle-eye Martin shouted: "Do we want a classic nineteenth-century hotel? There it is over there!" He had been reading up on the Menelaion Hotel, and had discovered in the guidebook that it was one of the nineteenth-century architectural landmarks of modern Sparta. We arrived to find that the hotel staff had put out barriers reserving a parking space for us right in front of the hotel. We piled out, dragged our bags in, and were directed to our lovely, if not spacious, rooms. By this time, we were a bit late for dinner, so after bag drop off in the rooms, we returned to the hotel's lounge and restaurant. Our waiter, a Greek repat from Onterio, Canada, was very helpful and knew how to make Martinis. We took his suggestions from the menu (mostly "international"). That being so, I had Carbonara, which my companions agreed was better than their choices. Then up to sleep only a bit past our usual bedtime.

Menelaion Hotel, Modern Sparta

DAY 24: January 27—Mystras

Today turned out to have just about the finest weather of our trip so far: partly sunny with a high of 58. Today was also our day to visit the ruins of Mystras—medieval Sparta—the secondary capital of the late Byzantine Empire, formally the capital of the Frankish crusader kingdom of the Morea. So, after a quick breakfast, during which we decided not to try and find our way to the ruins on our own, the desk clerk arranged for a car service to take us to the archeological site. Watch for a beige Mercedes, we were told. And soon it arrived, carrying the livery of the "Mercedes Taxi Service." The young driver picked us up from the sidewalk, and we were off. He introduced himself as *Kelis*, which means "Racer" in Greek, and he certainly lived up to his name. Always over the speed limit and cutting all his

The Modern Village of Mistra

curves. Along the way, he was often waving or shouting greetings to his friends and acquaintances outside of shops or restaurants. We passed through the modern village of Mistra, which finally lived up to our hopes for a "quaint" town. Indeed, we voted it a A- on the "cuteness scale," just about the highest rating of the whole trip. After passing the neat stone houses, elegant square, and charming stores of Mistra, we began a rapid climb up to the medieval ruins. These were clearly visible, clinging to the steep side of Mount Taygetus. Racer let us off at the gate and give us his card so we could call for a ride back to town in the afternoon.

The old city of Mystras has three levels: a "lower town" (already high on the slope), a "higher town" (much further up, site of most of the major ruins), and the mountain top citadel of the Frankish castle. Almost immediately inside the gates, we found ourselves surrounded by a French high-school tour group that Reginald quickly christened another "plague of frogs." Gregory, on the other hand, started up conversations with the teachers, chaperones, and some of the students. The "ruined" city has a number of intact or rebuilt struc tures, mostly churches. The largest of the ecclesiastical structures is the Metropolis or cathedral, built in the fourteenth century and always in use. It is still in use as the seat of the Orthodox

The Metropolis of Lacedaemonia

The Monemavia Gate

bishop of Lacedaemonia. After waiting for the students to clear out, we did a walk through of the nave. The vault and wall frescoes are medieval and fairly well preserved. They were of high quality. The iconostasis icons are eighteenth- and nineteenth-century and less impressive, although that of the Blessed Virgin was heavily decorated with votive plaques in the shape of body parts and organs, testimony to miraculous healing over the last two centuries. I admired the wood carving of the bishop's throne in the north aisle. Most memorable, perhaps, of the entire structure was the round marble inlay in the floor carved with a double-headed Byzantine eagle. Tradition has it that it was on this spot that the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine IX Paleologus, was crowned before he set off to his capital in Constantinople. The Paleologoi were intermarried with the Kantakouzenos family, who were the usual Greek rulers of Mystras and the Peloponnesus in the late middle ages.

We decided to avoid the students, who had gone off to visit the two Byzantine churches that served as the palace chapels until the Turkish conquest. So we began the steep ascent to the upper city, tripping along on the uneven cobbles of the narrow street. We took a short rest at the Monemvasia Gate, which has its medieval arrow ports and castle works almost completely intact. Still panting from the climb and sun, we finally made it to the Palace of the Despots, originally built by Frankish crusaders in the 1200s and massively expanded by the Greek despots in the 1300s. This was until recently only a shell, and partly open to tourists. In the last few years, the Greek government and the E.U. have begun to reconstruct the whole structure to serve as a museum. The Great Hall is

Palace of the Despots under Restoration

now roofed, and much of the rest of the L-shaped structure soon will be. Sadly this work means that tourists no longer have access. The transition from crusader Gothic to late Byzantine style was marked, as was the "fusion" sections of the building that partake of both styles. Much to our surprise, the Plague of Frogs had already arrived, and one of the teachers was giving a lecture on the architecture and history of the building. For the three of us, the post memorable tidbit of information was her observation that "Ceci montre la transition de le monde chrétien à celle byzantin." ("This shows the transition from the Christian to the Byzantine world.") An interesting transition that.

