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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE KLAN:
THE KU KLUX KLAN’S VISION OF WHITE PROTESTANT AMERICA, 1915-1930

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To Steve, Dottie, and Chris
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Since my dissertation is firmly rooted in print culture, I have come to appreciate the impact on reading on my historical actors and their actions as well as on myself as a scholar. Reading is not a one-way transmission of knowledge but rather can open up the worldview of one profoundly to another person. As I wrote the final draft of my dissertation, it occurred to me that reading, which has always been sort of a magical process for me, conveyed the hopes and trepidations of my historical subjects, and I wish that my writing conveyed their printed experiences in terms that they might have recognized. Some might find that desire distasteful because of the subject matter, but my commitment, throughout this process, has been to let the sources, the voices if you will, guide my research whether I personally liked my subjects or not. Reading or hearing the words of those we find distasteful is just as important as uplifting the works of those we admire. Reading Klansmen’s speeches, letters, and news magazines does not imply support of their cause but rather allows us to see how they, too, are human in spite of their intolerance. This project has altered my vision of the world, and I appreciate the support and candor of friends, relatives, colleagues and professors throughout various stages of my project.

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ABSTRACT

“The Gospel According to the Klan” identifies the intimate relationships between Protestantism, nationalism, gender and whiteness in the print culture of the 1920s Klan in order to demonstrate that the Klan reflected the values, ideals and aspirations of white America in that era. To present the commonalities between the Klan and the “mainstream” deflates historiographical arguments that label the Klan as periphery in both narratives of American culture and American religious history. This also suggests the ways in which religious faith, nationalism, gender and race all define and create one another in the Klan’s attempts to define what America was and what she certainly was not. The chapters, then, focus not on chronology but themes in an attempt to recraft the worldview of the 1920s Klan. I rely on methodologies of lived religion and ethnography to crack open their world and recreate it for readers in order to move beyond the Klan classification as a simply white supremacist group and show the complexities of the order’s hatred and commitment to the American nation. Klan print culture has been under-utilized in histories of the Klan, and it is a rich resource to see the logic, values and theologies of the order. What also becomes clear is that the Klan consciously defined the order in opposition to Catholicism. Catholic voices are equally important as Klan voices in the telling of this narrative because they illuminated another vision of America, which the Klan sought to counteract.
INTRODUCTION:
“To examine the Klan is to examine ourselves”

Forget the idea of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan being an organization that flogs [sic] and tars and feathers people. Nor is it an organization that sneaks around into people’s back yards trying to get something on somebody. We do, however, bring the transgressor to justice through the duly constituted officers of the law. Let us look beyond the horizon and see this thing from a national standpoint. Let us see to the influx of unfit foreign immigration….Let’s get behind Old Glory and the church of Jesus Christ—The Imperial Night-Hawk (1924)

In the long course of bigotry and violence, the Klan has evoked the rebelliousness of the Boston Tea Party, the vigilantism of American pioneers and cowboys, and the haughty religion of the New England Puritans. In its corruption of American ideals, it has capitalized on some of the best-loved aspects of the American tradition—Wyn Craig Wade (1987)

An ex-minister, William Simmons, was the architect of the 1920s Klan. His inspiration appeared in the form of D.W. Griffith’s film, Birth of a Nation (1915), based on Thomas Dixon’s The Clansman (1905), a romanticized rendition of the Reconstruction Klan. In early 1915, Simmons of Atlanta, a fraternalist and former Methodist minister, was in a car accident that kept him bedridden for three months. During his confinement, Simmons dreamed of a supreme fraternity. Influenced by the success of Dixon’s novel and its film adaptation, Simmons drew figures of Klansmen, created a new organizational structure based on the previous 1867 order and developed new terminology for the fraternity. When he regained his health, Simmons constructed a new Ku Klux Klan in an Atlanta atmosphere charged by anti-Semitism (the Leo Frank trial was in the summer of 1915). In October 1915, he recruited 34 members to become his Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, which he later incorporated. On Thanksgiving Day, Simmons and nineteen of his Knights marched up Stone Mountain and lit a cross on fire. That event marked the beginning of the second revival of the Klan.

Such is the standard story. Simmons created a revival of the Klan, and a dentist, Hiram Welsey Evans, eventually wrested control of the beloved order from Simmons and continued to build membership. Evans, the new Imperial Wizard, continued Simmons’s vision of an advanced fraternity. However, in the many tellings of the Klan story, narrators overlook Simmons’s religious involvement. After all, he was formerly a minister, who created a new Klan firmly enshrouded in the language of Protestantism. For the first Imperial Wizard, God had smiled upon America. It was momentous that he founded the Klan on Thanksgiving Day, a day of celebration.
of the Pilgrims, who came to the New World in search of religious tolerance. As the angels had smiled upon the Pilgrims, so they did upon the new order. Faith was an integral part of that instantiation of the order. Simmons articulated the religious vision, which Evans and many Klan lecturers (often ministers and local leaders) continued. The Klan, for Simmons and Evans, was not just an order to defend America but also a campaign to protect and celebrate Protestantism. It was a religious order. The standard story, however, neglected the place of everyday religion within the ranks of Klansmen and Klanswomen and instead focused upon the Klan’s vitriol towards Catholics, Jews, and African Americans. The focus on “Old Glory,” the flag, and patriotism resonated in various tellings, but the emphasis upon the dedication to the “church of Jesus Christ” remained absent. Historians failed to notice Protestantism, a crucial factor in the order’s development, because of the desire to document the order’s nativism, racism, and violence. The Klan gained a following because of its twin messages of nation and faith, and the fraternity progressed because of members’ commitment to its vision of America and her foundations.

