

----- Forwarded Message
From: Father Nicholas <inoknikolai@yahoo.com>
Date: Wed, 23 Aug 2006 02:59:44 -0700 (PDT)
To: <Orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com>
Subject: Reply to: Who are the Real Victims, Part 1

Reply to: "Who are the Real Victims", Part 1

As we stated in our introductory posting to the Paradosis list, "We have no intention of discussing here the scandalous accusations made against us." We still stand by that statement: we feel no need to refute point by point all those lurid fabrications. Time will tell.

However, I will respond to this present thread since it deals with those of us monastics still struggling here at Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, with the status of HTM then and now, and with certain details or misconceptions concerning how the so-called investigation of our case was carried out.

This is Part 1 of a two-part reply. FN

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/orthodox-tradition/message/90055>
To: orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com
From: "Fr. Alexander Lebedeff" <lebedeff@westworld.com>
Date: Wed, 21 Jun 2006 09:51:54 -0700
Subject: Re: [paradosis] Who are the real victims?

--- "Fr. Alexander Lebedeff" <lebedeff@westworld.com> wrote:

> Who are the real victims?
>
> Anyone who knows anything about HTM in Boston from personal
> experience would confirm the following:

Well, based on Fr. Alexander's introductory remark, we could stop right here, because nothing of what he writes below is supported by his own³personal experience² from visiting Holy Transfiguration Monastery, but comes to him second and third hand from others. The argument that³everyone knows² that something is "true" is no argument at all.

Nor do we suffer any illusions that anything we will ever say or write will change the minds of Fr. Alexander Lebedeff, Fr. John Shaw, Fr. Victor Potapov, Matushka Ann Lardas, or other of our vocal critics.

But for the sake of the many other readers on this list, let us continue. And, unfortunately for lovers of sensationalism, most of our explanations are rather straightforward and mundane.

Of course, the very best answer to all such wild speculation is the same one given by Philip to Nathaniel when the latter asked, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”– “Come and see” (John 1:46). Anyone who wishes to learn for himself is free to visit us and stay for a few days, and then draw his own conclusions. As Saint Pachomius remarked when he was asked if he was clairvoyant: “But putting aside the gift of God, when those who are wise and sensible according to the world spend a few days in the midst of men, do they not distinguish and recognize each one’s disposition?”

As for the description of any monastic establishment, much depends on the point of view (often preconceived) of the beholder. One and the same monastery could be declared to be “a model of good order, with proper discipline and obedience, which adheres strictly to the monastic statutes,” or it could be denounced as “a mind-controlling cult with all the normal guru trappings”, etc.

Might I point out from the beginning that an Orthodox monastery is just that: a monastery, and not an American college dormitory, or fraternity house. There are many things in a monastery that are going to rub “the old man” the wrong way — especially, perhaps, an American convert — but that by no means indicates that such things are evil. Understood from a proper Orthodox Christian perspective, many of these “accusations” below are seen to be simple, monastic discipline.

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> 1) HTM fostered an atmosphere of paranoia.

Judging from this present “account” and from much of what is written about us, I would say that the truth is that others have “fostered an atmosphere of paranoia” concerning us, rather than we concerning them.

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>All telephone conversations were monitored

We have already addressed this point and demonstrated why it is false:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/orthodox-tradition/message/90964>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/orthodox-tradition/message/91041>

And now, with the advent of multiple telephone lines, cell phones, fax machines, and e-mail, it is impractical and impossible to monitor all these forms of communication.

>

>all mail was screened,

Well, are we, as monastics, supposed to keep secrets from our spiritual fathers? I have never heard anyone of the brethren complain that Fr. Isaac glances through the mail before giving it to us. Actually, it's a big help: he weeds out a lot of junk mail and improper material; he can break sad or troubling news to his spiritual children gently; and one doesn't have to spend a lot of time repeating things when confessing one's thoughts. And frankly, the volume of mail that arrives here each day (as too, the phone calls received) makes it impossible for anyone to monitor it all that closely. (Some incidents, which I could perhaps relate another time, are actually quite humorous.)