Pantanassa Monastery

Rather than go back down the hill to the skipped churches, we decided escape the students by taking an what the guide book called an unmarked ally, little more than a path, along the side of the hill among the basements of ruined houses and shops to the two major monasteries of the city. The first of these, the Pantanassa, is not only intact, but a functioning convent with five Greek Orthodox nuns. We heard harsh laughter as we came though the monastery gate, only to find ourselves face to face with a tethered mule. He looked at us and sounded off again, much louder. Perhaps the Orthodox mule found Catholics amusing. Two of the nuns, much more demure, were chatting in the courtyard passage between the convent and the stair to the church. We discretely slipped around them and went up to see their chapel. This proved to be (for me) interesting architecturally, another example of the cross in a square form, which we had also seen at the cathedral. As we entered, we ran into our first nanny docent of the day, who made sure we did not intend to take any photographs using a tripod. Having proved ourselves camera-free, she went back out to sit in the sun. We spent perhaps 20 minutes in the church, and, by the time we exited, the nuns were gone, probably inside for lunch. The shop where the guide book

said they "occasionally sell embroidery," was closed. So, making a quick detour around the four-legged door-keeper, we took the "unmarked path" to the Peribleptos monastery, which supposedly has the best fresco cycle in the city.


Peribleptos Monastery (Closed)

After some ups and downs on the winding trail, sometimes wondering if we were lost, we arrived at Peribleptos, which means basically "lookout," only to find that all seven doors to the building were locked. A sign next to the principal door read "Monastery Closed." So we were reduced to admiring the exterior form and the view of the valley. Happily, for those not given to climbing, the way back to the entrance of the grounds was nearly all down hill. Along the way, we passed the small church of St. George, which was closed, and the smaller church of St. Christopher, which was open. Inside there was a clunky barricade that seems to have been the iconostasis and some very degraded frescos. By this time, it seemed that we were the only visitors in the entire site. The French were gone, along with the stray American tourists that we passed on the way up to the palace. So we took the street past the cathedral, and began our last climb up to the original palace chapel, the Church of the Theodores. It was locked. But glass doors gave a view of the bare-walled nave. It seems that the frescos were defaced when it was a mosque and then destroyed by the elements when the structure fell into disrepair. Up the hill to the other Catholikon, we found a splendid view down on the Palace of the Despots, whose size only then become apparent.


Catholikon of the Palace (with Bell Tower)

Inside this second chapel, the frescos were fairly well preserved, especially a magnificent one of the Virgin Hodigetria in the second-floor dome above the narthex. Outside we met a friendly young Greek who was the local docent. Gregory and Reginald chatted with him about the plans for the Palace Museum while I admired the very Gothic bell tower. We wondered about a strange round brick structure, quite ruined, visible through the arches of the tower. This, the docent explained, is the lower part of the now-ruined minaret that had been placed on top of the tower when the church was made a mosque in the Ottoman period.

It was now mid-afternoon and approaching the closing time at 3:00 p.m. So, we descended to the gift shop, got three bottles of water out of a very stubborn vending machine (the shop clerk had to force it to disgorge its wares), and I went off to have the ticket taker call our taxi. Reginald and Gregory checked out the shop, which they declared the most disappointing of the trip. Racer arrived within 10 minutes in his Mercedes, and we were soon back at the hotel to rest our tired legs. We met in the hotel restaurant for our last dinner in Sparta. I got the Carbonara again, as did Gregory and Reginald, who split a plate as their starter. As the meal was finishing, our kind waiter arrived with complementary digestives for Reginald and me. But as I had already left for bed, Reginald had to do penance and drink both.

