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An Investigation of A Select Number of College Fraternities and Sororities

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AN INVESTIGATION OF A SELECT NUMBER OF
COLLEGE FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Philosophy
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1955

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to investigate some widely known college fraternities and sororities. Basically there are two kinds of fraternal organizations on American college campuses. They are called fraternity and society. The fraternity organizes the social life of its members to promote their educational objectives. The society is an association rather than an organization, and functions solely to recognize achievement or interest in some field of education. The fraternity, whether for men or women--though fraternities for women are still commonly known as sororities--is regarded a general fraternity if it selects its members at large from the undergraduate student body, and primarily from the non-professional and non-vocational departments of this group. The professional fraternity differs from the general fraternity in only one respect, in that it selects all its members from students pursuing the same professional or vocational course and organizes their social life in harmony with their specific and common educational interest. The social fraternities stress the individual's relations to and with his fellows and to the group as a whole.

We now give formal definitions of the several categories of fraternities and societies. A social college fraternity is a mutually-exclusive, self-perpetuating group which

organizes the social life of its members in accredited colleges and universities as a contributing factor to their educational program and draws its membership primarily from the undergraduate body of the institution. A professional fraternity is a specialized fraternity which confines its membership to a specific field of professional or vocational education in accredited colleges or universities. It maintains mutually-exclusive membership in that professional field but may initiate members of the social college fraternities. An honor society takes in only those who are qualified scholastically and have distinguished themselves in some field of education and culture.¹

This thesis deals with social and professional fraternities. I will first discuss the origin and history of college fraternities and sororities and their general organization. In two further chapters I will discuss some fraternities on the basis of their constitution, their by-laws, and their rituals for the purpose of ferreting out whatever objectionable religious features they may have. In a final chapter I will attempt, on the basis of the evidence found, to evaluate the program and purpose of college fraternities and sororities.

¹Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities, edited by Harold J. Baily (15th edition; Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 57-59.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION OF FRATERNITIES

Secret societies have been one of the most effective methods of meeting the need of man for certain close and intimate associations outside of his family group. In practically all ancient civilizations these fraternities thrived and exerted a powerful influence upon the thought and lives of people.

Many details of the rites, purposes, and ideals of a secret order have not been recorded. But by piecing together bits of information from many different sources, as Homer, Herodotus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Aristides, and Cicero, we can get a fair idea of what these secret societies stood for. Apparently the oldest recorded fraternal organization was the one built about the so-called mysteries of Isis and Osiris which flourished in Egypt at an early date. It appears that these mysteries may have set the pattern in Greece for the rise and development of such mysteries as the Eleusinian, Pythagorean, and others. During the Middle Ages there flourished in Europe many guilds which functioned more or less as fraternities. There were the great organizations of the Knights Templar, Alchemists, the Hospitallers of St. John, the Comacine Masters, and the Free Masons. There is a remote possibility that the ritualism of these orders may have a loose connection with the mysteries

of the ancients. According to Masonic literature, the year 1600 marked the split of Masonry into operative and speculative Masonry. This date may also signalize the split between ancient and modern types of fraternal orders.

The Masons soon became the most active secret society, and this fraternity ever since has been the pattern for others to imitate.¹ The change from an operative to a fraternal or speculative society is frequently called the revival of Freemasonry for the reason that through the widening of the scope of the guilds new life and activity entered into the organization. This widening of the scope of the guilds was the admitting of men of all professions, provided they were accepted and initiated by the organization. Then followed the formation of a governing center or Grand Lodge which was established on June 24, 1717, in London, England. Anderson's Constitutions published in 1738 contains the account of the formation of the Grand Lodge of England. Little is known of the activities of the new Grand Lodge during the first few years of its existence and nothing seems to have been done either to establish or popularize the Craft. The Grand Lodge exercised authority over the Mason meetings.²

There have been several exposés¹ of Masonry, but the one of greatest significance is the so-called Morgan expose' of 1838.

¹William H. Shideler, The Development of Fraternity (Oxford, Ohio: Phi Kappa Tau Central Office, 1951), pp. 1-2.

²Delmar Duane Darrah, History and Evolution of Freemasonry (Chicago, Ill.: Charles T. Pownor Company, 1951), pp. 91-94.

William Morgan, a member of the Masonic organization, was highly offended when his name was omitted from a petition which he signed regarding the formation of a Royal Arch Chapter. Thus he turned against the fraternity. Allying himself with David C. Miller, a local newspaper man who had been stopped by objection from climbing the ranks of Masonry, he began to publish an expose' of the fraternity. Morgan disappeared suddenly thereafter and his abduction still remains unsolved.³

Albert G. Mackey, a noted authority on Masonry states:

"Morgan published in 1826 a pretended Exposition of Masonry."⁴

However, in his book, The Development of Fraternity,

Dr. Shideler states:

Since it is generally known, it is not giving any secrets to say that most of the rituals of college fraternities are based more or less directly upon the old Morgan expose' of the Masonic ritual as before stated. In many cases even the phraseology of the obligation is preserved in greater or less detail, and this is so not only in the case of college fraternities, but in the case of rival fraternal organizations such as the Knights of Pythias, the Odd Fellows, and others. The general mechanics, or what you might call the floor work, of the initiation ceremony, is copied with greater or less fidelity, and the general philosophy developed is very similar.

Originally college fraternities had only very simple initiation ceremonies, and little or none of the elaborate rituals they have today. Dr. Jasper McSurely, one of the earlier members of Beta Theta Pi, told me that in his student days--Miami, 1852-1856--the greatest secrets of a fraternity were its constitution and its meeting place, with grip, hailing sign, and password secondary. And even in my own student days the grips of most fraternities were rather general knowledge.

³Ibid., pp. 235-247.

⁴Albert G. Mackey, "Morgan, William," An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences, edited by Charles T. McClenahan (Philadelphia, Pa.: L. H. Everts & Company, 1884), p. 508.

Rituals apparently grew very gradually, and are used to express in more or less dramatic allegorical form the basic principles, ideals, and aspirations of the fraternity. Commonly the candidate passes through the three degrees of knighthood, or searches for the Holy Grail, or goes upon a similar type of holy pilgrimage, or something of the sort. Or he may, as in the ancient rites and mysteries, experience symbolic death and resurrection, as is most dramatically done in at least one case.⁵

The American college fraternity system began with the founding of Phi Beta Kappa at William and Mary College, December 5, 1776. It was a secret fraternity and remained so until 1831. The Greek letters are the first letters of the Greek words Philosophia Biou Kubernetes, that is, "Philosophy the Pilot (Guide) of Life." The Greek pattern was chosen because of the respect and admiration of the founders for the beauty, the simplicity, the discipline, and the perfection of the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, an ideal toward which they should ever strive.⁶

After almost five decades in which Phi Beta Kappa experienced no competition, other fraternities came into existence. The first great increase in fraternities occurred during the thirty years before the Civil War. Delta Upsilon was founded November 4, 1834, at Williams College. In the Autumn of 1825 Kappa Alpha was formed at Union by John Hunter and other members of the class of 1826. Alpha Delta Phi placed a chapter at Yale in 1836, and in 1839 Psi Upsilon planted a rival chapter at the same school. Delta Kappa

⁵Shideler, op. cit., p. 3.

⁶Ibid., p. 2.

Epsilon was founded at Yale in 1844 and placed branch chapters in other colleges. In 1847 the first New York City fraternity, Zeta Psi, was founded at the University of the City of New York (now New York University). In 1849 Delta Phi placed a chapter at the University of Pennsylvania. Sigma Chi was the third fraternity originating at Miami, and Beta Theta Pi, Phi Delta Theta, and Sigma Chi, from their home and birthplace called the "Miami Triad," spread over the West and South as the members of the Union Triad had spread over the Eastern states. The second Southern fraternity, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, was founded at the University of Alabama in 1856.⁷ A further increase followed that war. Phi Kappa was founded at Hope College on October 1, 1889. Theta Xi was founded at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, April 29, 1864. At the Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia, Alpha Tau Omega was born in 1865, Kappa Sigma Kappa in 1867, and Sigma Nu in 1869. In 1867 Alpha Gamma originated at Cumberland University.⁸ The twentieth century witnessed a further expansion of fraternities. Alpha Epsilon Pi was founded at New York University, November 7, 1913, Sigma Tau Gamma at Central Missouri State College, Warrensburg, Missouri, June 26, 1920, Alpha Epsilon Phi at Bernard College, October 24, 1909, and Sigma Delta Tau at Cornell

⁷Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities, edited by Harold J. Baily (15th edition; Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 4-5.