When, during my high school years, I attended boarding school, the faculty read our mail out of snoopiness; when I was a college student in the USSR in the 1970s, the KGB read all of our mail (coming and going) in the hopes of catching us and getting us into trouble; so when, upon entering the monastery, I was informed that our mail was going to be monitored to keep us *out* of trouble, well, I told them: "More power to you!"

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>novices were forbidden (or at least discouraged) to speak with visitors.

Well, it seems quite strange that anyone should have to explain something this elementary to a senior Orthodox clergyman, but it is basic monastic discipline to help novices make the break with their past and settle down inside and become spiritually quite.

Saint Pachomius, the founder of coenobitic monasticism, would not even allow visiting monks to live in the monastery proper, but had a special place set aside for them near the gates, where he waited upon them himself. He explained that he did this "because the community has many neophytes who do not yet know what a monk is, and boys who 'cannot tell their right hand from their left'". The Saint "thought it good and more respectful" to the visiting monastics to have them come together with the brethren only at the times of prayer. (Life of St. Pachomius)

In his Rule for Monastics, Saint Basil the Great commands:

"The practice of silence is beneficial for novices. For, if they

control the tongue, they will both give sufficient proof of continence and will learn in quiet, eagerly and attentively, from those that are skilled in instruction, how they must ask questions and answer each individual question. For there is a tone of voice and symmetry of language and appropriateness of occasion and special vocabulary which are peculiar to the monastic, and can only be learned by the man who has unlearned his former habits. Now silence both induces forgetfulness of the past through lack of practice and affords leisure to learn good habits. Accordingly a novice must keep silence, except of course for the psalmody, unless he is constrained either by a special need concerning the care of his own soul or the unavoidable necessity of the work he has in hand, or by some question that is put to him.” (Rule XII)

One could give many similar instructions from Saint Sabbas, Saint Theodosius, Saint Benedict, Saint John Cassian, Saint John Climacus, Saint Theodore of Studium, etc., but let this suffice.

And from what I have heard, Fr. Ephraim's monasteries here in America are must stricter than us on this and other points concerning contact with the outside world.

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> 2) HTM collected very expansive files and dossiers about bishops and > clergy of the Church Abroad—for what reason? God only knows.

Or as Romanos put it in his message of July 14, 2006: “HTM is notorious for keeping files!”

And as Fr. John Shaw wrote on March 1, 2006: “He [Bishop Gregory Grabbe] kept files on most of the ROCOR clergy, and some laity.”

Here it might be proper once again to pose the question: Who precisely is “fostering an atmosphere of paranoia” about whom?

Now, to “keep files” or “have an archive” is one thing; but to “keep files on” or “about” people is quite a different matter, and the insinuations contained in the statements above were not lost on the others readers of this list. Or perhaps those who wrote such things were speaking out of the abundance of their own hearts? (Luke 6:45)

I can't think of one self-respecting organization, institution, or public figure that would not keep files or maintain an archive. How else is one to avoid functioning in a vacuum?

And I am sorry to disappoint some people out there, but the “infamous” files of HTM are a much more modest collection than their fevered imaginations have created. We have no files marked: Lebedeff, or Shaw,

or Potapov, etc. For the most part the archives consist of correspondence on ecclesiastical matters, official documents sent to us from ROCA Synodal headquarters, and clippings from the religious press on pertinent public issues and affairs. Are such documents to be feared?

Nor are our files as systematized as we would like. For example, just last year while searching in our library annex for some old translations, I discovered a box of correspondence from the 1970s, when Fr. Alexis (presently Archimandrite Alexis in England) had been acting as our monastery scribe. Some of this material is pertinent to the topics presently being discussed on this list, and I hope to share some of it with the readers in the future. Among other things, it demonstrates that our ecclesiology has remained consistent throughout the years.

>From what we have learned and judging from citations in printed texts the archives of Holy Trinity Monastery, of the ROCOR Synod, and of some of her senior clergymen far surpass anything we have here.

And have not many of Fr. Alexander Lebedeff's and Fr. John Shaw's postings and articles been based on extensive files and archives — both personal and institutional? How much of the material presented at the recent Fourth All-Diaspora Sobor was retrieved from files and archives? And had the greatly maligned Vladyka Gregory Grabbe not labored tirelessly and selflessly for almost fifty-five years to maintain and supplement the ROCA Synod archives, how much of that material would even exist today?