Menelaion Hotel Bar and Restaurant

DAY 25: January 28—Mycenae

Today dawned with spectacular weather, sunny skies and an expected high of 62 degrees. It was also the feast of our brother, Saint Thomas Aquinas, so we offered a celebratory Mass in honor of the Angelic Doctor before our quick breakfast. We then packed the car and were off on our way to Nafplio on the Argolic Gulf. But the real event of the day was to be our stop at the ancient ruins of Mycenae. The drive from Sparta to Mycenae is short, just an hour and a half. First, we retraced the secondary road through the mountains of the central Peloponnesus to Tripoli. enjoying the same magnificent scenery as on the trip down. After Tripoli we were on

Argolid Orange Groves from Highway 7

the superhighway for about 40 minutes, until the turnoff for Mycenae. This meant going on small secondary roads for the rest of the trip, but, for a change, the way to our destination was very well marked. As we came up through the citrus orchards of the valley of the Argolid, we could see, towering above us, the hill on which the ancient citadel is built, and a very impressive site it was. On pulling into the parking lot, we found ourselves confronted with three enormous tour buses and a pack of fifteen cats (duly counted). We were going to have to share Mycenae with a madding crowd of tourists. These proved to be mostly French and Americans. After paying for our tickets, we took the entrance road up to the citadel, but made a little by-pass to overlook the monumental tombs that lie outside the wall. Gregory, trusty guide in hand, explained that these are among the most impressive Mycenaean monuments, and that we should spend time at the end of the visit doing them justice. The most impressive of these is down the road, and we would make a stop to see it when we left for Nafplio in the afternoon.

We then took the fairly steep stone pathway up to what is probably the best known feature of the ancient city, the Lions' Gate, which was mostly excavated and restored by Schliemann's wife. Pictures do not do it justice because they fail totally in giving an idea of the massive size of the gate itself and of the "Cyclopean" stones of the walls. As we stood marveling, the voice of an

The Lions' Gate, Mycenae

American teenager was heard explaining the monument to some of his friends: "You do know ancient astronauts built this, right? Everyone knows that no human being could move these stones; they were put here by extraterrestrials." Also, usually missing in the photos is that the road up to the gate is steeply inclined, so its height is even more impressive because you are walking uphill to it. Inside the gate, we turned right to look at the most ancient tombs at Mycenae. The oldest are shaft tombs from 1800 to 1700 B.C., later reworked, as a sacred site in the period 1700 to 1600 B.C. They are now stone-lined shafts surrounded by a oval double wall of cut stone, once filled with rubble. Now the they seem a kind or circular path with thin stone walls—I ignored a "you cannot go here rope," and investigated the pathway for a bit. Beyond the tombs, there is cult center. This is mostly foundations, and the central part of the shrine is covered with a modern structure to protect it and the archeological team digging there.

The Palace of Mycenae

Up the paved path to the upper citadel and the Mycenaean palace, we found ourselves again surrounded by the "Plague of Frogs." They soon dissipated and were replaced by an American tour group, which Gregory discovered to be from Ball State University in Ohio. As he chatted up the students, Reginald and I went on ahead to examine the palace. Much of this is hard to make out, but we found we could read the remains, if we found them on the site map and read the explanatory markers that are placed at convenient intervals. Impressive as the remains are, what overwhelmed all three of us were the precipitous cliffs of the ravine on the crest of which the citadel was built. These must drop some 200 feet straight down. How any soldiers, ancient or modern, could have scaled this drop-off and then gotten over the Cyclopean walls, is beyond me. The only part of the structure that seemed

Entrance to the Cistern of Mycenae

at all passable would have been the uphill wall of the citadel, but that was well fortified and protected by a two hidden sally ports.

The great weakness of Mycenae would have been its lack of water sources, which would have made it vulnerable to long sieges. But this was solved by cutting an enormous cistern out of the bedrock foundation, going down some 40 feet. According to the guide book it is "sometimes" possible to go down into the cistern "when it is open." Gregory and Reginald were of the opinion that, given the time of year, it must be closed. I went off down a steep stair that I figured might take us to the cistern entrance. Sure enough! At the bottom, in the darkness there was what looked like a further stair down into the pitch blackness. I called Gregory and Reginald, and they came down. The guide book said you needed a "flash" to go down into the cistern, and, sure enough, Reginald had a small flashlight with him. Gregory was amazed and asked Reginald what he didn't take with him. Sadly, the tiny light did little but show that stairs went down, and down. An overlooked sign confirmed this was the cistern. I wanted to jump the saw horse blocking the stair and see what was below, but Reginald and Gregory looked at me as if I were crazy.