⁸Ibid., p. 5.

University, March 25, 1917. Both World Wars gave further impetus to the growth of fraternities. Since 1945 fraternities added many new chapters.

In our day fraternities are deeply rooted in the American academic system, in fact, have become a part of it, and have developed fiercely dynamic loyalties. Fraternities have a surprising vitality, and are now far stronger than ever before. According to the New York Times there are at present over 1,100,000 active members in college fraternities. Over a million of them are ex-G.I.'s. There are 59 national fraternities having 2600 active chapters.⁹

In the year 1910 the National Interfraternity Conference was founded. This Conference limits its membership to men's general college fraternities devoted to fraternity ideals, national as distinct from local, and of sufficient age and standing to have a considerable number of chapters functioning by the maintenance of fraternity houses. Professional fraternities and honor societies are not eligible. The policy of the Conference is to limit its functions to study and discussion of, and advice to, fraternities in an advisory capacity. A fraternity having full membership in the Conference is allowed one vote.¹⁰

⁹Shideler, op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 63-70.

In 1915 the National Panhellenic Conference was established "to maintain on a high plane fraternity life and interfraternity relationships; to cooperate with college authorities in their effort to maintain high social and scholastic standards throughout the whole college; and to be a forum for the discussion of questions of interest to the college and fraternity world." The Panhellenic Conference is empowered to make recommendations to member fraternities. The Panhellenic Creed, the Interfraternity Compact, and the Standards of Ethical Conduct have come into existence through such recommendations.¹¹

The first step toward an organized government in most fraternities was the selection of one chapter to be what was called the "grand" or "presiding" chapter. This chapter was supposed to be the repository of facts from which other chapters might derive information, and to be the governing body of the fraternity. It was to be subject only to the direction of the assembly of delegates from the chapters, termed the convention, and was to preserve and maintain some sort of settled policy in the administration of fraternity affairs. When fraternities held conventions, authority of all kinds was vested in that body during its sessions. This plan was used until after the Civil War. But it was not adequate to supply the wants of a growing organization. A new system of government appeared. The convention still

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 319-321.

retained the supreme legislative power, but the administrative and executive functions of government were vested in a body called an executive council. The executive head of the fraternity or some other member of the governing council came to be the secretary. Due to the rapid increase in the number of chapters of the fraternities other features were introduced. The latest development in fraternity administration has been the establishment of a central office with a full time secretary in charge and with adequate assistance for handling the business details of the organization.

All college fraternities are secret with the exception of Delta Upsilon. In the earlier period of fraternity history the constitution often included esoteric material such as the description of the badge, the meaning of the motto, the method of giving the passwords and the grip, and other such "secrets" as are now ordinarily found in a separate ritual. Many fraternities now publish their constitutions and codes of laws in convenient booklet form or in their handbooks, and the interchange of such publications through interfraternity courtesy is common.¹² This does not mean that fraternities give out such information indiscriminately to those not being fraternity members.

We have given a brief overview of the origin and history of the organization of fraternities. In the next chapter we shall discuss the following fraternities most of which are members of the above conferences:

¹²Ibid., pp. 12-13.

1. Fraternities belonging to the National Interfraternity Conference: Alpha Epsilon Pi, Delta Phi, Delta Tau Delta, Delta Upsilon, Phi Kappa, Sigma Tau Gamma, Theta Xi, and Zeta Beta Tau;

2. Fraternities belonging to the National Panhellenic Conference: Alpha Epsilon Phi, Alpha Omicron Pi, Chi Omega, and Sigma Delta Tau;

3. Fraternities not belonging to the above conferences: Beta Sigma Phi, Beta Sigma Psi, Epsilon Sigma Alpha, Kappa Delta Phi, Phi Delta, and Phi Sigma Lambda.

CHAPTER III

FRATERNITIES CONTACTED

Since our Synod is concerned that its members do not affiliate with organizations whose religious beliefs and practices violate the teachings of our Church; and since most often the rituals of fraternal organizations explicitly contain objectionable religious features, it is necessary that these rituals be examined. Therefore I have made efforts to contact some fraternities and sororities to gain access to their rituals. I consulted Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities, the fifteenth edition, published by George Banta Publishing Company in 1949, for names and addresses of these organizations. This book lists, among many, the following fraternities and sororities:

1. Fraternities belonging to the National Interfraternity Conference: Acacia, Alpha Chi Rho, Alpha Delta Phi, Alpha Epsilon Pi, Alpha Gamma Rho, Alpha Kappa Lambda, Alpha Phi Delta, Alpha Sigma Phi, Alpha Tau Omega, Beta Sigma Rho, Beta Theta Pi, Chi Pi, Chi Psi, Delta Chi, Delta Kappa Epsilon, Delta Phi, Delta Psi, Delta Sigma Phi, Delta Tau Delta, Delta Upsilon, Farmhouse, Kappa Alpha Order, Kappa Alpha Society, Kappa Delta Rho, Kappa Nu, Kappa Sigma, Lambda Chi Alpha, Phi Alpha, Phi Delta Theta, Phi Epsilon Pi, Phi Gamma Delta, Phi Kappa, Phi Kappa Psi, Phi Kappa Sigma, Phi Kappa Tau, Phi Mu Delta, Phi Sigma Delta, Phi Sigma Kappa, Pi Kappa Alpha,

Pi Kappa Phi, Pi Lambda Phi, Psi Upsilon, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, Sigma Alpha Mu, Sigma Chi, Sigma Nu, Sigma Phi, Sigma Phi Epsilon, Sigma Pi, Tau Delta Phi, Tau Epsilon Phi, Tau Kappa Epsilon, Theta Chi, Theta Delta Chi, Theta Kappa Phi, Theta Xi, Triangle, Zeta Beta Tau, and Zeta Psi;

2. Fraternities belonging to the National Panhellenic Conference: Alpha Chi Omega, Alpha Delta Pi, Alpha Gamma Delta, Alpha Omicron Pi, Alpha Phi, Alpha Xi Delta, Beta Sigma Omicron, Chi Omega, Delta Delta Delta, Delta Gamma, Delta Zeta, Gamma Phi Beta, Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Delta, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Phi Mu, Pi Beta Phi, Sigma Kappa, Theta Upsilon, Zeta Tau Alpha, Alpha Epsilon Phi, Alpha Sigma Alpha, Alpha Sigma Tau, Delta Phi Epsilon, Delta Sigma Epsilon, Phi Sigma Sigma, Pi Kappa Sigma, Sigma Delta Tau, Sigma Sigma Sigma, Theta Phi Alpha, and Theta Sigma Upsilon.¹

I wrote to thirty organizations which I selected at random. Twelve answered. In this chapter we will take note of those fraternities who declined to send their rituals. In the next chapter we will discuss and examine those fraternities who did send their rituals. The Commission on Fraternal Organizations of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod,

¹Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities, edited by Harold J. Bailly (15th edition; Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1949), p. 318.

of which Dr. Paul M. Bretscher is chairman, gave me permission to use its files which contain rituals of, and information regarding, these organizations.

The following fraternities, which are members of the National Interfraternity Conference, declined to send information regarding their ritual. Several months ago, we wrote them as follows:

Dear Sirs:

I am a student of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., working toward a Bachelor of Divinity Degree. My thesis topic deals with an investigation of social fraternities . . . I would appreciate any information you could give me concerning your organization. I am especially interested in the ritual of the fraternity. I would appreciate it very much if you could send me a copy of your ritual for a short period of examination. I would return it to you as soon as possible . . .

Alpha Epsilon Pi

Alpha Epsilon Pi, through its Executive Secretary, George S. Toll, informed me:

The information you requested in your letter, especially concerning the ritual, is strictly private and cannot be given to non-members.

In another letter to this fraternity asking for further information, I said:

Thank you for your kind letter of information regarding your fraternity. I have one more request. If it is at all possible, may I secure a copy of your constitution and by-laws? If so, would you please send it at your earliest convenience? . . .

The answer received, which was stamped on my own letter, stated: "Not available to non-members."