All jesting aside, if some people are truly concerned about tapped telephone lines and compromising files, then I think that they had better worry more about those whom they are joining, the Moscow Patriarchate, rather than about those whom they have left behind, HTM/HOCNA. President Putin and his administration know a thing or two about tapping telephones, and no doubt the Moscow Patriarchate has very extensive files and archives.

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> 3) HTM developed a true cult mentality regarding the person of their
> Elder, the "Geronda," with his fake Greek accent (he was born in
> Detroit!),

Now, this point concerning Fr. Panteleimon's supposedly "fake" Greek accent would be funny, if it wasn't so exceedingly ridiculous. What possible difference would it make about anything, even if his accent was fake?

And if it is fake, then the man deserves a special Academy Award for the “Longest Sustained Role Ever,” because no one of us (and some here have known Fr. Panteleimon for over fifty years!) has ever heard him speak any differently — not when he is tired, or ill, or excited, or has just been woken up in the middle of the night to answer the telephone. Besides without getting “ethnic” in our “politically correct” and “multicultural” society anyone could easily find examples of people who have lived all their lives in America and still speak English with an accent. Is it a crime?

After all, what is more important: the content of a spiritual message, or the form of its delivery? I wonder what sort of Philistine accent Balaam's ass had (Numbers 22: 28-30)? No doubt the cultured Judeans were right not to listen to a bunch of rustic fishermen from Galilee with their provincial dialect and rough idioms?

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>and all the normal "guru" trappings.

Since Fr. Alexander gives no details, nor does he elaborate this theme, he makes it difficult for anyone to respond. I suppose it's taken for granted that “everyone knows” what “all the normal guru trappings” are, and what is meant by “a true cult mentality.”

Once again: “Come and see” whether or not we are all brain-washed zombies. It's very simple, really.

And one thing a “cult” tries to prevent, or very tightly control, is all contact with people who may have known members in their former life and who would be able to remind them who they used to be and to recall the past to their minds. Such is not the case at all with us at Holy Transfiguration Monastery. True, having renounced the world and our families, we do not, as a rule, return home for visits — after all, we are monastics. But our relatives are welcome to visit us here at the monastery, and we are allowed to go out with our families alone for day trips in the area. Nor have we ever been prevented from speaking to family members on the telephone regularly.

(FN: Please apply the following passage also to Fr. Alexander's point No. 5, below, on our clergy):

Metropolitan Vitaly had requested that Fr. Panteleimon write a detailed letter to Archbishop Anthony concerning the charges made against him. Here is a pertinent excerpt from that letter.

Letter of Archimandrite Panteleimon to Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles, April 13, 1986, (pages 78, of thirty pages):

“But to come to the specific accusations. In their overzeal to accuse me, both Frs. Gregory and Mamas become comical, if not ludicrous. According to them, not only am I able to have such a control over the minds of the people in the monastery (since according to them we are a cult), but it seems I am so ingenious and able that I exercise this same control over many priests and parishioners outside the monastery < priests and people, that is, who are spread throughout the US and Canada. Fr. Mamas attempts to explain how this is done in the monastery (i.e. complete obedience, daily confession of thoughts, advances by me, guilt feelings by the fathers and novices here, etc), but he fails to explain how I am able to accomplish this with people that I rarely see even once a year, or in some instances, once in many years. Yet I am still able to have such influence and control over them.

But then, even concerning those in the monastery, it is virtually impossible for me to see some forty people daily. Not only is this impossible for one person, but it is impossible even for many to be hearing the thoughts of all daily. No, there is no daily confession of thoughts in the monastery. This is only possible in sketes and in the heremital life, where there is an elder and, at the most, two or three monks with him. But where there is a coenobium of many monks, this is not possible. When a novice first comes, then more time has to be taken out for him, till he becomes accustomed to the life and typicon of the community, and till he is able to weed out and handle his own thoughts. But even the novices do not come **every day**. There just isn't enough time for that, what with services, prayers, obediences, rest, etc. As for the older fathers, they come only rarely, when there is a real need to say something. The novices come two or three times a week, or as they need to. Usually, Fr. Isaac and myself hear thoughts. But there are times when we send some to other fathers who have had similar difficulties and warfares so that they might help them by their own experience. Thus, at times, we sent some of the younger ones to say their thoughts to Fr. Ephraim, to Fr. Mamas, and to others. If we did not all work together as a team, we could not possibly handle such a number as we are in the community.