Moreover, those messages resounded because of social change in the United States. Immigration, urbanization, and the internal migrations of African Americans made the Klan’s white, patriotic, and Protestant message appealing. From 1890 to 1914, over 16 million immigrants arrived in the United States, and ten percent of those immigrants were Jewish. Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox were a large part of those waves of immigration, and as historian Jay Dolan reported, a vast majority of those immigrants were Catholics from Ireland, Germany, Italy, and Poland. In reaction to immigration and World War I, nativism emerged as a popular response to “hyphenated” Americans. Immigrants groups, who did not support the war, were even more suspect. As one scholar noted, “The Klan’s underlying ideas of racial separation and white Protestant supremacy...echoed throughout the white society of the 1920s, as religious and racial hatreds determined the political dialogue in many communities.” White supremacy was a common belief in the early twentieth century, but the Klan’s political action, public relations campaigns and the production of material artifacts identified it as a distinct movement. By 1918, there were fifteen chapters of the new Klan. With rising popularity, Simmons, and later Evans, sought to eliminate the violent image of the Reconstruction Klan. By June of 1920, Simmons approached the Southern Publicity Association to advertise his organization in order to modify its image. The Association’s owners, Elizabeth Tyler and
Edward Clarke, presented the Klan as a fraternal Protestant organization that championed white supremacy. Their efforts proved effective. Membership increased, and the Klan claimed chapters in all 48 continental states.9

By 1924, membership peaked at four million members as Americans pledged their support to the order, wore robes, lit crosses, and marched in parades.10 In its heyday, the second revival of the K.K.K. produced multiple newspapers and engendered flashy displays of membership ranging from outdoor naturalization ceremonies to marches and parades (Figures 1 and 2). The organization built membership from “ordinary, white Protestants,” who embraced Klan events, like picnics and pageants, and read Klan pamphlets, newspapers, novels, and flyers. In that way, the portrait of Klansmen as white-robed terrorists, who haunt the dreams of all of their enemies, ignored the full rendering of Klan experience. That portrait sidelined the Klan to the margins of American history despite its large membership and cultural influence. By labeling the order as a fringe movement of terrorists, historians have examined the nefarious elements of the movement without exploring its broader appeal to white Protestants. Yet its numerical strength and popularity require that we reevaluate the order and its place in our narratives to see how such a movement fits within our tellings and retellings of American history.

“To examine the Klan is to examine ourselves,” claimed one historian of the Klan, Kenneth Jackson.11 For Jackson, the second revival of the Klan (1915-1930) was representative of American culture rather than a peripheral movement of extremism. To understand the 1920s Klan as central to narratives of American history and American religious history calls into question narratives of Protestant progress, the origins of nationalism, relationships between religion and race, and the occluded presence of intolerance. Jackson’s provocative statement contained the ring of truth. Critical study of the 1920s Klan allows us to understand Klansmen and Klanswomen as part of the mainstream.

The second revival of the order was distinctly different from its predecessor, the Reconstruction Klan of the 1860s and 1870s as well as the successive waves of twentieth and twenty-first century Klan revivals. One explanation for that distinction is that the second revival was the most integrated into American society and, at its peak, boasted millions of members. The membership was composed of white men and women dedicated to nation, the superiority of their race, and Protestantism. Most histories have downplayed the religious lives of Klansmen and Klanswomen in order to focus on the racism, anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism, and violence of
the order. Religious faith, however, washed over the pages of the Klan newspapers, fictional books, pamphlets, and speeches. Dedication to Protestantism emerged as a crucial part of membership and as the foundation for the order’s ideals, principles, and even intolerance. To understand how religion influenced the order, it is necessary to appreciate how faith has been foundational to characterizations of nation, race, and gender in that moment in American history.

To examine the Klan forces us to take a hard look at the development of American culture and conceptions of nation.

The Ku Klux Klan is the center of my study because it is a hate movement with the longest history in the United States, a remarkable amount of print culture, and the most organizational revivals in multiple historical periods and places. Various movements of men and women have re-envisioned the order to meet their pressing social concerns. The founding of the Klan occurred in 1866 in Pulaski, Tennessee. That order continued through Reconstruction until the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1877, which stymied Klan activities. The first Klan was primarily motivated by concerns about Reconstruction’s effect on Southern social structure. As such, it particularly targeted African Americans, “carpetbaggers,” and other Northern whites for the unsettling of Southern life. The second wave of the Klan lasted from the 1910s through the 1930s, but most activity occurred in the 1920s. That revival lamented the presence not only of African Americans but also of Catholics and Jews, and its leaders openly presented the order’s principles to members through Klan newspapers and magazines as well as the national press. Members embraced Protestant Christianity and a crusade to save America from domestic as well as foreign threats.

The Klan of the 1920s would be the last unified order. Because of unity and popularity, the second revival generated the most scholarly ink and sometimes ire. Historians and critics of the order often overlooked the religious motivations and commitment of Klan members. The scholarship on the Klan, as well as other hate movements, generally emphasized violence, racism, gender ideology, and nationalism without illuminating how religion impacted those ideas and actions. Interpretation has sought to define why Klansmen, and occasionally Klanswomen, embraced the order, and ironically, the models employed in such analyses generally neglect what members of the order actually say about their experiences. Scholarship rarely presented the Klan in its own language.
Beginning with John Moffatt Mecklin in the 1920s, scholarship described Klansmen as motivated by frustration and resentment arising from the conditions of their rural lives. Mecklin argued that members of the Klan were men barely maintaining control over their own lives. His argument suggested that Klansmen feared the foreign, especially immigration, and members of the order voiced concern that foreign influences could transform local as well as national cultures. Frustration and resentment, then, were the center of agrarian and rural men’s experiences. Mecklin analyzed the psychology of those rural men and chalked up their pathology to the threat of difference. Nancy MacLean, in analyzing the role of class in the motivations of Klansmen, reiterated the frustration model, claiming that Klansmen encountered disadvantages because of socioeconomic status and societal change. For MacLean, the Klan was a reaction to the changing gender norms of the 1920s. Flappers, women’s suffrage, and men’s dwindling status led white men to form an order to protect white women from African American men and the women’s own weaknesses. The frustration model proved inadequate as an approach for elucidating why the Klan rose in popularity at such stellar speed. To explain that frustration fueled hatred does not account for why those men (and women) expressed their anxiety and concern in extraordinary ways (the burning of crosses, dressing in robes, etc.) while their contemporaries did not. Members might have been, and likely were, resentful of changes to their ways of life in different time periods, but that likelihood alone does not predict the complexity of their reactions. Moreover, by examining frustration, the scholarship neglected other factors crucial to understanding members’ behaviors and the order’s appeal.

