

OPINION/EDITORIAL

Conflict between Greek letter organizations and Christianity becomes subject of debate

Jameka Merriweather
BLACK COLLEGE WIRE

"Stomping the yard" with desired colors and Greek letters. Leading the university in community service projects. Throwing the biggest parties of the year. Lending a helping hand to fellow members.

Greek-lettered organizations. Their purpose and function can become blurred not only in the eyes of the university, but with its members.

Is Greek life compatible with Christianity?

Recently, a debate over Greek-lettered organizations and their relationship to Christianity has emerged — a debate that goes back at least to the mid-1980s.

The campus of Prairie View A & M University in Prairie View, Texas, experienced this debate firsthand and with full effect: The president of the campus chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., stepped down and denounced his membership in the organization.

The events began with an opinion piece in the student newspaper, the Panther, "Why God wants you to denounce your letters."

A student anonymously urged others to denounce their Greek letters or steer clear of Greek-lettered organizations.

He said fraternities and sororities were "idols to themselves and to people who long to be a member of them." He said these organizations take the place of God in some people's hearts because they spend time "worshipping" the organizations and not God.

The student said, "demons used the founders of secret societies and Greek/Egyptian organizations to create a stronghold for young people for years to come." He claimed these demons purposely work against the will of God.

"Organizations encourage members as well as potential members to dedicate all their time and efforts to their success," he said,

which conflicts with God's will.

The debate lasted until the semester's end. In response to "Why God wants you to denounce your letters," the Panther published, "Why God is ONE with my letters."

The author of that piece, B.J. O'Neal, summarized the opposing arguments as "a common mishap that occurs when religious people err in their understandings or over-interpret human action as it relates to historical events documented in the Bible." He argued that people should realize that "the true intentions of Greek organizations are in fact aligned with what God would have his people doing."

O'Neal supported his statements by citing personal experiences and Bible verses.

Fuel was added to the fire when the president of the Eta Gamma Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Asad Abdul-Salaam, stepped down and denounced his fraternity membership. Abdul-Salaam wrote, "Why I denounced my letters."

Abdul-Salaam condemned Greek images and symbols, and called the rituals "anti-Christian."

"Asad was a great president," said Mark Anthony Williams II, the new president of the Eta Gamma Chapter. "He was somebody that I truly looked up to and still do. It takes bravery to work hard and to get somewhere but also to step down due to religious reasons. I don't know a lot of people that would do that."

"We, as Alphas, don't look at him differently. We don't talk about him behind his back. I still love Asad to death," Williams said. "If he believes his walk with God will be greater, it's not for us to judge. Asad is not a sporadic guy; it was something well thought out."

However, Williams said, "I personally know a lot of people that are extremely involved in church —