But then again, how many times I am absent from the monastery and am not even there to be able to hear thoughts and exercise this control over people, which Fr. Mamas claims. Two months of the year, November and December, I am away on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the annual visit to the convent of Oinoussai.

So we have two months of the year already during which I am absent;

add to this the period of time that I have to be away, attending retreats, parish feast days, pastoral visits to communities to hear confessions, etc.; add to this every Saturday night and the numerous vigils that we celebrate throughout the year, when thoughts are not heard, since everyone is tired and exhausted; add to this my illnesses which are not a few, and the numerous pilgrims and visitors that, of necessity, I have to speak to and spend time with; add to this the time that I have to spend to write certain important letters, such as this; add to this my responsibilities for our convent, to serve, to visit, to speak with them, to attend to many of their needs; add to this the time spent at our hermitage in Maine, and it is a wonder that I have any time left for the fathers.”

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> 4) Anyone who had been a monk or novice at HTM and would leave (or
> even a former friend of the monastery who came to "see the light")
> was immediately subjected to a vicious defamation campaign—he or she
> would be discredited in every way, even to the point of revealing
> deep secrets of a confessional nature.

We have heard this scenario repeatedly, but have yet to see it demonstrated with concrete, chronological, printed data: the time when someone left, the short interval before the “campaign” began, and what precisely was said that was so vicious and defaming.

On the contrary, other than the necessary explanations to the grieved brethren and bewildered layfolk, we don't unusually say much else when someone leaves. If later, contrary to all that they had said or written previously, those who left began to defame the monastery, we have made public their earlier, positive statements. I have never seen anything made public that had been marked “Confession”, “Private”, “Personal”, etc. Some of our accusers regret having voluntarily written things that contradict their later slander, and they, therefore, resent our having shared these with others, and they may now claim that such statements were a “confession”, but that is not so.

And perhaps these accusations by third parties claiming that we have defamed those who left would not ring so hollow, if they did not come from people who themselves often had been involved in disseminating the slanders against us during the very process of the so-called “investigation” itself.

Concerning which, here is another pertinent excerpt from Fr. Panteleimon's letter to Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles, April 13, 1986, (p. 28):

“But even more serious was the revelation made by Vladyka Alypy concerning the letter of December 1985 sent to him by Fr. Mamas. Then, in order to demonstrate the truth of what I had just said, I informed you that whereas we (i.e., the monastery and I) had not been officially informed by the Synod of any accusations or proceedings, many clergy and lay persons throughout the country, and even from abroad, were telephoning us and telling us all sorts of details. You then asked if I had seen the letter of Fr. Mamas, and I answered that I had a copy. But before I could inform you that we had received it anonymously in the mail, Bishop Alypy, to my great surprise and amazement, offered to explain how I had probably received the copy. He told both yourself and my sinfulness that he had given Fr. Gregory a blessing to his request to send a copy to Fr. Victor Potapov. Vladyka Alypy said, ‘At first, I said “no” to Fr. Gregory. Then I thought about it and said, ‘All right, if Fr. Victor does not show it to his matushka.’ But Fr. Victor showed it to Fr. Vladimir, his brother-in-law, and Fr. Vladimir showed it to Fr. A., and Fr. A. probably sent you the copy.

I was so dumbfounded on hearing this from Vladyka Alypy, that I was left speechless. In the first place, since the letter was addressed to Bishop Alypy, why should Fr. Gregory have, a copy? Secondly, by what right is a blessing given by Bishop Alypy for this private (and libelous) letter to be sent out by Fr. Gregory to many and various individuals? (I could name others who received copies from Fr. Gregory). Is Fr. Victor Potapov a member of the investigating committee? Is he a member of the spiritual court? What was the reason, or justification, or purpose for sending him, or any of the others, a copy? Is this not an irregularity, to say the least? When the fathers here in the monastery heard about it, they thought that it was a serious canonical breach on the part of one of the members of the investigating committee.”