In addition to its reliance on theories of resentment, much Klan scholarship overestimated K.K.K. violence by assuming brutality was endemic in the order. Centering upon violence occluded how Klansmen and Klanswomen defined themselves, the order, and their actions. The order’s rhetoric did not employ a terminology of violence; rather leaders and editors carefully crafted their public opinions to avoid obviously violent content. In Wyn Craig Wade’s history of the Klan, he highlighted the cruelty and white supremacy of the order. His work provided excruciating detail of the violence against African Americans, race traitors, and others in the many Klan revivals. For Wade, the Klan’s actions made the order appear reprehensible, dangerous, and menacing. Interestingly, he explicitly linked the 1920s Klan to religious fundamentalism to show continuities of hatred and intolerance through today. Michael Newton, in his history of the Klan in Florida, concurred with Wade’s opinion and characterized the order
by its use of brutality, primarily lynching. Newton’s work was a regional piece about the order from Reconstruction through today, and he demonstrated that Florida Klans were the most violent permutations of the organization. He attempted to tie the order to various lynch mobs, but his work revealed that violence, at least in Florida, could not be directly attributed to Klansmen. Additionally, Newton did not grant the 1920s Klan unique status. Rather he purported that the organization was part of the history of violence that began with the Reconstruction Klan and continued to current manifestations of the order. But that history might actually be more suggestive of regional character of the Florida Klans than the national traits of the order. Both Wade and Newton illuminated the patterns of brutality in the order’s history, but they downplayed the Klan’s motivations for such as well as the possible impetus behind those actions. The order’s violence became its only legacy in their narratives.

Leonard Moore and Shawn Lay disagreed with the focus on Klan violence. Both Moore and Lay employed social historical approaches to their subjects, through which they interpreted the Klan both compassionately and non-judgmentally. For both scholars, Klansmen and Klanswomen were ordinary citizens in spite of their affiliation with the order. Both examined the second revival of the Klan as an anomaly compared to the cruelty in other revivals. The second Klan was more representative of 1920s culture because its actions and ideology reflected the white supremacy of American society. Lay argued that Klansmen, above all, were average folks, who belonged to a fraternity not a monstrous organization. Lay’s edited volume examined Klan activity in different states and regions of the West as indicative of the character of the K.K.K. The volume suggested that the Klans of the West were not as aggressive as the instantiations in the South or in Indiana, so that region played an important role in the Klan’s character. Moore argued similarly that the Indiana Klan was a populist organization of white men. His vision of the Klan explored the order’s use of “ethnic scapegoats,” particularly Catholics and Jews, and Moore proposed that the prejudice was symbolic of more complex fears. Klansmen were not actually as racist and hateful as they might appear but rather that figurative prejudice functioned to assuage anxiety. The fraternal order operated much like a support group for white Protestant men who believed that their values were under assault, so Moore’s work harkened back to the frustration model of earlier scholarship. Moore and Lay characterized the fraternity by populism rather than rampant nativism or ethnic and religious hatred. For both scholars, the members of the order were white supremacists in a culture of white supremacy; the members were
normative. However, the empathetic approach, advocated primarily by Lay, is a minority voice in the field of K.K.K. history because other scholars continued to foreground the Klan’s nativism, nationalism, and racial supremacy rather than the similarities of the order to the mainstream.

Nativism is a common descriptor of the various revivals of the order and, in particular, the 1920s Klan’s campaign for “100% Americanism.” Jeffrey Kaplan and Tore Bjørgo argued that nativism is intimately bound to nationalism and a desire to protect national culture. Nationalism has been a motivating factor for various hate movements. In the case of the K.K.K., the fear of the foreign was a fear of the loss of “pristine” America, which was coded as white and Protestant. Catholics and Jews became targets of the order because of their ability to change American culture. Those enemies represented all of the Klan’s fears of American decline, which would occur due to immigration, alcohol, and foreign influences in politics. The Klan believed members to be representative of American ideals; all others were in some way not American. The order embraced nativism as a virtue. Wade went so far as to characterize the order’s nativism as continuing feature of Americanism:

In the long course of bigotry and violence, the Klan has evoked the rebelliousness of the Boston Tea Party, the vigilantism of American pioneers and cowboys, and the haughty religion of the New England Puritans. In its corruption of American ideals, it has capitalized on some of the best-loved aspects of the American tradition.

On that sentiment, Wade and the Klan actually agreed. The Klan defined itself in multiple historical periods as the defender of the nation, and thus, its nativism was a reaction to changing norms in society.

With the order’s hypersensitivity to the foreign, racism was another trope associated with the Klan. In many historical accounts (e.g. Wade, Newton, and MacLean), racism was a motivating factor for men and women to join the order. The fear of the foreign, including African American enfranchisement during Reconstruction to the “Catholic invasion” of the 1920s, emerged as a so-called menace to American values. The Klan reacted to dangers lurking in the American landscape. To defend against those dangers, the order vigorously restated its social boundaries and articulated concern regarding the purity of the white race. Kathleen Blee argued that race was a key factor for how supremacist groups organize. Race became the foundation of collective identity for the hate movement as well as the focus for the group’s political agendas.
Whiteness was the glue that held the groups together, and the protection of whiteness became a rallying cry.