The national offices of Alpha Epsilon Pi are at 616 State National Life Building, 4 North Eighth Street, St. Louis 1, Missouri. It was founded at New York University on November 7, 1913, and the first to be founded at the Washington Square Campus of New York University. It has forty-one active chapters, three inactive, and a total membership of 7,018. The fraternity has as its goal the development of a high standard of social and intellectual fellowship among its members so that each one may be better fitted to take proper rank in universities and communities of America. We read in the preamble to the constitution of this fraternity:

The fraternity dedicates itself to the promotion among its members of personal perfection, a reverence for God, and an honorable life devoted to the ideal of service to all mankind; lasting friendships; and the attainment of nobility of action and better understanding among all faith; the pursuit of those benefits which derive from vigorous participation in university and college activities, and from pleasant application to literary, cultural and general social undertakings; and the unbiased judgment of our fellows, not by their rank or worldly goods, but by their deeds and worth as men.²

Delta Phi

The Executive Secretary of Delta Phi, William M. Graves, replied to my letter:

Due to the fact that the Delta Phi is a secret fraternity, it is impossible to send you any information regarding the ritual. I am sorry also, that this fraternity cannot meet your request for a copy of the constitution.

²Ibid., pp. 93-95.

Delta Phi, third in order of establishment of American college fraternities, was founded November 17, 1827, at Union College, Schenectady, New York, by Benjamin Burroughs of Savannah, Georgia, a clergyman in the Presbyterian Church; William H. Fondey, a lawyer; Samuel L. Lamberson, a clergyman; David H. Little, a justice of the New York Supreme Court; Samuel C. Lawrison, a surgeon in the Navy; Thomas C. McLaury, a clergyman; John Mason, a clergyman; Joseph G. Masten, mayor of Buffalo, New York; and William Wilson, a bishop in the Protestant Episcopal Church. The national office of Delta Phi is located at 15 William Street, New York 5, New York. The fraternity has fifteen active chapters, six inactive, and a total membership of 5,100. The founders of the fraternity regarded the aim and purpose of the Delta Phi to be:

To consolidate the interests of all members and at the same time mutually benefit each other, to maintain high standards as students and gentlemen and to foster cordial and fraternal relations.³

Phi Kappa

Mr. Frank L. Chinery, national Secretary-Treasurer of

Phi Kappa replied to my letter as follows:

You make one request however with which we cannot reply. The Ritual of most organizations is something private or secret and is not made available to non-members except in rare instances. It is not our practice to make distribution of the National Constitution and By-laws of the fraternity.

³Ibid., pp. 148-149.

Phi Kappa was founded at Hope College on October 1, 1889. It was originally organized as a club or society and not as a full-fledged Greek-letter fraternity. The national office of the fraternity is located at 822 Delta Avenue, Cincinnati 26, Ohio. The fraternity has twenty-one active chapters, seven inactive, and a total membership of 6,895. Phi Kappa is a college fraternity for Roman Catholic men. The purpose and aim of the fraternity is:

To promote social and intellectual intercourse among its members, identify students and alumni more closely with their college, and cultivate a spirit of loyalty to their alma mater.

Phi Kappa differs from other social fraternities since it lays down as a first principle the fellowship of faith. This means that the men living together in a college or university are pledged to support Roman Catholicism in the face of unbelief and wavering religious convictions. The government of the fraternity is vested in the grand chapter which meets in biennial conclave. This body is made up of all past supreme executive officers, the active supreme executive committee, one delegate from each active chapter, and one from each alumni chapter. During the interim between conclaves administration of affairs is vested in the supreme executive committee. An advisory council of seven members, comprising the immediate past supreme president, the three members of the supreme executive committee, and others appointed, serves as a steering committee for the fraternity.⁴

⁴Ibid., pp. 207-209.

Sigma Tau Gamma

Sigma Tau Gamma's Executive Secretary, E. Kennedy

Whitesitt, states in his letter on behalf of his fraternity:

I am sorry that I cannot send you a copy of our Ritual. This is the only secret material we have. You are welcome to copies of our officers' handbook, pledge manual, and constitution. Our fraternity has no religious qualifications for membership.

Sigma Tau Gamma was founded at the Central Missouri State College, Warrensburg, Missouri, on June 28, 1920, by seventeen men who desired to perpetuate their student friendships in an organization dedicated to true brotherhood. As a general social fraternity, Sigma Tau Gamma is now open to expansion in any accredited institution conferring the bachelor's degree. The national offices are located at 125 East Big Bend Boulevard, St. Louis 19, Missouri. The fraternity has thirty active chapters, one inactive, and a total membership of 9,702. The Officers' Handbook offers suggestions and assistance for the various chapter officers in developing local programs. The Pledge Manual provides a study program for pledges which acquaints the pledges with the development of Greek-letter societies in America, the history and program of the fraternity, social proprieties, how to study efficiently, and how to develop talents for leadership in campus activities.⁵

⁵Ibid., pp. 275-277.

Theta Xi

H. P. Davison, the Executive Secretary of Theta Xi, replied:

We are unable to comply with your request of sending you our Ritual. We cannot show our Ritual to anyone except those that have been initiated. We also are not permitted to send our Constitution to persons not affiliated with our fraternity.

Theta Xi was founded at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, April 29, 1864, by eight students. It was the only fraternity to be founded during the Civil War. At first the fraternity placed limitations upon membership and confined membership to students taking courses leading to the bachelor of science degree. In 1926 Theta Xi became a social fraternity and now selects all its members from all branches of knowledge. The national headquarters of this fraternity are located at 5473 Delmar Boulevard, St. Louis 12, Missouri. The fraternity has thirty-seven active chapters, three inactive, and a total membership of 14,631. The purpose of the fraternity is:

Intellectual curiosity that assures the highest scholarship rating consistent with the member's ability, habits that lead to better mental and physical health, sincerity in the member's association with others and confidence in himself, responsibility to chapter, college, community, and country, leadership that comes from practicing the principles of democratic self-government, interests and activities outside regular scholastic studies that employ spare time to advantage, and spiritual understanding that provides a reservoir of strength to draw upon when faced with conditions beyond comprehension.

Full executive powers have been granted to the grand lodge, which is the ruling body of the national fraternity.⁶

Zeta Beta Tau

William H. Karchmer, the Assistant General Secretary of Zeta Beta Tau, sent the following letter:

The information which you are asking for is esoteric and only available to members of our organization. I believe that you will find this will be true with every social fraternity and that on this basis they will be unable to furnish you with the information you request.

Zeta Beta Tau was founded December 29, 1898, by a group of young men attending several universities and inspired by Rabbi Gustav Gottheil, professor of Semitic languages at Columbia University. It was an organization for scholars. In 1901 the organization changed its original objectives and became the pioneer American and Canadian college social fraternity of Jewish students. The fraternity's central office is located at 124 East 40th Street, New York 16, New York. There are forty active chapters in the fraternity, eleven inactive. It has a total membership of 10,825. The fraternity awards an annual scholarship at the Hebrew University in Palestine and engages in a number of community and social service programs.⁷

⁶Ibid., pp. 300-303.

⁷Ibid., pp. 306-308.

The following fraternities of the National Panhellenic Conference also declined to send their rituals.

Alpha Epsilon Phi

The Executive Secretary of Alpha Epsilon Phi, Kaye McLaughlin, wrote me:

I regret to inform you that there is a National Panhellenic agreement not to give out such information without first clearing through the National Panhellenic Conference, and therefore I am unable to send you the material you requested. I would suggest that you contact the National Panhellenic President directly, as I am sure that you will get no cooperation from any one of the member organizations otherwise. Under no circumstances, however, will we be able to send you any part of the Ritual, as this is never shown to a non-member.

Alpha Epsilon Phi was founded at Barnard College, October 24, 1909, by a group of women. The policy of the national organization is to inaugurate national projects; such as a traveling library, scholarships at various colleges, and an air camp and day nursery. After the pioneer work is completed on these projects, they are turned over to local chapters of the fraternity to continue the work started. Alpha Epsilon Phi is governed by a national council composed of five members elected at each biennial convention. The national office of Alpha Epsilon Phi is located at 185 North Wabash Avenue, Chicago 1, Illinois, and serves as a clearing house between officers and chapters. This sorority has thirty-three active chapters, seven inactive, and a total membership of 6,042.⁸

⁸Ibid., pp. 337-338.