The exit from the citadel took us along the ramparts on the hill side of the city, which there overlooked what seemed miles of citrus and olive groves. One could imagine the same sort of agriculture in the second millennium B.C. Before the exit from the site, we visited the large and distinguished museum. This

Orange Groves from the Citadel of Mycenae

had a very interesting introductory exhibit with photographs of the site before, during, and after the nineteenth and early-twentieth-century archeological projects. I found the pre-reconstruction photos of the Lions' Gate the most interesting. The gate was intact, but much of the upper stonework had to be put back in position. Although most of Schliemannn's most spectacular finds are now in London, Athens, and Paris, the pottery and domestic ware that he ignored is, in large part, what you see here. We had a chance to examine what was probably the largest collection of Cycladic Chickens at any stop on the trip. There was an extensive display of cooking ware, including finely crafted bronze cooking pots. Finally, there was an informative exhibit of examples of Linear B, the deciphering of which still seems impossible to me.

Cycladic Chicken, Mycenae

Outside, after an unfulfilling stop at the museum store (I was tempted to buy a repro Chicken, but held back), we returned toward the parking lot to visit the "tholus" or underground beehive tombs. There was one of these, a smaller but well preserved one, just outside the museum, and Gregory explained its structure: a walled roadway cut into the side of the hill, entering a round structure. This was then vaulted with a dome and the whole recovered with earth. After the burial, the entrance way was also covered. In theory, the tomb was thus hidden from robbers, but none seems to have escaped antiquity unscathed. We returned to the overlook above the two tombs we passed on our way into the citadel. Those are traditionally identified as that of Aigisthos and that of Clytemnestra. Gregory explained that there is no good reason to identify the tombs with those

"Tomb of Clytemnestra"

Inside the "Tomb of Agamemnon"

legendary figures, just as it is equally absurd to link the huge tomb we were going to see later with Atreus or Agamemnon. The later identifications having been made in antiquity by Pausanias. Reginald was left open-mouthed in shock. I noted that, historically speaking, there is no way to prove a negative, so it is always possible that the eponymous worthies did get buried there at some point. Reginald heaved a dramatic sign of relief; Gregory rolled his eyes. Whatever their reaction to the rest of this ancient site, the three major tombs overwhelmed me. The massive stone blocks, in the case of the "Treasury of Atreus," about 30 feet long, 10 feet high, and who knows how deep, made the teenager's invocation of extraterrestrials seem a little less absurd. After examining the interiors of the two tombs next to the city, we hiked up to the parking lot. I now realized that a stone in the ground that I had seen on our brief visit earlier in the day marked the zenith of one of the tomb domes. And there was no "you cannot go here rope." I wanted to run over and jump up and down on it so as to test the stonework. Gregory said "No!" but Reginald just rolled his eyes.

Citadel of Tiryns

After our stop at the "Tomb of Agamemnon," we briefly stopped in the modern town of Mycenae to get a snack for the road. The city is filled with tourist-trap hotels, all this names like "Agamemnon," and "Aphrodite." The road south to Nafplio took us through fields of citrus, which Reginald identified as tangerines. We passed the Mycenaean citadel of Tiryns, which, from the road, looked even more monumental than Mycenae itself, probably because it was on the flat. Gregory

informed us that a Mycenaean public latrine is preserved inside the walls. Sadly it was past 3 p.m. and the site was closed. By the time we got to the resort town of Nafplio, it was getting late in the afternoon. The trip down had been easy, but once again the city streets defied our print-out map. According to the map, the easiest way to get to our hotel, the Grande Bretagne, was to take the road along the water. As we were going in circles, and I was helpless as a guide, Gregory finally cried out, "Let's go to the beach!" He soon found his way into a beach-front public parking lot, where a local told us the Grande Bretagne was just outside the exit, right in the direction we were pointing.

Hotel Grande Bretagne, Napftio

On leaving the parking lot, we were in a waterfront square of exquisite beauty. And there, right on the square, was the hotel. Gregory pulled over, and I ran in to find were to park the car. The desk clerk came out, and I motioned to Gregory to pull into the private street separating the square from the hotel. No parking was allowed there or anyplace on the square we were told. After some brief confusion, Reginald and I unloaded, and Gregory took the car back to the public lot. The Grande Bretagne was built in 1870, at the height of the "Grand Tour." The rooms were lavish. The clerk, realizing that Gregory was exhausted, give him the prime real estate: the bridal suite, complete with canopied bed, huge bath, and a double balcony overlooking the square and the water. Gregory retired for a nap. Reginald and I unpacked. I went down in the open elevator, and the gracious clerk gave me free wine for saying Mass. Then Reginald and I did a reconnoiter of the neighborhood. The harbor district of Napftio was stunning, the buildings charming, the water sparkling blue.