For Blee, those groups defined their whiteness by crafting strict racial boundaries.\textsuperscript{22} The policing of those boundaries often fell upon the shoulders of the women in hate movements or revolved around the protection of women by men. Blee provided a specific argument about the place of women in the 1920s Klan, in which the purity of white womanhood defined Klansmen as real men. Moreover, the development of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (W.K.K.K.) provided a challenge to that assertion of manhood when Klanswomen refused to play a vulnerable role. Nancy MacLean purported that reason for the resurgence of the 1920s Klan was a reaction to the changing gender norms. The Klan became an outlet for the reconstruction of white manhood and womanhood, wherein the organization attempted to reinforce traditional gender roles under the guise of maintaining racial purity. The protection of white women was a method of gendered control that restored the masculinity of white men. The discussion of gender and the Klan was minimal in the literature of the 1920s Klan, and scholars tended to overlook the religious impetus behind gender norms as well as other facets of Klan life.

Scholars deployed a myriad of factors to explain the motivation for the 1920s Klan and the order’s contemporary manifestations, but among those, religion served a secondary or rhetorical role. Some historians recognized the order’s historical engagement with Christianity, though they did not necessarily analyze religion as a motivating factor for Klan actions. No matter what the causation for the white supremacist movement, most monographs on the Klan at least cite that the order was a nominally Protestant movement. Scholars have revealed denominational affiliations of members, purported ties between the Klan and fundamentalism, highlighted the recruitment of ministers and church visits, and noted the relationship of the Women of the K.K.K. and Protestantism.\textsuperscript{23} Despite their use of the term “Protestant” to classify the Klan, those works do not explore what the religious worldview of the 1920s Klan actually entailed. Scholars have assumed that the term “Protestant” was comprehensible to all readers, but in most works, the term was neither defined nor examined critically. Other scholars have noted the religion of the Klan and other groups was “false” religion.\textsuperscript{24} The declaration of false religion occluded the commitment of members to the religious vision of the order and marginalized the centrality of that vision to the Klan’s appeal. The order relied upon religious systems ranging from a white supremacist version of Protestantism in the 1920s to today’s Christian Identity
movement. The problem was that the lack of attention to Klansmen and Klanswomen’s religious leanings allowed for simplistic renderings of the Klan’s actions as motivated by gender, race, nativism, or frustration. A proper examination would explore how those factors might be bound together.

Moreover, that scholarship overlooked what the subjects explicitly said about their religious backgrounds. Klansmen and Klanswomen avidly promoted their affiliations within Protestantism. The second revival of the order continually articulated its allegiance to Protestantism, nationalism, and white supremacy. Religion played an important part in the collective identity of the order, and neglecting religious commitment ignored a crucial self-identification. Instead, those accounts assumed that religion was a rhetorical tool rather than a legitimate system of belief and practice. Those historical and sociological accounts illuminated racial or gendered agendas but obscured religious motivation for actions and rhetoric. The Klan’s religion became a guise that somehow hid its “real” agendas. Some scholars were also hesitant about the relationship between religion and racial or religious hatred, and thus a religious studies approach is sorely needed in the literature. True or false, legitimate or illegitimate, the Klan still upheld its rendering of Protestantism. Identifying the Klan as white and Protestant does not further scholarship unless we can unearth how members employed and comprehended those terms. To accomplish that goal, my project highlights how the Klan crafted its religion, nation, and race, and the varying interrelationships between those components, while taking the order’s worldview at face value.

Writing about religion and racism, Michael Barkun insisted that no matter how odd or repellant religious systems might appear, white supremacists still believed them to be true when they furnish a framework for supremacy’s ends.25 If supremacy movements maintained the legitimacy of their worldviews, then scholars must take seriously their claims no matter how extreme. The religion of the Klan should be seen as religion. The religious systems of the hate movement, believable or not, influenced their members and often supplied divine mandate for their racism, hate, and the purpose of the community. To recognize how those religious systems placed race, nationalism, and gender in the realm of the ultimate is not only necessary to comprehending how those groups function but also how to best counteract similar movements. To study the Klan as a Protestant movement adds complexity to standard histories of Klan and further explanation of how the order imagined the larger world.
Scholars of the Klan, however, were not alone in their efforts to downplay the religious commitment of the order. References to the Ku Klux Klan in larger narratives of American religious history were few and far between, and generally, religious historians have overlooked how the Klan employed Protestantism. In Sydney Ahlstrom’s opus, *A Religious History of the American People*, the Klan was only mentioned in its opposition to immigration. In his grand narrative of American religious history, Martin Marty argued, “The revival of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s included an anti-Catholic note which attracted only the extreme reactionaries in some [S]outhern and [M]idwestern white Protestantism.” In both works, the Klan proved to be a marginal movement of reactionaries rather than an authentic interpretation of Protestantism. The narratives ignored the Klan’s requirement of church membership in a Protestant denomination; the centrality of church-going in print culture; and the Klan’s theological endeavors. Moreover, the order launched campaigns to unify Protestants across denominational lines in its effort to save America from immigration and other “evils.” The Klan was a part of the religious story of the America, whether its members were likeable or not. Perhaps it is easier to relegate the order to the margins rather than to attempt to integrate the Klan into American religious history. The religious history of America would appear different to us if we viewed them through the eyes of a Klansman. The questions that arise are: How would narratives of American religious history be told if the Klan was integrated rather than segregated? How is the story different if a white supremacist movement proves pivotal rather than fringe? What narratives are occluded with separation and what stories are revealed? What if our narratives of nation were told from the perspective of both Klansmen and Klanswomen? Are the stories different or do they remain similar? By inserting the Klan into narratives of American religious history, the relationship between faith and nationalism comes to the foreground. In crafting its vision of the nation, the order understood “true” America in religious, racial, and gendered terms. To move the Klan from the margins toward the center illuminates the complicated, fractious, and contradictory process of claiming national identity.