Alpha Omicron Pi

Alpha Omicron Pi, through its Executive Secretary, Mrs. J. Ann Hughes, sent the following information:

Your request for the copy of a ritual is impossible for me to send to you. I am sure that no sorority will forward to you their ritual as that material is only for its own sorority members. I also feel sure that no sorority will tell you exactly what it stands for, to use your own words. Actually our own sorority was founded for the sake of friendship by four very fine women in January of 1897 at Barnard College. We are both educational and philanthropic in purpose and we support the Social Service Department of Frontier Nursing Service located in the hills of Kentucky. More information than that I cannot give to an outsider. I suggest that you decide on another topic for your thesis as I believe that you will secure no information along the lines you outlined in your aforementioned letter.

In another letter, Mrs. J. Ann Hughes stated:

I am sorry, but the National Panhellenic Conference of which we are members, has a ruling that no Constitution or By-laws of any of its member organizations send same to any but authorized proper authorities such as colleges where members of the Conference intend to place chapters or have chapters. Hence, we cannot grant your request.

Alpha Omicron Pi is the second fraternity to be established at Barnard College. It was founded on January 2, 1897. The government is vested in a council which is composed of the three living founders of the fraternity, the national officers, the district directors, the presidents of active and alumnae chapters, the alumnae advisers of active chapters, the chairmen of all national standing committees, and the past national presidents. Conventions are held biennially, the place of meeting being selected by the governing body. The convention of 1931 adopted as the national philanthropic

work the frontier social service department to function in the mountains of eastern Kentucky. The central office of the fraternity is located at the 4th National Bank Building, Suite 1109-11, 18 East Fourth Street, Cincinnati 2, Ohio. The fraternity has fifty-five active chapters, ten inactive, and a total membership of 15,625.⁹

Chi Omega

Elizabeth Dyer, President of Chi Omega, wrote me as follows:

All Greek-letter fraternities and sororities are secret fraternal organizations and no member in good standing would think of revealing the Fraternity Ritual to anyone. I think it is fair to say that sororities and fraternities are attempting to utilize the dynamics that arise in group living and direct it into channels that will make for fine personality development on the part of the members.

Chi Omega was organized at the University of Arkansas, April 5, 1895, by four women. The sorority has as its theme the promotion of "Hellenic Culture and Christian Ideals." The aim of the sorority is to organize groups of women at the college level of intelligence; that such groups must stimulate creative abilities upon which the progress of a civilization depends; and they they must aid in the preservation of the freedoms essential to the development of the individual; but that such individual persons should balance intelligence by experience in the social setting of the group. The government of this sorority is vested in the

⁹Ibid., pp. 346-348.

convention, but during the intervals between conventions this power is delegated to the council composed of six members. Conventions are held biennially. Fixed features of conventions are round table discussions. A Greek play, "The Earth Mother," especially written for Chi Omega, is produced at each convention. The executive office of Chi Omega is located at 2245 Grandin Road, Cincinnati 8, Ohio. The sorority has 101 active chapters, two inactive, and a total membership of 41,575.¹⁰

Sigma Delta Tau

Mrs. Leah Kartmann, Executive Secretary of Sigma Delta Tau, replied:

We are sorry but our ritual is a confidential matter and it is given only to the neophyte. While we appreciate the assistance it might give you in writing your thesis, we cannot comply with your request.

Sigma Delta Tau was founded at Cornell University on March 25, 1917, by a group of women. In organizing the fraternity and in formulating its ideal and ambitions, the founders were aided by Nathan Caleb House, ritualist. He is known as "Brother Nat" and is the only man entitled to wear the Sigma Delta Tau official badge. The supreme or grand council is composed of four national officers selected biennially at conventions, and the regional advisers and

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 364-367.

committee chairmen appointed by the chairman. Biennial conventions are held. A meeting of the grand council takes place prior to the convention. In odd years, the grand council alone meets. The national office of Sigma Delta Tau is located at 1718 Sherman Avenue, Evanston, Illinois. The fraternity has twenty-five active chapters, one inactive, and a total membership of about 4,000. The purpose of the fraternity is:

To form a close social and fraternal union of those similar ideals and to foster, maintain, and instill such ideals in the hearts of its members as will result in actions worthy of the highest precepts of true womanhood, democracy, and humanity.¹¹

¹¹Ibid., pp. 421-422.

CHAPTER IV

FRATERNITIES CONTACTED (CONTINUED)

The Commission on Fraternal Organizations of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has in recent years acquired a number of rituals of fraternities and sororities. Many pastors have helped the Commission gather these materials. The Commission granted me permission to use its files. From these files I selected eight organizations whose rituals I propose to examine. These fraternities are: Beta Sigma Phi; Beta Sigma Psi; Delta Tau Delta; Delta Upsilon; Epsilon Sigma Alpha; Kappa Delta Phi; Phi Delta; and Phi Sigma Lambda.

Beta Sigma Phi

Beta Sigma Phi was founded April 30, 1931, by Walter W. Ross. The first chapter was established at Abilene, Kansas. The organization became international in scope with the first Canadian chapter founded at Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1935. There are some three-thousand chapters of Beta Sigma Phi located throughout the United States, the Canadian Provinces, England, Scotland, Alaska, the Canal Zone, Hawaii, Guam, and Cuba. The headquarters of the Beta Sigma Phi are located at 3525 Broadway, Kansas City, Missouri. The total membership (including the junior affiliate organization, Nu Phi Mu) is 100,000 young women.

Beta Sigma Phi was created for young women in search of social and cultural activity. It gives its members an intimate touch with many lives and many minds, a precious guard against narrowed friendships; an enriching, intensifying, inspirational experience in the appreciation and enjoyment of the liberal arts. It is sponsored by the Educational Foundation which acts as its business representative and guarantees its national financial obligations. The Educational Foundation directs the founding of new chapters. It is a corporation organized under the laws of the state of Missouri and its Board of Directors acts as the Executive Council of the sorority. Beta Sigma Phi unites young women in fellowship and friendship through its planned program, with the ultimate aim of making an art of living. The ideals of the organization are represented in its Latin motto, "Vita, Scientia, Amicitia," which means Life, Learning and Friendship. There are three degrees in Beta Sigma Phi: Pledge, Ritual of Jewels, and Exemplar.¹ The opening and closing ritual for each meeting is as follows:

Sisters in Beta Sigma Phi, here under the watchful eye of Diotima, our Patron Saint, we pledge ourselves anew to the aims and purposes of our glorious sisterhood; more tolerance for our fellow beings through a better understanding of them; a clearer and deeper appreciation of the cultural and finer things of life for ourselves; and a determination to give the

¹Beta Sigma Phi, Manual (Kansas City, Missouri: The Sorority, 1938), p. 45.

best that is in us to our Sorority and to assist in any and every way to shed the light of our talisman throughout the world. (This paragraph is repeated by the president whom all members face after they have joined hands).²

The sorority prayer is the formal closing and is repeated by the president as the members stand with bowed heads. The prayer reads:

Eternal Father, Shepherd of the Stars, guide us that we may follow only the good, only the true, only the beautiful. Hold aloft to us the guiding torch of wisdom and help us to push on, undaunted, toward its light. Illuminate our souls with thy wisdom that we in turn may light the way for those who follow us. If the road we take seems obscure in dust, give us skill and grace to pave it with stars, to transmute the dust into star dust. Grant us such clearness of vision, such sweetness of spirit, such earnestness of purpose, that we may follow the torch to our goal.³

Beta Sigma Psi

Beta Sigma Psi is a national Lutheran social fraternity composed of Lutheran college students united by their religious beliefs. The fraternity was organized and established at Champaign, Illinois, in 1920. Similar organizations existed at Purdue University and the University of Michigan. The national fraternity was established at the University of Illinois, April 17, 1925, to promote a fraternal society for Lutheran students at universities and colleges. The object of Beta Sigma Psi is: "to promote a fraternity of Lutheran university and college students by providing them a home

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 46.

which fosters spiritual welfare, inspires good fellowship, maintains wholesome surroundings, maintains high scholarship, and a sterling code of morals." The government must be in accordance with the National Constitution of Beta Sigma Psi, and is vested in a National Council composed of eight national officers, and accredited delegates from each active and alumni chapter. All communicant Lutheran male students, who are members of the Synodical Conference of North America, or Lutheran male students whose applications for membership have been approved by the student or resident pastor of the Synodical Conference of the college or university in which they are enrolled, and who are not members of any secret society with religious intent, are eligible for membership in Beta Sigma Psi. Beta Sigma Psi is not secret. However, the ceremonies for initiation and pledging are kept confidential and are more impressive. Pledging is a trial period and not binding. If a pledge discovers that he is not satisfied, he may drop the pledge.⁴ The pledge of Beta Sigma Psi is:

I hereby promise to become a loyal pledge, to obey all rules and regulations of this society and at all times to conduct myself as a Christian gentleman.⁵

⁴D. A. Lienemann, Your College Days (Lincoln, Nebr.: Beta Sigma Psi, n.d.), pp. 16-18.