We had gotten some suggestions for restaurants near the hotel. These turned

out to specialize in fish, more fish, live music, and tourist food. A strikeout for the carnivores among us. But we did locate a very local place, the Alaloum. Reginald described the clientele as "truck drivers and students." It was not a tourist joint. We settled on it. The Ottoman fortress at the end of the jetty glowed beige brown against the hazy blue mountains on the other side of the bay. This called for Tom Collinses and chairs in the outside pavilion. This pavilion was "closed," but the ever-accommodating clerk said we could use it, and he followed us running, bringing pads for our chairs, drinks, and a bowl of salted nuts. Reginald and I luxuriated for an hour. We went in at a little after six, cleaned up, and got Gregory. Our little student place turned out to specialize in deep-fried. I had the deep-fried *Bacalao*" (salted cod), which was unmemorable. Gregory and Reginald had varieties of domestic pork, both in a local sauce. Fortified, we took Gregory on a short tour of the neighborhood, but mostly spent our time admiring the water, the castle on the jetty, and the sweep of the bay. Turning to face the hotel, we realized that towering over the whole city was what looked like a massive volcanic cone, topped by a brightly illuminated crusader fortress citadel. Splendid! We thus returned to the hotel with an dream image already in our heads. Tomorrow would be our last day on the road, with a stop in Corinth, and then the Athens Airport. I, at least, slept very well.

Alaloum Restaurant

DAY 26: January 29—Corinth

After a quick breakfast from the hotel's buffet, we were ready to pack and be on our way to visit Ancient Corinth. By general consensus, I would say, the Grande Bretagne was the nicest hotel of the trip, stately and elegant. The waterfront area of Napftio was exquisitely located and breathtaking in its beauty. Finally, we could agree that a mainland city of Greece had charmed us. One night hardly seemed enough. It was a lovely sunny day, with temperatures in the 60s. As we drove north through the citrus and olive groves, I fell asleep for about an hour or so, sitting in the

back seat for a change. When I awoke, we were already about to pass Tripoli. As we sped along on the superhighway, there suddenly appeared, as we rounded a mountain, Arcocorinth, the ancient mountain fortress that guards the isthmus. It has been a stronghold from ancient to modern times, serving the Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Franks, the Byzantines again, and finally the Ottomans. It mystified me how anyone could have taken it by siege, but Gregory explained that it had been taken several times, after long investments.

Our destination was not Acrocorinth, however, but the lower city, that where St. Paul was arraigned before the Roman governor Gallio. The road to the archeological park was well-marked until the last winding streets through the little village outside the park. We parked, and Gregory and Reginald stopped for coffee, tea, and a snack. I went off to find the ticket booth. It turned out to be way up the road we were on, past a long section of tourist shops. There was an icon shop on the corner across from the café, and Gregory and Reginald succumbed to the temptation. The elderly proprietress was very insistent, and soon both Gregory and Reginald made purchases. I went in to find them and, unable to resist the hard sell, also bought a piece. All were hand-painted, supposedly by monks of the Meteora, and the prices were good. Outside we met a newly-married American couple, two students from Brigham Young University. We exchanged pleasantries and agreed to meet in the archeological park. I had earlier bought the tickets and gotten the bad news: the museum was closed. But we would have much to see before driving to Athens.

Arcocorith

Outside the enclosure, we first viewed the theater and the odeon, both from the time of Hadrian and both bankrolled by, of course, Herodus Atticus. The first ruin inside the gates was a Nymphaeum, a fountain, this time carved out of a massive piece of bedrock, a cube perhaps 30 feet high. It had been hollowed out and made into