These are provocative questions because they force us to rethink what historians miss when we relegate distasteful movements to the margins of history. For Klan historian Kenneth Jackson, such was particularly problematic because the Klan was “typically American.” He wrote that the Klan gained power because it capitalized “on forces already existent in American society: our readiness to ascribe all good or all evil to those religions, races, or economic
philosophies with which we agree or disagree” and our ability to “profess the highest ideals while actually exhibiting the basest of all prejudices.”

To assess the Klan as a religious movement allows for an entry into the culture of 1920s and shows how the Klan, like many others, struggled with conceptions of nation, race, gender, and even its self-professed Protestantism. Moreover, the case study elucidates the similarity of Klan members to their contemporaries, who perhaps did not possess the white robe or light a fiery cross but found resonance in the order’s white supremacy. Klan print culture provides the evidence of the order’s similarity with the larger American public.

“It will continue to speak, in its enlarged capacity, as the courier of the Imperial Palace to the various Klans of the nation.”

To study the religious worldview of the Klan, I employ Klan print journals, speeches, fictional works, newspapers, pamphlets, position papers, and broadsides. I use official sources from the order as opposed to diaries, journals, or letters from individual Klan members. The narrative proves to be an official one that primarily focuses on the words of Klan leaders, klavern members, and anonymous editors of Klan newspapers. I describe the official and ideal worldview of the Klan to show how leadership, and often members, attempted to supply a unified, structured vision of the order. I also examine the “lived religion” of Klan members from the official perspective. The sources do not invite a thick ethnographic description of what it actually meant to be a Klansman or Klanswoman in the second revival. Nevertheless using print culture, I am able to decipher how leaders constructed those roles as well as documented the occasional opposition of members to those constructions. The print culture allows me to reconstruct the K.K.K.’s portrayal of the faith and the nation and to show the order’s relentless dedication to its twin messages in ways that scholarship has not achieved before. Previous works on the Klan often contained suspicion, if not disdain, toward the Klan print culture. Some scholarship suggested that the Klan could not be taken at its word because of hidden, often nefarious, motives. Instead, I take the order’s print at face value because members, readers, and leaders were an avid part of creating that aspect of the order. The printed words signaled truth. In some ways, print was the order’s reality, and it is unfair to interpret the Klan’s words as a guise for its actions. By relying upon print reflections of the worldview my approach, while to some extent tracked the historical progression of the Klan, offers more of a snapshot of what was expected of a Klansman (or a Klanswoman) in the 1920s. My narrative is about the principles of
the order in its defense of nation and Protestantism as well as how members crafted their representations of the order. The Klan produced various newspapers and magazines to communicate its ideas about religion, nation, and race in order to accomplish its goals. The printed word served to illustrate the order’s hopes and fears to its members as well as a larger public.

In January of 1923, the Imperial Kloncilium, the governing body, ordered the creation of an official publication. Thus, the Imperial Night-Hawk was born. Whether the Imperial Night-Hawk was created because of the aforementioned public relations campaign, I cannot be sure. The weekly ran during the peak of Klan membership, from 1923 to 1924. The circulation of the paper in 1923 is unknown. However, by the end of 1924, the editor(s) of the Night-Hawk claimed 36,591 copies were printed each week. The editors also reported subscriptions in all 48 continental states. Each Klansmen gained access to a subscription when he became a member. The editor described the weekly:

It goes to our army camps and to many of our battleships. It goes to numerous newspapers, to hundreds of ministers, and untold numbers of school teachers. It has told the truth in times when the Klan was not allowed to state its case through the public press. It has explained the beliefs of the Klan in a most wonderful fashion. It has performed its duty well. Without one cent of cost to those receiving it, the Imperial Night-Hawk has freely and gladly been sent, with the compliments of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc., to all those who desired its weekly visit.

The Kourier Magazine (1924-1936) replaced the Night-Hawk in December of 1924, and the weekly became a monthly in the transition. Another popular Klan weekly, The Dawn: The Herald of a New and Better Day (1922-1924), boasted a circulation of 50,000 in 1923 and even charged ten cents a copy on the newsstand. There were other news magazines, including the Fiery Cross, and the Official Bulletins of the Grand Dragons, a series of regional bulletins that reported on local and national events. Those Klan newspapers were key communicators of the new Klan’s identity.

The print culture proves to be an invaluable resource and entrée into the Klan’s worldview because it allows for a glimpse of public persona as well as private communications to members. Klansmen made the newspapers for other Klansmen, and they were not supposed to be publicly available, which meant the publications served to remind Klansmen of their duties, the expectations of the order, and its positions on various issues ranging from evolution to Catholics to the public schools. Studying Klan print culture allows us to search inside the order.
to understand how leaders and editors constructed religion, nationalism, gender, and race for their community. Examining the print demonstrates how the Klan wanted to *make* Klansmen into white, manly, Protestant Americans, who both selflessly served and defended the ideals of the organization. Through print culture, the Klan sought to mold Klan bodies. In other words, reading the publications hopefully embedded Klan ideology and identity into the bodies of Klansmen as well as their minds.³⁵ The order’s hope was to create Klansmen who longed to be the chivalrous Knights the order desired. That, however, was a tenuous process—to convince readers of the *Night-Hawk*, and other print culture, to live the ideals the pages proscribed. Editors and leaders sought to shape the membership, but the members often had different ideas, which led to strident denunciations, warnings, and sometimes threats regarding their behavior from the Klan leadership. What becomes clear is that the print culture served as a method of communication between the national organization and individual Klansmen.