⁵Beta Sigma Psi, Pledge Book (3rd edition; Lincoln, Nebr.: The Fraternity, n.d.), p. 7.

Delta Tau Delta

Delta Tau Delta was organized January 1, 1860, at Bethany College, West Virginia, by William R. Cunningham. The fraternity has chapters at the Universities of Michigan, Minnesota, Colorado, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin, at Rensselaer, Tufts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Cornell. In 1886 the fraternity absorbed two chapters of the Rainbow fraternity, the first southern college secret society, founded at the University of Mississippi in 1848. Delta Tau Delta is governed by an executive council composed of five alumni and four undergraduate members, elected by convention.⁶

The primary purpose of Delta Tau Delta is to serve as a constructive adjunct to the system of higher education, contributing to moral, spiritual, and social development of its members. The Lutheran Witness of September 4, 1951, submitted the following:

The secret ritual of Delta Tau Delta, for example, contains references to "Hieros" and "Hermes," despite the fact that this fraternity uses a Christian prayer which closes with the words: ". . . through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom, with Thee, we ascribe all honor and glory forever. Amen."

During the ceremony the pledge is told that ". . . no true Delt in any sense ever retraces his steps from

⁶ Albert G. Stevens, ed., The Cyclopaedia of Fraternities (2nd edition; New York: E. B. Treat and Company, 1907), pp. 353-354.

the altar where he registered his fraternal vow." To indicate this, the pledge must turn to the right after those words were spoken. He is invested with a grip. "The Grip," says the ritual, "is the special credential of a Delt and is one of our most important and carefully guarded secrets." To insure secrecy, the initiate is forced to take an oath.

The secret oath of Delta Tau Delta, founded in Virginia in 1858, reads as follows: "I, . . . (name) . . ., in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, do hereby and hereon most solemnly and sincerely affirm, declare, promise, and swear that I will ever maintain inviolate and keep the secrets and mysteries of the Delta Tau Delta fraternity; that I will honor and observe its customs and obey its rules; that I will never, knowingly or intentionally, wrong or injure said fraternity or any member thereof; that I will give Delta Tau Delta lifelong allegiance, service, loyalty, and love, upon true and conscientious performance of all of which, without hesitation, equivocation, or mental evasion, fully accepting the same, both in letter and in spirit as officially interpreted and understood, I pledge my faith, my veracity, and my sacred honor. So help me God!"

Delta Upsilon

Delta Upsilon was formed at Williams College, Williamstown, Mass., on November 4, 1834. The fraternity was known by various names. Some of the names were Social Fraternity, Equitable Fraternity, and Ouden Adelon. In 1858 the official name, Delta Upsilon, and the motto, "Justice our Foundation," were adopted. The government of the fraternity is of a twofold character. All members of the fraternity are members of the corporation and have a right to vote every three years through their respective chapters for a chapter representative, who is called a trustee. The trustees, sixty-one in number, select fifteen directors from their number and choose such officers as are designated. The fraternity has sixty

active chapters, four inactive, and a total membership of 36,911 living and dead. Delta Upsilon has as its object the promotion of friendship, the development of character, the diffusion of liberal culture, and the advancement of justice. It is a non-secret fraternity. The motto of the fraternity is "Dikai Upotheke," which means "Justice, our Foundation." The fraternity's motto is public; there is no grip and no secret password. Its constitution and the records of its conventions have always been public while only within recent years this is true of the other fraternities. Strangers are not usually admitted to chapter meetings, but there is seldom reason for their admission. In a word, the decent privacy of most business and social organizations is observed as a matter of custom instead of oath. For many years the fraternity has admitted its members through an initiation ritual, which, while no more secret than the rest of its material, is nevertheless generally considered a purely private affair, though non-members occasionally are present.⁷

In the order of initiation the chaplain offers the following prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God, Who didst inspire our fathers to establish this Fraternity upon justice for its foundation; Grant unto us in our day such a love for truth and justice, such a desire for righteousness, and such a knowledge of Thy will as may enable

⁷Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities, edited by Harold J. Baily (15th edition; Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 159-162.

us to be just in all our dealing with each other and with the world, and to live worthily of this our Fraternity. May this brotherhood, founded upon Thy laws and for the setting forward of all high and noble ideals, enjoy Thy continual favor and be to us and to those who now enter its fellowship a constant source of strength and happiness, and an unfailing means for advancing all that is right and true, through Christ our Lord. Amen.⁸

Epsilon Sigma Alpha

Epsilon Sigma Alpha is an international educational and social sorority. The first chapter was installed in Jacksonville, Texas, on September 13, 1929. During the next eleven years the organization continued to grow, but the progress was slow considering the opportunities which the sorority offered. In 1941, E. Robert Palmer, educator, philosopher, lecturer, became the head of the organization and since that time Epsilon Sigma Alpha has expanded. International headquarters are located at Loveland, Colorado. The organization has thirty-seven chapters in the United States and members throughout the world numbering 20,000.⁹

Mr. Roy W. Hahn, Extension Director of Epsilon Sigma Alpha, in a letter to Dr. Paul M. Bretscher, states:

The aims of the society are the development of character, and education along the lines of the social graces, arts, and self-reliance; combining the

⁸Delta Upsilon, Ritual of Initiation (New York: The Fraternity, 1937), pp. 10-11.

⁹Epsilon Sigma Alpha, The Story of Epsilon Sigma Alpha (Loveland, Colo.: The Sorority, n.d.), pp. 1-2. (Tract)

qualities of womanhood into a strong organization for furthering our community and nation. The members are given a loyalty pledge which is non-sectarian. We do require a belief in the almighty God. The Greek goddess, Athene, is our symbol of knowledge.

In the ritual of initiation pledges take the following oath:

In the presence of God and these witnesses, I most solemnly and sincerely pledge myself to uphold the honor and dignity and respect the standards of Epsilon Sigma Alpha, to the very best of my ability. I shall recommend for membership in my chapter only those persons whose characters are above reproach. I hereby promise to be loyal to the officers of my chapter and to fulfill all obligations connected with my membership.¹⁰

The second degree of Epsilon Sigma Alpha is the "ceremony of the jewels." The installing officer says: "Sisters, we are assembled tonight under the thoughtful eye of our inspiring patroness, the gentle and fair goddess of Athene." There are ten jewels surrounding the Open Book on their badge. Each jewel has a special significance. The first pearl is for wisdom, the second for beauty, the third for strength, the fourth for truth, the fifth for fidelity, the sixth for fellowship, the seventh for cooperation, the eighth for loyalty, the ninth for vision, and the tenth for service. The candidate, after hearing what the jewels stand for and the lesson each teaches, repeats the following oath before the altar of fire:

I, having heard the lesson of the jewels, before the Altar of Fire, and inspired by the precept of Athene,

¹⁰Epsilon Sigma Alpha, Ritual of Initiation and Ceremonies (Loveland, Colo.: The Sorority, n.d.), p. 2.

goddess of wisdom, do hereby dedicate myself anew to uphold the honor and dignity of Epsilon Sigma Alpha, that the ideals of the organization should be made manifest in my life.¹¹

A hymn sung by the Epsilon Sigma Alpha reads:

Lord, let us do our little part
With courage and a willing heart.
Open our eyes that we may see
However dark the day may be,
However rough the road we fare
The purpose of ESA we bear.