a delivery system for the water that was piled in from the hills to be distributed through marble founts, now gone. But this object paled before the most striking structure in the site, at least for Reginald and me, the podium and remains of the temple of Apollo. These stand on a raise above the forum, framed by the mountains surrounding the Gulf of Corinth. Against the blue of the gulf and the green of the mountains, the pale marble Doric columns are striking. We walked around them (outside the "you cannot go here ropes"), with Gregory explaining the temple and how it functioned in the cult. After getting our coordinates from a map display of the forum, we took the path down into the very place where St. Paul walked and preached. Gregory was obviously moved and getting very excited. Then, around a corner appeared the young American couple. As he had promised, Gregory gave them a superb tour, which they seemed to enjoy very much. As he had already explained much of this to us, Reginald and I wondered off, each on our own. I investigated the area of shops on the west side of the forum and located a round monument base built by a wealthy woman patron whose name escapes me. Finally, I took my time deciphering the Latin inscriptions that seemed to cover every inch of the marble facing that lay in heaps on the open field of the forum. Reginald got his necessary "column fix" and took his time admiring carving and capital fragments.

Temple of Apollo, Corinth

Latin Dedicatory Inscriptions in the Forum

We all came together in the middle of the ancient forum, not far from the rostrum or bema, which is one of the two places where Paul might have stood before Gallio. At the couple's request, the five of us did a "selfie" using their camera. A first for the three of us at least. On top of the rostrum are the foundations of an early Byzantine church, now none higher than a foot or so high. This is, in fact, the official Orthodox cathedral of modern Corinth. But it is only used once a year, on the vigil of the Feast of St. Paul, when the clergy and people come to sing Great Vespers. I spent some time absorbing the feel of the place. Gregory examined some pedestals in the middle of the forum; Reginald found some column capitals to admire. We all then converged on the Julian Basilica, the court building that is the other possible site of the trial of Paul. It is now just foundations and rubble. From there, we walked over to the first-century fountain court on the north-east corner of the forum. The courtyard and the walls where the founts were are very much intact, and this was the one place were I could imagine the ancients, in this case mostly women, drawing water, gossiping, and going about their shopping. The men would have probably been in the baths next door, now wholly ruined.

The Rostrum of Corinth

West Range of the Forum of Corinth

The last part of the forum was the eastern range of shops, now little more than foundations. But there is also a fragment of floor mosaic, sadly roped off and under a modern protective cover. We passed the site of the public latrines (gone) and made a pit stop at the museum. It was open for "public accommodation." This meant that there were seven or eight idle curators siting around smoking and chatting. They were, apparently, enough to guard the bathroom, but not sufficient to protect the sculptures. We did peek into the courtyard briefly, taking in the collection of statues, most headless, and all looking Hadrianic in style. Sadly, we did not see the Gallio inscription naming him as governor at the time Paul visited, which, I think, is the most famous item in the museum.

Statues in the Courtyard of the Museum
(Closed for Lack of Staffing)

After one last look at the temple of Apollo against the gulf, we headed off to the airport. The drive was easy going on the superhighway until just after crossing the isthmus canal. Then, we were diverted off onto the secondary road. Yes, the farmers' protest blocking the toll road was still going strong. This time, however, there was no gauntlet of jeering workers to manoeuver through, just a long, slow trip on a secondary road through the oil refineries. About a half hour past the isthmus we were allowed back on the toll road. The trip to the outskirts of Athens went quickly, and we were soon on the ring road. This circle route turned out to a much longer trip than expected. The

Highway 62 to the Athens Airport

big loop around the city brought us so far north that I began to wonder whether we had taken a wrong turn. But no, it was the right highway. It took another 40 minutes to loop around the east side of Athens and get to the airport. After one missed turn, we were in the rental car lot. Then followed a short hike with our bags to the Sofitel lobby.

Our Hotel at the Athens Airport

This is clearly a hotel that deals with a transient clientele, and the expectation of deadbeats and intruders was obvious: prepay if you want to use the phone, prepay a deposit if you want the key to the minibar, door card required for the elevator . . . On the other hand, this was the kind of place that knew how to make a Martini. Reginald approved and ordered seconds. Dinner was good, if rather uninteresting, international cuisine. And we were early to bed. But not before a final toast to another 25 years of priesthood for Gregory, and a promise to do it all over again after another 25. And so we parted. We would have to leave the hotel at 5:30 a.m. to walk over for our flight check in. Gregory's flights, first to Istanbul and then to Tel Aviv, would not leave until late morning. As it was his vacation, he deserved at least one day to sleep in.