That was in April of 1986, so one can well imagine how we felt *eight months later* to read this line in a document from the ROCOR Synod: Statement From The Chancery Of The Synod Of Bishops

Nov. 18/Dec. 1, 1986

No. 11/35/213A

“We have been extremely reluctant until this time to make known the details of this case!”

Or when Matushka Ann Lardas writes to this list on August 6, 2006: “demanding things from the bishops, ‘who were not at liberty to discuss an ongoing investigation’!”

The number of accusers is also a matter of some confusion. We hear repeatedly of twenty or more, yet when we make a tally of all the monks or novices who have ever left, we find only approximately a dozen that have actually slandered us. We have noticed that some of our detractors automatically add the name of anyone who ever left the monastery to their list of accusers, but a number of our former members have told us that they never made any such accusations or revelations to anyone.

Once the first father to leave the monastery made those slanderous charges which he did, any dissatisfied father who left after him had an easy excuse for his own departure. All he had to do was add a few lurid details pertaining to his own person, and he would have a ready audience. Sadly, no one ever came to the monastery to ask those of us who remained “at our post” as monastics what we had to say about the charges or the people who made them. That really hurt.

Of those who have left and then slandered us, only two (or three) have continued in their monastic vocation: Archbishop Gregory, who admitted that he himself had heard nothing of the slanders while still with us and only learned of them second hand much later, and perhaps Fr. Theodore, who has joined the Ecumenical Patriarchate and with whom we have lost contact. The majority of those who are still struggling as monastics elsewhere left for personal reasons and have not made any such accusations.

See this link to the Euphrosynos Café: <http://tinyurl.com/kaotx>
(Esp. the last two entries.)

And besides, the size of the opposition is hardly a criterion for determining right or wrong, even in the secular world, let alone in spiritual matters. If that were the case, then that small band of Apostles and disciples should never have taken on the Roman Empire. And the Orthodox Church should have called it quits many times in its past: for example, during the ascendancy of the Arians, or during the reigns of the Iconoclasts. Were St. Athanasius the Great, St. Maximus the Confessor, or St. Mark of Ephesus ever intimidated by numbers? And if numbers count, then what of the thirty five monks here at HTM who can testify that such things never took place?

But then, consider these concrete examples from the lives of the Saints:

>From the Life of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified:
Chapter XXXVI

“The sanctified Sabbas took the Patriarch's letter and descended to his lavra. When he read the epistle in the church, those high-minded sixty

monks who opposed him became enraged and being blinded by malice, with one accord they formed a body, lining themselves in battle array against the holy father. Some of them prepared their baggage, packing their clothes and other possessions, while the rest took up axes, shovels, and crowbars and ascended Sabbas¹ tower. This they demolished to its foundations and hurled its timbers and stones into the ravine. Thereafter they all departed with their baggage. After the sixty had departed from the Elder's lavra, the remaining brethren brought forth the fruit of pure hearts unto God, even as wheat increases when the tares are weeded out."

(FN: Anyone who has gone on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and has visited St. Sabbas' lavra knows how much demonic rage it took for those monks to be able to demolish that tower.)

>From the Life of Saint Benedict of Nursia;

"One day the entire community from a nearby monastery came to see him. Their abbot had recently died, and they wanted the man of God to be their new superior. For some time he tried to discourage them by refusing their request, warning them that his way of life would never harmonize with theirs. But they kept insisting, until in the end he gave his consent.

At the monastery he watched carefully over the religious spirit of his monks and would not tolerate any of their previous lack of obedience. No one was allowed to turn from the straight path of monastic discipline either to the right or to the left. Their waywardness, however, clashed with the standards he upheld, and in their resentment they started to reproach themselves for choosing him as abbot. It only made them the more sullen to find him curbing every fault and evil habit. They could not see why they should have to force their settled minds into new ways of thinking. At length, proving once again that the very life of the just is a burden to the wicked, they tried to find a means of doing away with him and decided to poison his wine. As he made the sign of the Cross over it with his hand, the pitcher was shattered. Then he went back to the wilderness he loved."