Lord, let us see the beauty here,
The Blue and Gold so very dear;
The smile upon a sister's face,
The Jonquil sweet in all its grace;
The Open Book, the Greek Lamp too,
Be loyal ESA through and through.

Lord, strengthen us that we may keep
Our faith, though bitterly we weep.
Grant us undaunted to remain
Through every storm of care and pain,
Lord, let us do our little part
With courage and a willing heart. Amen.¹²

In the Epsilon Sigma Alpha services the following is said in memory of the one departed:

Life can never be all sunshine, yet it need not be all tears for the gentle hand of the Eternal Father soothes our heartaches. He must have needed her, our sister, her tenderness and her love and so he called her to a Heavenly Home.

We know that she lived, loved, and triumphed by the radiant after glow. No things, no length of time, no breadth of space can ever remove her image. We will not lose the feeling of her by our side.

How can we say that the song is ended when its melody lingers and is held in our hearts.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 3-5.

¹²Ibid., p. 6.

Now may these words of Longfellow comfort our hearts:
 And the night shall be filled with music,
 And the cares that infest the day,
 Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
 And as silently steal away.¹³

At the opening of each meeting the president of Epsilon Sigma Alpha says:

Sisters of Epsilon Sigma Alpha, we meet again to pledge ourselves anew to the vows of our ritual we accepted in the golden glow of a candle-lighted room. Let us be ever mindful of the responsibilities that we pledged to our sorority, keep faith with ourselves and our sisters, be tolerant and sincere and ever worthy to wear the badge that symbolizes virtue, honor, truthfulness, friendliness and love-
 liness.¹⁴

In the closing of each meeting all members join hands and repeat together the following:

Eternal Father, master of all good works, guide and direct us that we may remain steadfast in our hearts and faithful to our pledge under the watchful eye of Pallas Athene. May we be reminded that graciousness, poise and friendliness, is our goal; and as we go our separate ways, to ever hold aloft the ray from the lamp of learning; that those who follow in our footsteps may be guided by its light.¹⁵

Kappa Delta Phi

Kappa Delta Phi is one of the sororities for which no historical data was available in all sources contacted in the St. Louis area. No information was available on the location of the headquarters of the sorority.

¹³Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 32.

The ritual of Kappa Delta Phi has been in the possession of the Commission on Fraternal Organizations of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod since September 13, 1946. The ritual had a note appended to it to the affect that the sorority at the time of writing had chapters at Louisville, in Hamilton and Miamaburg, Ohio, and in LaFayette and New Castle, Indiana; more recently also in Illinois. The ritual of the Kappa Delta Phi is filled with admonitions to "let your ideals of womanhood surpass all--always to honor and to perpetuate the glories of American womanhood."

In the ritual of Kappa Delta Phi the president offers the following prayer:

O, God, Who hast given the good gift of Friendship, keep alive in our hearts the Virtues of Kala, Daimon, and Philia. Make our offenses to be forgotten, and our services to be remembered. Be with our absent members; guide and bless them.¹⁶

In the closing prayer the president says:

O, Almighty God, as we extinguish the earthly symbols of our three great Virtues, we beg of You to keep their Fires burning within our hearts, and to keep our minds¹⁷ illuminated with the precepts of our sorority.

The oath of initiation used by this sorority reads:

I do hereby solemnly promise and swear that I will aspire to the high ideals of womanhood as placed before me; that I will always be honest and upright in my dealings with others; that I will lead a clean and honorable life to the glory of God and the welfare of my Sorority; that I will be loyal to God,

¹⁶Kappa Delta Phi, Ritual (n.p.: The Sorority, 1946), p. 2.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 3.

to my country, and to this Sorority and every member thereof; that I will love my sisters and will never permit others to defame, ill-treat or slander a Sister Kappa Delta Phi when it is in my power to prevent it; that I will spread good cheer amongst my associates and be ever ready to assist in social and civic work in my community; that I will ever honor and perpetuate the glories of American womanhood; that I will keep inviolate all secrets of this Sorority and to the best of my ability observe its precepts. All this I promise and swear under the penalty of expulsion from the Sorority. So help me God. Amen.¹⁸

The initiation centers in a search for the three great virtues. During the initiation service a lighted candelabra with three tapers must be on the altar. This last mentioned piece of furniture with its Bible is interpreted as follows: "This will signify that we first took the word of God and that at this meeting we look upon the president as authority." The Fire of Kala is the mystery of beautiful things, the sublimity of ideals. The Fire of Daimon is the mystery of strength in a threefold structure: strength to be loyal to God, to Country, and to the Kappa Delta Phi. The Fire of Philia is the mystery of love for Kappa Delta Phi and every member.¹⁹

Phi Delta

Phi Delta was organized at the Long Island College of Medicine, Brooklyn, New York, in 1901. In January 1918, the chapters numbered sixteen, of which five ceased to exist at the merging with Theta Kappa Psi.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 9-16.

The ritual of Phi Delta has the chaplain offer the following prayer:

Almighty ruler of the Universe, we invoke thy blessing on this our present communication. Grant that this young man may cultivate and devote his life to thy service and become a true and faithful brother among us. Endow him with a competency of thy Divine Wisdom, that by the influence of the pure principles of our instruction he may be the better enabled to display the beauties of Friendship, and Brother Love, Truth and Honor, to the glory of thy Holy name.
Amen.²⁰

During the initiation ceremony, the president quotes Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, God created the heavens, and the earth, and the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the waters, and God said 'Let there be light.'" When these words are said, the conductor removes the blindfold from the candidate. The president tells the initiate that the Bible is given as a guide and counsel to members of the fraternity. In the Bible, so he says, members find explained the most excellent factors of their institution: friendship, brotherly love, truth, and honor. A study of the divine work will not only tend to make one a better "Phi Delta" but also a nobler and truer man. This fraternity has a myth of the origin of its organization based upon Greek mythology. The myth tells of Apollo, the son of Juno and Zeus, traveling on his way and coming to the city of Athens. There he saw two boys playing upon the banks of a pool in a public park. Suddenly they became displeased with each other and in the ensuing struggle one of

²⁰Phi Delta, Ritual (n.p.: The Fraternity, 1923), p. 2.

them fell into the pool. This pool was guarded by a water monster. The other boy plunged headlong into the water to rescue his companion. The monster pulled one lad down and Apollo rescued him. In the process, Apollo was bit by the monster. This was a test for Apollo given him by Zeus. Apollo, having passed the test, made friends with these two Athenian boys. On his twentieth birthday Apollo founded the oracle of society known as the Phi Delta. A lapse of two thousand two hundred ninety-nine years passed before this organization was revealed to a body of men. As a member of this society one is expected to be in all respects like Apollo and his brother members who stand for truth, fraternal brotherhood, and uprightness in men.²¹

At the close of each meeting the chaplain prays the following prayer:

Thou, O God, who knowest our downsetting, and our uprising, and understandeth our thoughts afar off, shield and defend us from the evil intentions of our enemies and support us in rendering the trials and afflictions we are destined to endure while traveling through the Vale of Tears. Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down. Yea, he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. Turn from him, O Lord, that he may rest until he shall accomplish his day. For there is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch will not perish. But man dieth and wasteth away, yea,

²¹Ibid., p. 4-5.

man lieth down and giveth up the ghost. As the waters far from the sea, and as the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down and riseth not up until the Heavens shall be no more. Yet, oh, Lord, have compassion on the children of thy Creation. Administer them comfort in time of trouble and save them with an everlasting Salvation. Amen.²²

Phi Sigma Lambda

Phi Sigma Lambda is the other sorority for which no historical data and information with regard to the headquarters of the organization is available in the St. Louis area.

A copy of the ritual of Phi Sigma Lambda sorority was sent to the Commission on Fraternal Organizations of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod by Rev. C. F. Buchroth of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, in January 1935. The purpose of the Phi Sigma Lambda is: "to furnish a socializing influence for the women students of _____ College, and to encourage high standards of scholarship."²³

The initiation ceremony of Phi Sigma Lambda provides for the following officers: (1) High Queen, (2) Friendship, (3) Service, (4) Loyalty, (5) Page, (6) Chaplain, (7) Secretary. The initiation is done in candle-light. The High Queen presides and the Page leads in the initiates. Friendship states that it is the keynote to success in the social world and that friendship means giving always and

²² Ibid., p. 5.