DAY 27: January 30—Flights to Oakland


Breakfast Buffet at the Airport Sofitel

So Reginald was up before five. I was up even earlier at four, as I had received the news that my sister had passed the previous day, in the afternoon, her time. So I wanted to say a Mass for her before I had to hurry down and meet Reginald in the restaurant. Well, the one thing the Sofitel does well is the breakfast buffet, the most lavish of the trip.

Everything was splendid as far as I was concerned, although Reginald did not consider the bacon up to his usual standards. After some extra coffee and tea, we pulled our bags after us to the departure terminal. Clearing check in and other legalities got us on the plane by half past seven. The 8:00 a.m. British Air flight to Heathrow was the duplicate of our trip from Heathrow to Istanbul: the same flexible business class seating, with the middle seat covered by a fit-in table. And we got our second breakfast of the day. This was to be the day of extra meals. I took the light fruit option, but Reginald got the English Breakfast. Superior bacon, he announced. And, by 10 o'clock local time, we were on the ground at Heathrow.

Athens Airport Duty Free

We would have a five-hour wait for our late-afternoon departure for San Francisco. Reginald stopped in duty-free to pick up a bottle of Metaxa as a gift for a friend. I was amused by a couple-hundred-dollar bottle of Jack Daniel's called "Sinatra Reserve," but was not a bit tempted to buy. We then parked ourselves in the business lounge, having found it with much less trouble than we had during the flight coming from the United States. After identifying the best chairs and the table best arranged for computer use, we set to amusing ourselves. Reginald finished a long novel he had been reading; I spent three hours of the time working on this journal. About noon, Reginald wandered over and checked out the buffet. He came back with steak. This was a full-service lunch, with wine or mixed drinks, if desired. I had a chicken pasta and salad. By the time we finished up eating and getting our gear in order, we had about 90 minutes till gate time. The plane left on time, and the first order of business in business class was "dinner," one hour into the flight. I took the fruit; Reginald had the steak sandwich, which he approved. He then went to sleep. I decided to stay awake because it would be bedtime when we got home to St. Albert's, and I feared insomnia from jet lag. I watched *The Martian*, *Mission Impossible*, and half of *The Man*


British Airways Business Class

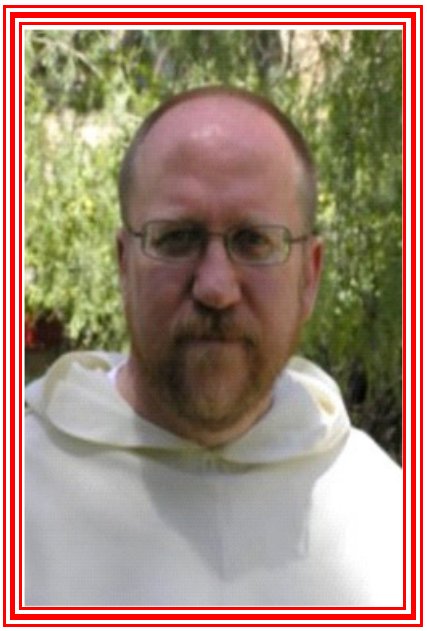
from U.N.C.L.E. Honestly, I don't remember most of these movies' plots; I was simply trying to keep awake. Two hours out of San Francisco, they served us "supper." Well, it had been a long day, so why not have two evening meals to match the two in the morning? Oddly, I was able to eat about half of what they served, but cannot remember what it was. We landed at bit early at 7:30 p.m. Pacific Time.