>From the Life of Saint Symeon the New Theologian:

"One day, after Matins, no sooner had the Saint begun to catechize his monks according to his custom (for he would admonish some, censure others, and exhort others to virtue), when suddenly not less than thirty monks tore their rassa as did Annas and Caiaphas, and, moved by homicidal rage, they rushed toward the Saint with wild cries. By Divine Grace, however, they were hindered from drawing nigh to him and laying their hands on him. Unable to do anything else, they broke the lock of the monastery gate, and like madmen they ran with shouts and commotion

to the Patriarch Sisinius. Knowing, however, the frenzy and malice of those monks, the Patriarch rightly decided to have them exiled. But the good shepherd and imitator of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, fell at the feet of the Patriarch and besought him with tears to forgive them.”

If, by the permission of God, the demons were allowed to incite such malice against such great and holy men as these, why should we be at all surprised that something similar has come down upon us sinners now?

- >
- > 5) The parishes and clergy under the "wing" of HTM were completely
- > under the control of the Elder—not their Diocesan Bishop. Whatever
- > the Elder would tell them to do, they would do.

Concerning our clergy, please see the excerpt from Fr. Panteleimon¹'s letter to Archbishop Anthony of L. A., above.

- >If he said, "leave
- > the Church Abroad" — they would leave. If he said, we're going under
- >
- > Akakios and Germanos, they would follow. If he said, we're leaving
- > Akakios and going under Auxentios, whom HTM had deeply maligned in
- > the past, accusing him of simony, secret consecrations, and all kinds
- >
- > of sins (remember the document called "A Clarification"?)

This issue was dealt with in ³The Struggle Against Ecumenism², see pages 125-30.

And here are excerpts from an explanatory introduction to “A Clarification” for our clergy and faithful:

“Perhaps the question will arise why the signatories of this ‘Clarification’ joined the Synod of Archbishop Auxentios in 1987, seven years after this document was written. The answer is that the ecclesiastical landscape greatly changed with the blessed repose of Metropolitan Saint Philaret in 1985 and the departure of all but four bishops from the Synod of Archbishop Auxentios in the same year.

Although ROCA had stopped serving with bishops and clergy of the Auxentian Synod because of various administrative disorders, the faithful were permitted to commune the Holy Mysteries in each other's

Churches. It was an administrative separation and not one due to matters of faith. The North American clergy first approached Bishops Akakios and Gabriel, hierarchs of the Auxentian Synod, who had ceased to attend the Synod meetings because of the administrative disorders there. It was hoped that these two bishops would form a new synod and consecrate bishops for the flock in North America. When the Bishops Akakios and Gabriel failed to co-operate and separated, the clergy looked to Archbishop Auxentios as the canonical Archbishop of Bishops Akakios and Gabriel. Since the Bishops that had caused so much scandal and disorder (and Bishops Paisios and Petros were among them) were no longer with Archbishop Auxentios, there was much better order in his synod.

The North American clergy invited Archbishop Auxentios to the United States so they could meet with him personally and ask him about various incidents surrounding his person that they found troubling. A group of thirty clergy had several sessions lasting many hours with the Archbishop and two senior clergymen accompanying him. They were satisfied with the Archbishop's explanations and the written documentation he provided later that demonstrated that he was not guilty of the canonical infractions alleged by his adversaries. Archbishop Auxentios humbly admitted that he had made errors of judgment, but stated that he had never willfully broken the canons for any reason. The North American clergy humbly admitted their error of judgment in the past. They realized that the Archbishop was indeed a guileless man who at times had been misled by those around him.

The North American clergy consequently urged Bishops Akakios and Gabriel to return to their canonical Archbishop since all the bishops that had been a source of scandal to them were no longer joined to the Archbishop. The Bishops refused, and it became obvious that their differences with Archbishop Auxentios were more of a personal nature than previously thought. If Bishops Paisios and Petros had still been with Archbishop Auxentios it would have been unthinkable for the clergy and flock that had left ROCA to petition that synod to receive them for the reasons given in 'A Clarification.' As for Bishop Akakios of Montreal, he had for all intent and purposes become *de facto* an independent bishop, since he, by his own choice, had never participated in any meetings of the Synod of Archbishop Auxentios following his consecration.