²³ Phi Sigma Lambda, Initiation Ceremony (n.p.; The Sorority, 1935), p. 1.

not taking. Service, says a member, must have willingness to sacrifice for the good of others. Loyalty tells the pledges they must have faith, for faith is founded in the deep roots of loyalty. The new members must be loyal to every member of Phi Sigma Lambda. The initiates are then led to the altar where the chaplain has them repeat this vow:

I, _____,--do solemnly promise--that I will join my sincerest efforts--with those of my sisters--to further the ideals--of friendship, service and loyalty--in Phi Sigma Lambda. I shall hold my sorority--in equal importance with any other organization--and shall keep inviolate--any secret work of the sorority. This I promise--in the presence of my sisters--and before our God.²⁴

²⁴Ibid., p. 3.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION AND CRITICISM OF FRATERNITIES

According to Dr. Shideler,¹ the great purpose and ideal of fraternities is fraternity. This ideal is made up of many separate intangibles. It cannot be analyzed and evaluated in mathematical terms, and can be appraised only in comparative terms and terms of personal experience. Dr. Shideler admits that, on the whole, fraternities do achieve their purpose. They develop character and personality. This is, so he believes, one of the most valuable functions of a fraternity. "Latent abilities have been developed, confidence has been aroused, better men and citizens have been developed." Fraternities have also made a contribution to college administration in the sense of relieving the housing situation. Finally, according to Dr. Shideler, President Brown of Denison claims that fraternities have a very great deal to do with promoting scholarship.

There are, however, many aspects in fraternities that make them questionable with reference to group experience. Social and economic status is an obvious factor that affects possible election to a fraternity or sorority. The fact that these organizations have restrictive qualifications often means that members tend to build a high wall around

¹William H. Shideler, The Development of Fraternity (Oxford, Ohio: Phi Kappa Tau Central Office, 1951), pp. 10-11.

themselves and come to have little understanding and acceptance of others.² In his book A Study in Undergraduate Adjustment, Robert C. Angell states that though sororities promote social facility, the ability to understand others, self-knowledge, and self-control, they are not likely to increase tolerance or to stimulate one to think through one's philosophy of life.³ More vicious, however, is the effect fraternities and sororities produce on those students who for some reason are not admitted to the select group. These students often form a sort of club for non-fraternity students. Such a club is an unhappy form of compensation.⁴

Dr. Thomas A. Brady, vice-president of the University of Missouri, voiced the following concerns in an address on fraternities and sororities:

In the past forty years, college fraternities have been bitterly and consistently criticised by the general public and by many teachers and officials of colleges and universities. They have been accused of snobbery, intolerance, rowdyism and barbarianism, cruelty, and complete lack of interest in spiritual and intellectual things. In short, although they exist, by nature, only in collegiate communities, it has been claimed that they have little interest in the educational mission of the institutions around which these societies are built.

In my opinion, there is much truth in many of the accusations that have been made against fraternities.

²Dugald S. Arbuckle, Student Personal Services in Higher Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1953), p. 254.

³Robert C. Angell, A Study in the Undergraduate Adjustment (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), p. 112.

⁴Arbuckle, op. cit., p. 255.

And I say this not because so many fraternities are bad (most of them, I believe, are not bad at all) but because they have made so little progress toward doing the educational job that they are so eminently fitted to accomplish. I contend that we cannot understand the nature of the fraternity as an educational society until we study the history of the modern university and determine just where the fraternity belongs in the organization of this institution.⁵

The most withering attack on fraternities in recent months comes from the pen of Dr. Henry P. Van Dusen, president of Union Theological Seminary, who delivered himself of the following:

Some of the worst evils of fraternities, paradoxically, flow directly from their professed virtues. Most of them enshroud their proceedings with mysterious mock-secrecy. Many of them initiate members with ceremonies which are an absurdly contradictory combination of crude horse-play reminiscent of late-Victorian hazing and elaborate rituals embracing pseudo-religious, even Christian ideals and pledges. Indeed, from their professed aims and principles one might suppose that they were self-appointed allies of the college administration, dedicated to inculcating studiousness, probity, chivalry, magnanimity, in all who are subjected to their beneficent 'shepherding.'

The truth is that they are, on most campuses, the most troublesome and obdurate obstacle to the fulfillment of the high purposes of education.

For close to forty years I have been continuously and intimately acquainted with the colleges of the United States. I know them of every type and in all sections of the country--publicly and privately sponsored, secular and church-related, men's and women's and co-ed, in New England and the Middle Atlantic States, in the south and southeast and central west, in the Rocky Mountains and on the Pacific Coast. I have yet to meet a front-rank and forward-looking president or dean who did not confess (often in the privacy of his

⁵Thomas A. Brady, "The Catholic Fraternity", The Temple, (November 1952), p. 1.

study and strictly off the record) that fraternities constitute his most persistent and harassing headache. I have yet to sit down with a group of representative undergraduate leaders to scrutinize the fraternity system in the context of college welfare without hearing the majority of them admit that fraternities are divisive, extravagant, demoralizing and ridiculous. Certainly, in a Christian perspective, I know of few advocates of the Christian cause in American colleges who would not agree that fraternities are their most baffling handicap, although some of them make the best of a bad situation through practice of the scriptural injunction to "make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness," and by shrewd devices draw the fraternities, usually halfheartedly or pharisaically, to their support.⁶

Dr. Paul M. Bretscher adds this thought to Dr. Van Dusen's article on fraternities in a recent issue of the Concordia Theological Monthly:

A Christian who has in Holy Baptism pledged himself to the service of the Triune God, has been brought up in a Christian home, and has heeded the directions of his pastor, dare not yield to the temptation of college and university campuses to become initiated on a ritual which at best promotes shallow moral idealism and sentimental religiosity. In the face of that temptation he will remember, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to Thy Word," Ps. 119:9 (R. S. V.). No Christian need join an objectional, worldly minded fraternity! There are opportunities for Christian fellowship on American college and university campuses if the Christian will make reasonable efforts to discover them.⁷

In a similar vein Dr. Theodore Graebner wrote some years ago:

Students are often attracted to a sorority or fraternity by the glamour that attends such affiliation. But glamour and social prestige must not take precedence

⁶ Henry P. Van Dusen, "Fraternities and Church Colleges", The Christian Century, LXX (September 9, 1953), 1018.

⁷ Paul M. Bretscher, "President Van Dusen on Fraternities", Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIV (December 1953), 946.

over the higher values. The standards of the Church are those imposed by God. The standards of the university are those established by the world of men. There is a vast difference between the will of God and convention; between morality and respectability.⁸

With these thoughts in mind, let us examine the rituals which have been cited in the previous chapter. We will seek to determine whether they contain objectionable religious features such as Christless prayers, unionistic worship, unnecessary oaths, and other elements, which violate the Christian faith.

Beta Sigma Phi

The Opening and Closing Ritual for each meeting is as follows:

Sisters in Beta Sigma Phi, here under the watchful eye of Diotima, our Patron Saint, we pledge ourselves anew to the aims and purposes of our glorious sisterhood; more tolerance for our fellow beings through a better understanding of them; a clearer and deeper appreciation of the cultural and finer things of life for ourselves; and a determination to give the best that is in us to our Sorority and to assist in any and every way to shed the light of our talisman throughout the world. (This paragraph is repeated by the president whom all members face after they have joined hands).

The sorority prayer is the formal closing and is repeated by the president as the members stand with bowed heads.

The prayer reads:

Eternal Father, Shepherd of the Stars, guide us that we may follow only the good, only the true, only the beautiful. Hold aloft to us the guiding torch of

⁸Theodore Graebner, A Handbook of Organizations (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948), p. 138.

wisdom and help us to push on, undaunted toward its light. Illumine our souls with thy wisdom that we in turn may light the way for those who follow us. If the road we take seems obscure in dust, give us skill and grace to pave it with stars, to transmute the dust into star dust. Grant us such clearness of vision, such sweetness of spirit, such earnestness of purpose, that we may follow the torch to our goal.