Scholars have argued that both print culture and the act of reading are methods of communication, which can be characterized as either transmission or ritual communication.³⁶ Communication as transmission was the most common form, and in that model, a variety of media passed (new) ideas to readers, viewers, and listeners. The ritual model, however, proposed that no new information was actually presented to readers; rather communication reaffirmed a particular worldview. The ritual process, then, maintained, reproduced, or transformed the reality of the reader rather than furnishing new ideas. Print culture often functioned to inculcate a sense of community among readers, who already shared similar ideas, beliefs, or practices. The *Night-Hawk*, *Kourier*, and *Dawn* all served as a means to instantiate the Klan’s worldview and to verse readers in the order’s goals. By reading a Klan newspaper, members imbibed in its politics, ethics, and actions, and they assented to its portrayal of faith and nation.

American religious historians have explored the function of print culture as a method of community building for various religious groups. David Hall examined the importance of reading in early America, and he has argued that certain books, particularly the Bible, provided cultural scripts and tropes for how reality was constructed. For Hall, reading always occurred in “cultural fields,” so that reading was never a purely individual act. Rather reading functioned as common activity that bound together religious peoples and confirmed their faith worlds.³⁷ For David Paul Nord, communities could be created, maintained, and destroyed in print. Print itself did not build communities. Instead, the printed page furnished tools for readers to create their
own communities in novel ways. In his study of religious publishing, Nord furthered his argument about reading communities by exploring how evangelical publishers believed that meaning passed directly from text to reader with no interference or interpretation. Unfortunately for those publishers, cultural contexts heavily influence how readers experienced texts. Nord demonstrated that despite the hope for ideal readers that would embrace the religious grace of Bible or John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), readers haphazardly followed the publisher’s goals. The tension between religious publishers and their audiences, however, should not overlook the people who read “properly” the spiritual works and embraced religious community.\(^{38}\)

Candy Gunther Brown analyzed the explicit connection between print culture and community. She described the print culture of evangelicals as their method to define the boundaries of their religious worlds, to circumscribe the members of the faithful, and to unify the church.\(^{39}\) For Brown, those evangelicals constituted a “textual community,” in which publishers, authors, and readers defined the practices. Those evangelicals gained a sense of collective identity by participating in textual communities that provided clear boundaries for the faithful. Print culture clearly functioned as ritual communication for religious movements, and the *Night-Hawk* operated in comparable ways for Klansmen because it reinstated a familiar worldview. It served as a textual community that supplemented meetings, rallies, and parades. Reading was a method to become a better member and engage more fully with the ideals of the order. However, the *Night-Hawk’s* anxiety about members’ activities signaled that readers defined their own Klan communities despite what editors and leaders articulated upon the printed page.

Despite that anxiety, the editors claimed the centrality of the *Night-Hawk* in Klan culture. The paper, in its own words, was the “only recognized national organ of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” and it was the “sole and only official publication,” which meant that “statements to the contrary or claims of this official recognition on the parts of others” were without basis.\(^{40}\) More importantly, the editors of the *Night-Hawk*, representatives of the Klan press, affirmed their positions as the “shock troops of the Klan armies.” They protested against “utterly ruthless forces, who had attempted to hush the voice of the Protestant press.” Those editors threw “their own money and personalities into the cause.” They wrote that the newspaper had fought the first half of the battle, and it was “up to the Klansmen of the nation to help them make good.” The weekly urged, “These newspapers are fighting your fight Klansmen, and you wade in and aid
them.”\textsuperscript{41} The \textit{Night-Hawk} and additional newspapers bolstered the Klan. It was the responsibility of members to read, ascertain, and embody the ethics of the order. The Klan’s print culture served as a guide to the identity that the \textit{Night-Hawk}’s editors hoped to foster. The practice of reading solidified notions that Klansmen were Christian Knights, who upheld the law of the land and protected the faith. Those under-utilized print sources allow me to explore the world of the second revival of the Klan to see what mattered the most. Those newspapers permit entry into a worldview that has been mischaracterized and misunderstood by some who only want to condemn the Klan for its actions. Condemnation might be deserved, but it obscured the motivations and beliefs of members. That occlusion makes it difficult to explain why the Klan had appeal as well as what membership in the order meant for Klansmen. Using Klan print culture and presenting Klan members in their own terms illustrated their experiences in the fraternity and the larger world. The print culture edged the order more closely to the mainstream. That media also demonstrated not only the religious foundations of the Klan but also the complicated relationships between religion, nation, gender, and race in the early twentieth century. To see the Klan as citizens rather than villains illuminated a more complex American story. To imagine Klansmen in such a way requires a deliberate method, which takes their words at face value as well as reflects upon their more insidious actions.

“It is useless to make inquiries of those who hate and are hostile to Masonry, of the Methodists, Catholics, Socialists, and so forth. The best way to find out just what the K.K.K. stands for is to go to their own published platform. If anyone can contradict their statement let him come forward with evidence.”\textsuperscript{42}

In his \textit{The Invisible Empire in the West} (1992), Shawn Lay argued that Klan studies should align with the dominant trends in social history; Lay hoped that Klansmen could be studied compassionately and objectively.\textsuperscript{43} For Lay, the Invisible Empire deserved a sensitive and somewhat neutral study like other more benevolent, historical subjects. On the other hand, Kathleen Blee noted that empathetic approaches to the hate movement could be dangerous because such methods ignore the devastating effects of such movements.\textsuperscript{44} Life in the Klan might have been normative for its members, but Blee warned that describing that group as such downplayed its violence and hatefulness. Such scholarship could present a “false” sense of those groups and their respective missions. The enterprise becomes even more complicated when we consider the religious faith of the Klan as an addition to our study. Should its religion be portrayed as Protestantism simply because they assert Protestantism? Or should Klansmen’s
religious lives be separated as somehow different from other Protestants? Does religion motivate their hate? What is at stake if religion is the motivating factor? Moreover, what methods serve appropriate for “unloved groups”? Should unloved groups be held to a different historical standard that assumes deception on the behalf of members? Additionally, what positions should historians claim? Should scholars be fair to an unloved group or should we not only declare its unsavory nature but also allow its actions to color our methods?