BART Train for Rockridge, SFO

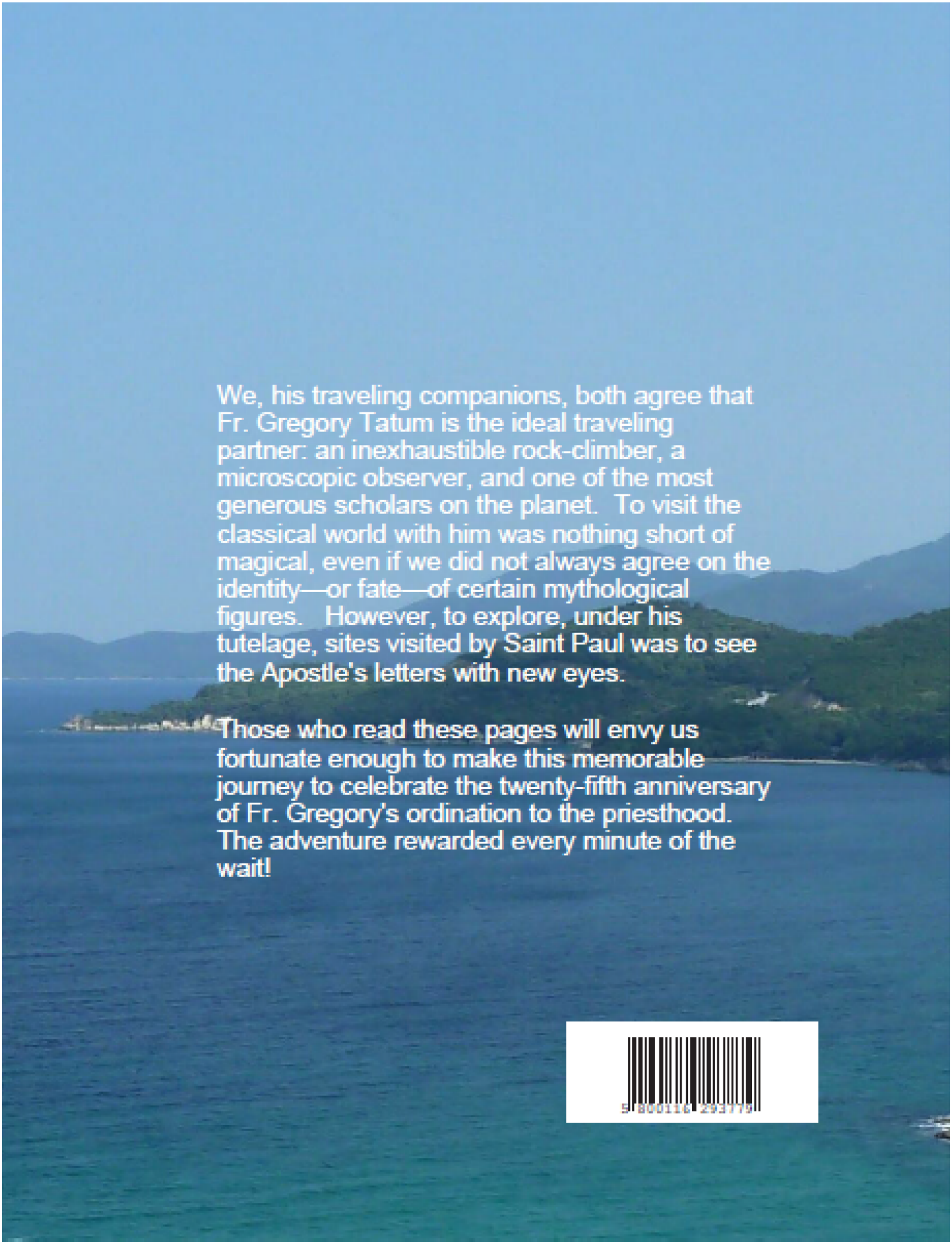
We were off the plane quickly being up front in business. I passed customs with no problems, but the officials noticed that Reginald had two names on his passport, Reginald and William. So it took an extra 20 minutes for them to figure this out. I had my turn to delay our progress at baggage claim. Reginald's bag was one of the first out, but mine never seemed to appear. After the carousel stopped, I found "Lost Bags," and the official come over to do a last run through. And there was the bag, with my shocking-turquoise tag hidden from view by a bunch of routing slips. Too tired to be very embarrassed, we found the BART and were on our way to Rockridge. The noise of the train kept us awake until the station, and we were on the priory elevator by 9 p.m. We were soon to bed, somewhat exhausted, but happy to be home, and even happier that we had gone.

FATHER GREGORY TEAL TATUM, O.P.

ORDAINED A PRIEST OF GOD, SEPTEMBER 9, 1989



MAY OUR LORD BLESS YOU FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE TO HIM AND HIS HOLY CHURCH!



We, his traveling companions, both agree that Fr. Gregory Tatum is the ideal traveling partner: an inexhaustible rock-climber, a microscopic observer, and one of the most generous scholars on the planet. To visit the classical world with him was nothing short of magical, even if we did not always agree on the identity—or fate—of certain mythological figures. However, to explore, under his tutelage, sites visited by Saint Paul was to see the Apostle's letters with new eyes.

Those who read these pages will envy us fortunate enough to make this memorable journey to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Fr. Gregory's ordination to the priesthood. The adventure rewarded every minute of the wait!

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