The above prayer is of the essence of deism. It is Christless. Aside from the nature religion expressed in the prayer, as "Shepherd of the Stars, hold aloft thy torch, gives us skill and grace to pave our road with stars, and transmute the dust into star dust," this society seems to be a regular hotbed of snobbery. There is reason to believe that the Chapter Manual is built upon a vague religiosity which completely ignores the Bible and the Christian way of life.⁹

Delta Tau Delta

The secret ritual of Delta Tau Delta contains references to "Hieros" and "Hermes," despite the fact that this fraternity uses a prayer which closes with the words: ". . . through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom, with Thee, we ascribe all honor and glory forever. Amen." In the oath, the pledge must say:

⁹Ibid., p. 141.

I will give Delta Tau Delta lifelong allegiance, service, loyalty, and love; . . . I pledge my faith, my veracity, and my sacred honor. So help me God!

This borders on a violation of the First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." A Christian cannot take an oath which pledges one's faith to a society and not to God.

Delta Upsilon

In the order of initiation the chaplain offers this prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God, Who didst inspire our fathers to establish this Fraternity upon justice for its foundation; Grant unto us in our day such a love for truth and justice, such a desire for righteousness, and such a knowledge of Thy will as may enable us to be just in all our dealings with each other and with the world, and to live worthily of this, our Fraternity. May this Brotherhood, founded upon Thy laws and for the setting forward of all high and noble ideals, enjoy Thy continual favor and be to us and to those who now enter its fellowship a constant source of strength and happiness, and an unfailing means for advancing all that is right and true, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

There are a few objections to this prayer. The clause that God inspired their fathers to found the society on the foundation of justice is, at least, pious sentiment. The statement that this love for justice which they ask God to create in their hearts will teach them to be just with all men disregards the nature of the human heart. If men are Christians and if they pray to Christ for strengthening of their faith and zeal to live by the love of Christ, they

will strive to practice justice toward all men. Unless the love of Christ rules a person's heart, he cannot truly love his brethren. The prayer leans on the Law and not the Gospel.

Epsilon Sigma Alpha

This organization is definitely an unchristian society.

The oath of membership states:

In the presence of God and these witnesses, I most solemnly and sincerely pledge myself to uphold the honor and dignity and respect the standards of Epsilon Sigma Alpha, to the very best of my ability. I shall recommend for membership in my chapter only those persons whose characters are above reproach. I hereby promise to be loyal to the officers of my chapter and to fulfill all obligations connected with my membership.

The second degree oath termed the "Ceremony of the Jewels" reads:

I, having heard the lesson of the jewels, before the Altar of Fire, and inspired by the precept of Athene, goddess of wisdom, do hereby dedicate myself anew to uphold the honor and dignity of Epsilon Sigma Alpha, that the ideals of the organization should be made manifest in my life.

A Christian is forbidden to swear falsely, blasphemously, and frivolously and of taking oaths in uncertain things. In Matt. 5:33-37, a Christian is informed:

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

A Christian may swear by God's name when the glory of God and the welfare of his neighbor is demanded. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." Deut. 6:13. In addition, the religious song, quoted on page 35, completely disregards God's grace in Christ. In the closing prayer on page 36 addressed to God, the Eternal Father, members ask Him to direct their ways that they might remain faithful to their pledge under the watchful eye of Pallas Athene. There is no mention of Christ and His love and grace in this prayer. This is blasphemy since God's name is equated with that of a pagan deity. In the memorial service on pages 35 and 36 the heavenly home is promised to anyone who has been a faithful member of Epsilon Sigma Alpha. The Christian view explicitly tells us that only those who have lived a life of faith in the merits of Jesus Christ have the promise of Scripture that they will receive eternal life. The memorial service closes with these words:

Now may these words of Longfellow comfort our hearts:
 And the night shall be filled with music,
 And the cares that infest the day,
 Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
 And as silently steal away.

Only the words of Jesus Christ, the Savior of all men, can comfort the hearts of men especially at the time of death. Here the sorority puts man's words above that of Jesus Christ.

Kappa Delta Phi

In the prayers of this sorority we read:

Oh, God, Who hast given the good gift of Friendship, keep alive in our hearts the virtues of Kala, Daimon, and Philia. Make our offenses to be forgotten, and our services to be remembered. Be with our absent members; guide and bless them.

Oh, Almighty God, as we extinguish the earthly symbols of our three great virtues, we beg of you to keep their Fires burning within our hearts, and to keep our minds illuminated with the precepts of our sorority.

These prayers mix Christian thought and naturalistic ideas.

Both prayers are Christless.

Phi Delta

The ritual of Phi Delta has the chaplain offer the following prayer:

Almighty ruler of the Universe, we invoke thy blessing on this our present communication. Grant that this young man may cultivate and devote his life to thy service, and become a true and faithful brother among us. Endow him with a competency of thy Divine Wisdom, that by the influence of the pure principles of our instruction he may be the better enabled to display the beauties of Friendship, and Brotherly Love, Truth and Honor, to the glory of thy Holy name. Amen.

The prayer is addressed to the ruler of the Universe.

But who is this Almighty ruler? The prayer does not identify him. It could be the true God. But it could also be Allah, Buddha, or some other pagan deity. The ritual closes with this prayer:

Thou, O God, who knowest our down setting, and our uprising, and understandeth our thoughts afar off, shield and defend us from the evil intentions of our enemies and support us in rendering the trials and

afflictions we are destined to endure while traveling through the Vale of Tears. Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down. Yea, he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. Turn from Him, O Lord, that he may rest until he shall accomplish his day. For there is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch will not perish. But man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man lieth down and giveth up the ghost. As the waters far from the sea, and as the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down and riseth not up until the Heavens shall be no more. Yet, oh Lord, have compassion on the children of thy Creation. Administer them comfort in time of trouble and save them with an everlasting Salvation. Amen.

The prayer mentions nothing of Christ and His grace. A Jew or pagan could pray this prayer. It is unionistic. A Christian prays to the Triune God and prays in the name of Jesus. "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." John 16:23. Dr. Graebner gives a most graphic description of this prayer when he says:

The prayer is an Irish stew of heterogeneous Bible texts, but will undoubtedly impress the young pledge as very solemn, being composed of sweetly sad sentiments addressed to the good Lord.¹⁰

Phi Sigma Lambda

The initiates must repeat this vow:

I, _____,--do solemnly promise--that I will join my sincerest efforts--with those of my sisters--to further the ideals--of friendship, service and

¹⁰ Graebner, op. cit., p. 146.

loyalty--in Phi Sigma Lambda. I shall hold my sorority--in equal importance with any other organization--and shall keep inviolate--any secret work of the sorority. This I promise--in the presence of my sisters--and before our God.

The oath is a frivolous oath. Neither the glory of God nor the welfare of the neighbor demands the oath.

Dr. Graebner summarizes his impressions of this sorority as follows:

Aside from the frivolous oath, in addition, God is placed on the same level with Buddha, and the prayers evidently are Christless because non-Christians may join the society. The sorority is placed above, or on an equal basis with, the home and the church, the institutions founded and ordained by God. The member of the sorority is expected to be loyal to her society and her sorority sisters above all things. The society has been patterned after the Eastern Star, as the ritual breathes the spirit of the Eastern Star.¹¹

Conclusion

We have concluded our investigation of a number of rituals of college fraternities. We have discovered that these rituals do contain religious features which conflict with the Christian faith and because of which Christian university students ought not affiliate with fraternities represented by them.

But there are other features in fraternities which a Christian must take into account before he joins a fraternity. To these features Rev. Curtis C. Stephan calls attention. With the permission of the Commission on Fraternal Organization we are appending Rev. Stephan's critique to which we

¹¹Ibid.

wholeheartedly subscribe. Rev. Stephan writes:

Letters in my files from deans of twenty leading universities of our land speak of certain advantages and values that fraternities and sororities offer, but they speak also of many disadvantages and evils of the system.

It seems to me from long thought on the matter that the defects of the system so far outweigh the merits that our people ought to be discouraged from associating themselves with these organizations. I find these objections to be serious ones:

1. blasphemy, oaths, and secrecy that violate the second commandment;
2. prayers that are Christless and un-Christian;
3. promotion of religious indifference;
4. compulsory attendance in a body at heterodox churches;
5. living as a close family unit with false believers and unbelievers;
6. obligation to conform to the social pattern of behavior of the fraternity;
7. allegiance to the fraternity above all else;
8. failure to practice high moral ideals;
9. tendency to snobbery even toward unorganized fellow-Christians;
10. discrimination against people of certain religious, ethnic, cultural, and economic groups.

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