My study is enmeshed in these methodological questions because simply to study the Klan already problematizes socio-cultural history, and the addition of religious faith makes the enterprise simultaneously more interesting and more difficult. I rely on a bricolage of methods and themes ranging from social history to lived religion to print and material culture studies to ethnography. In principle, Shawn Lay might be right about the need to focus on Klansmen and Klanswomen as ordinary citizens. Klan members were not much different from their neighbors and friends except that their hatred for certain others motivated them to commit acts of violence, economic terrorism, and other more subtle forms of discrimination. However, the need to make Klan members appear ordinary is not my main goal. Rather it is more fruitful to explore how they configured their everyday lives. Social history is valuable because it attunes historians to the daily lives of diverse folks, and with that approach scholars can explore how Klan members lived their intolerance day-to-day rather than just in rallies, marches, and protests. Lay is correct in not making members appear as wholly evil, but we should examine the broad range of their lives to show how complicated human experiences can be. Emphasizing the lives of Klansmen and Klanswomen opens up the worldview of the order and illuminates the centrality of religion. To see the lived religion of the Klan provides a much-needed perspective on how members and leaders maintained the order and its vision of America.

Scholarly emphasis on lived religion has emerged in American religious historiography from a desire to explore the everyday experiences of religion in people’s lives and to move beyond belief-centered studies. For David Hall, religion is culture, which is shared and negotiated by clergy and laity alike. In addition, religion is a part of the social system that provides a set of scripts for its adherents. An essential part of my study requires stepping into the worldview of the Klan in order to examine how such scripts function for the order’s members in their actions, beliefs, and lives. Those scripts are largely set forth in Klan print culture. The difficulties of that approach are paramount, especially when relying upon official sources. If
lived religion allows explanations of how a worldview is practiced, Klan sources and scripts portrayed the order and its members in an ideal fashion that often neglected dissent. The official portrait still demonstrated the complicated boundaries between the sacred and profane in lives of Klansmen and Klanswomen. Klan studies have explored much of the profane, a small bit of the sacred, but this field has not approached how both are interwoven in the lives of Klan members. Scholarly reticence about how the sacred and profane interact hides the sacred aspects of Klan life.

To settle into the Klan worldview, I employ ethnographic method to document, describe, and interpret. According to James Clifford, ethnography has the ability to make the ordinary strange and the strange familiar. Ethnography highlights the need for reflexivity and sensitivity to one’s subjects. In the current ethnographic turn, ethnographers reach beyond a scientific model of studying subjects through a “microscope” and embrace a more dialogical model, which allows the subject to speak for him/herself. Historian Robert Orsi argued for intersubjectivity in which the scholar places her world in direct dialogue with the culture studied to see similarities and differences. That transformative process allows for an awareness of one’s own culture.46 With its uplifting of informants, ethnography contains the risk that scholars might become the mouthpiece for those we study. Kathleen Blee argued that the romantic assumptions embedded in ethnography and oral history, especially the desire to empower informants and tell their stories, should not apply to hate groups. For Blee, the question is why would anyone want to empower the Klan? She noted that to empathetically connect with the Klan violates the required boundaries for researchers, who work with unloved groups. Her main concern was that empathy and rapport might make scholars complicit in the “horrific” agendas of Klan members via description and study.

While Blee’s concerns are legitimate, I would note that the study of unloved groups problematizes the focus on empowerment and empathy in ethnographic method. Can we use that method on a group, who most would not want to empower the Klan? Blee suggested the use of heavy dose of skepticism when handling unloved groups because of their nefarious actions and intentions. However, I would suggest that ethnographic method should look skeptically on all informants rather than just those who make us uncomfortable. Ethnographic work should not be a venue to redeem our subjects, likeable or not, but rather a method to understand how their worlds function for better or worse. My specific interest in ethnographic method is that it allows
us to have a glimpse of the Klan’s world in a particular historical movement and how that world might operate. Disgust at the order’s actions might make us feel better, but that emotion does not allow for an understanding of how Klansmen and Klanswomen create and sustain their lives. It is not hard to imagine why many scholars refuse to work with unloved groups.

For Karen McCarthy Brown, ethnography is neither for the faint of heart nor those in need of moral clarity. To enter the world of ethnography is to enter the world of moral ambiguity. An ethnography of the Klan is not only morally ambiguous but also ethically challenging. How can one study her subjects with empathy if they disgust her? What is at stake, for the scholar and the scholarship, by seeing them as they see themselves? How can one balance the Klan’s worldview with their violent and hateful actions? Does the study of those groups require some form of judgment by the scholar? Does the scholar need to moralize? In his revised edition of *Salvation and Suicide*, a study of the mass suicide at Jonestown, Guyana, David Chidester argued that as a scholar, it was not his place to judge the events at Jonestown. He claimed we should not give into the temptation to moralize but rather strive to understand how a religious worldview functions for its inhabitants. He employs “structured empathy,” which was empathy molded by interpretative categories such as myth, symbol, and ritual. That particular method supposedly opened up an empathetic worldview of others and allows the scholar to enter the worldview of another imaginatively to understand its appeal and its logic. While Chidester’s form of empathy appears worthwhile, it is equally as problematic as Blee’s skepticism. My approach to empathy navigates their two distinct approaches. First as Chidester has argued, it is necessary to see how religious worlds function for adherents. Previous scholarship has attempted to do this but often fails because of the overemphasis on the deplorable nature of unloved groups. Examining the unacceptability of a worldview often neglects the larger motivations and the appeal of a religious movement. Second, to simply render the world as members (of the Peoples Temple or the Klan) may see it yields a one-sided presentation of Jonestown and of the order, which reflects Blee’s concern. We can garner a sense of what both movements are like from the perspective of members, but doing such ignores how others, from the outside, engage the language, symbology, and the believers of those movements. For my project, both Blee’s and Chidester’s methods inform my attempt to find a more integrative approach to the Klan: to see them as they see themselves but also to recognize that this is only a partial presentation of the story.
My study seeks to examine the Klan’s rendering of its members and the larger world employing ethnographic tools in historical enterprise. This means that my study is neither a complete portrait of 1920s America nor a strict history of Klan actions. Instead, I present the worldview of the Klan by illuminating how the order characterizes faith and nation as well as what members hoped, feared, and admired about American culture. To see through the eyes of members and leaders clarifies their understandings of religion, nation, race, and gender. My project is arranged thematically rather than historically, which means that each chapter is centered around one component of the Klan’s worldview to delve deeply into how the order represented itself. Chapter One revolves around the Klan’s professed Protestantism. In an exploration of robes, Jesus, and retellings of Protestant history, the Klan’s commitment to the faith appeared in terms of exclusion. The order employed a generalized Protestantism while simultaneously limiting the historical boundaries of the tradition. Building upon those presentations of Protestantism, Chapter Two explores the relationship between religion and nation in Klan print culture. For the order, white Protestants created America, and the burden of national maintenance fell solely upon their shoulders. Using material artifacts, like the fiery cross and the American flag, as well as the selective, historical accounts of amateur Klan historians, the order argued that the origins of the nation were explicitly religious. The battle for continued inclusion of the Bible in public schools became a religious brawl to safeguard the nation by guaranteeing that future citizens would have access to the sacred texts throughout their schooling.