It should be noted that in 1985 Archbishop Auxentios had been 'defrocked' by his erstwhile brethren for supposedly giving a secret blessing to consecrate a very scandalous individual to the Episcopate. In spite of the scandal caused by this travesty of a canonical trial, these bishops had actually rendered Archbishop Auxentios a great favor

by departing from him, for now there was relative peace in his synod. After the Archbishop's repose all of these Bishops (who have now formed two separate synods in Greece; one presided over by Archbishop Chrysostom Kiouisis, and the Lamian Synod, presided over by Archbishop Makarios of Petra) have now admitted officially and synodically in their Synodical publications that their accusations were false, and they have reinstated Archbishop Auxentios into the diptyches as the lawful Archbishop of Athens, without, however, entering into communion with the canonical successors of Archbishop Auxentios."

Also see the objective analysis of this question written by Fr. Seraphim Johnson when he was still in ROCOR:

http://www.homb.org/Archived_Docs_HTM/FrSphOnAkakiosAuxentios.pdf

>they

> would all fall into lock step and follow.

>

> I saw this happen with Fr. Nicholas Liberis, the local priest here in

>

> the LA area. When HTM told him to leave the Synod, he immediately

> complied. I told him — wait, you know Archbishop Anthony of LA is

> staunchly anti-ecumenist and staunchly anti-MP. What possible grounds

>

> can you have for leaving your bishop? He replied that he had to leave

>

> for "obedience to the Elder" and for "Greek solidarity."

Fr. Nicholas Liberis is a grown man and a senior clergyman who can speak for himself, if anyone wishes to contact him concerning this interesting account.

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> So, the path of HTM is strewn with the victims of the cult mentality

> they fostered and maintain even to this day.

Once again Fr. Alexander passes off his groundless speculations as a fact. He has no personal present experience with the monastery in order to be able to make any such statements.

Concerning the monastery brethren at present, see the upcoming Part 2 of our reply.

>

> God forbid one of the current monks or novices should dare to leave

Yes, God forbid that any of us presently here should desert our monastic calling. But what of those who did?

> and speak negatively of the monastery. The floodgates of defamation
> of his character would immediately be opened and the man's witness
> would be disparaged and defamed.

By citing a person's own, earlier statements which totally contradict and disprove his later slanders of us?

But what **has** occurred on several occasions when monks have left, is that immediately they are contacted by the others who have slandered us and are asked to join their ranks. These attempts at "recruitment" have been reported to us by several of the fathers themselves who refused to collaborate with the slanderers and who stated to them bluntly that they had no accusations to make against us.

Even further, some of these renegade monks have most solicitously contacted our parents, brothers, sisters, relatives and friends in order to inform them of all the slanders concerning us.

Many of the people on the Paradosis list are converts, and they know all too well the pain, grief, bewilderment and misunderstandings caused to their families by their decision to embrace the Orthodox Faith. And they can understand how all that was intensified for us when we informed our families of our intention to become monastics. Now imagine what it was like for our non-Orthodox families and friends to receive such lurid and salacious telephone calls and letters from our former brethren. And please don't tell us that it was done out of love and concern for us. These people have openly admitted their malice and their desire to harm us in any way possible.

(See Bishop Ephraim's "Letter to the Faithful" after a second group of monastics left in 1991:

<http://sima278.tripod.com/1986/86-13.htm>)

>

> That's just the way it is.

>

- > No hatred against HTM here at all.
- >
- > Just the facts.

On the contrary, as we pointed out at the beginning of our reply, Fr. Alexander, having no firsthand experiences concerning us, knows no “facts” to be able to report them here. As to whether or not he harbors any hatred for us, we leave that to his own conscience. For our part, we pray for him and for all our other detractors daily.

- >
- > With love in Christ,
- >
- > Prot. Alexander Lebedeff
- >

And yet again: “Come and see” for yourselves, as others have:
<http://tinyurl.com/kaotx>

Fr. Nicholas
HTM

----- End of Forwarded Message