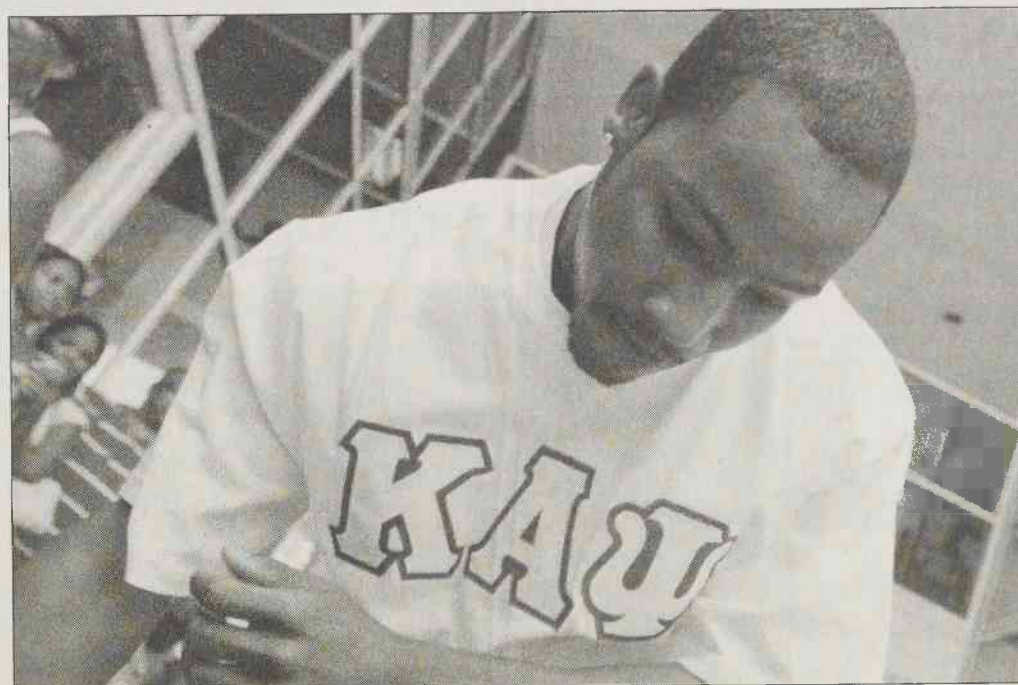


Photo by Garrett Garms

The conflict between Greek life and Christianity is becoming a major issue on campuses across America.

preachers, deacons, mothers — and it's all about how you personally portray your letters," he said. "Your organization may be flawed, but you can try to help it become better and [get] back to its original intent."

Williams said it would be better to have written about how Greek life has digressed from its original path.

The Rev. Kenneth I. Clarke Sr., a member of Alpha Phi Alpha and director of Cornell United Religious Work at Cornell University, traces the current debate to such ministers as Frederic Hatchett and Gail Gray, who condemn Greek-lettered organizations.

Hatchett is the founder of the Web site www.dontgogreek.com and author of "Coming Apart at the Seams: Biblically Unravelling the Evils of Sororities and Fraternities." On his Web site, he claims to have 21 years of "experience" with Greek-lettered organizations, "six years as an outsider looking in, five as an insider, 10 and counting as a born again, denounced member."

Hatchett says the origin of these organizations can be

found in the "Ancient Cults of Babylon," which can be proved in "SEVEN undeniable similarities between Ancient Babylonian Cults and Greek Organizations today."

Gray is the author of "Greek-Letter Organizations: Offspring of Abomination." Her mission is to teach about "the spiritual conflict surrounding Christian membership within secret societies," according to her Web site, www.gailgray.com.

Clarke says of these critics, "They take text [from the Bible] that supports their case with a snip of a ritual and say it's evidence. You can't take a quote out of an initiation without putting it into context," Clarke said.

Clarke said he finds this difficult to do if you have not been a part of a Greek-letter organization because, he said, members understand the symbolism behind the rituals.

"For example, I shouldn't know what a Kappa ritual means as an Alpha any more than a Kappa should know about Alpha's rituals," he said.

He also said, "some of the language of the rituals are

used symbolically and not to be taken literally."

He maintains that some rituals have been handed down throughout history and have historical references or references to African culture.

"I have never had to make a decision between Alpha Phi Alpha and my faith," Clarke said. "No one is asked to serve something else other than God, just have a commitment to your organization."

Clarke said he is concerned that this debate will affect younger members who do not have tight grasp on their organization's history or black history.

Thus, Clarke says it is essential for older members and graduate members to converse with the younger ones and help them to have a better grasp of their organization's past and of the purposes on which they were founded.

"These arguments are problematic," he said. "Christianity, as well as other religions, are most potent, most transformative when they clarify what they stand for as opposed to misguided interpretations of faith that speak about what they are against."

MOVIE REVIEW

Zeitgeist takes in-depth look at religion from three perspectives

Larry Williams
ARGUS STAFF

Zeitgeist, which means "the spirit of the age", is a documentary that digs deep through history to show the truth of religion and its political manipulation.

The documentary is split up in three parts: "The Greatest Story Ever Told", "All the World's a Stage", and "Don't Mind the Men Behind the Curtain".

The first part explores the history of Christianity. It starts with Kemet, one of the earliest civilizations. The film talks about their pagan customs and how their beliefs were based upon the sun and its movements through the zodiac. The movie later goes on to draw comparisons between Horus, their pagan god, and Jesus Christ.

"All the World's a Stage" is the next part of the movie that breaks down the 9/11 tragedy, using scientific knowledge and insider CIA information. This section talks about the mysterious collapsing of the World Trade Center — not only buildings one and two but also building seven.

The film claims that NORAD, the United States air defense system, conducted drills at the same time 9/11 happened.

The most eye-opening part of the movie, "Don't Mind the Men Behind the Curtain," breaks down the history of government corruption in America.

The film also explores the way many wars were started, allegedly involving some of America's wealthiest families as financing both sides, to prolong war.

For further information or to see the movie, it is available online at zeitgeistmovie.com.

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