Chapters Three and Four assess the place of gender, masculinity, and femininity in the movement. To be a citizen and a Protestant was to be masculine, which was the bedrock of being a successful Klansman. The order circumscribed the role of Christian Knighthood for members in addition to instituting the rhetoric of “real” manhood. Martyrdom emerged as the penultimate example of masculinity because the self-sacrificing act depicted strength, overwhelming allegiance to the order, and an emulation of the manly Christ. Whereas masculinity was crucial to the identity of the Knights, femininity proved to be a more complicated affair. Knights proclaimed the protection of white womanhood as slogan for the order, but women often contradicted the men’s vision of the female condition. Klansmen represented women as defenseless, vulnerable, and endangered, usually by Catholics, but the Women of the K.K.K. had different ideas about the nature of their womanhood. The W.K.K.K. asserted its members’ rights
as equal citizens in the Invisible Empire, whose dedication to nation and the perpetuation of the faith rivaled that of the men’s order.

Chapter Five delves into the Klan’s presentation of whiteness and race by examining the order’s reflections about African Americans and Jews. Through the account of “other” races, the traits of whiteness become more visible. In addition, the Klan traced the heritage of America to her Nordic and Anglo-Saxon roots to claim that the white race bore the responsibility for the development of nation and Protestantism. However, the order’s vision of racial alchemy, which created the American race, complicated its commitment to racial purity. Finally, the conclusion explores the Klan-Notre Dame Riot of 1924, giving insight into the Klan worldview in one particular incident. The riot shows the order’s devotion to nation, race, and religion as expressed in anti-Catholicism as well as its firm belief that Klan members were the victims of persecution in the riot. In South Bend, Indiana, the Klan sought to defend the nation and her true citizenry while also realizing how tenuous its own vision was. The order imagined a white Protestant America in print culture, material artifacts, rallies, and speeches. The K.K.K. stood at the crux of peril and promise for the beloved nation, and their worldview contained lament as often as hope. Warring factions, personified in the riot, attacked the nation from within her boundaries. The Klan was both soul and savior, the center as well as the defender, of its imagining of nation, but members also had to confront the fragile nature of the order’s vision. To sustain beliefs and ideals, members turned to reading, robes, and fiery crosses. Those printed and material artifacts tell the story of the 1920s Klan and their fervid persistence in maintaining white Protestant dominance.
CHAPTER ONE

“Thank God for the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan”: The Klan’s Protestantism

As the Star of Bethlehem guided the wise men to Christ, so it is that the Klan is expected more and more to guide men to the right life under Christ’s banner—H.W. Evans (1925)⁴⁸

The real interpretation of the message of the angels who announced the birth of the Christ child…nearly two thousand years ago, was carried forth by the Klansmen and Klanswomen of the Altoona on the eve of Christmas day, and the lamp of happiness was lighted in more than fifty homes of the poor of the city and vicinity after the Ku Klux Santa Klaus had paid his visit to the said homes—Imperial Night-Hawk (1924)⁴⁹

In his The Modern Ku Klux Klan, Henry Fry, a former Klansman, described the ritual of naturalization, the process by which one became a member of the Invisible Empire. He observed:

The Exalted Cyclops raises a glass of water and “dedicates” the “alien,” setting him apart from the men of his daily association…He is then caused to kneel upon his right knee, and a parody of the beautiful hymn, “Just as I am Without One Plea,” is sung by those of the elect who can carry a tune….When the singing is concluded, the Exalted Cyclops advances to the candidate and after dedicating him further, pours water on his shoulder, his head, throws a few drops in the air, making his dedication “in body,” “in mind,” “in spirit,” and “in life.”⁵⁰

Previously a kleagle for the order, Fry could no longer continue his membership when he encountered the naturalization ceremony. The ritual’s resonance with Christian baptism proved unnerving to the author, especially considering the rest of the order’s rituals were “ tiresome and boring…twaddle.”⁵¹ That ceremony convinced Fry that the Klan was a “[s]acrilegious [sic] mockery.”⁵² What proved most disturbing to Fry was how the Klansmen seemed to have no problem with the naturalization’s proximity to the “sacred and holy rite of baptism.” Naturalization made a “mockery and parody” of a Christian ritual that the author held dear.⁵³ For Fry, the ceremony confirmed that the Klan was a moneymaking scheme parading as a religious fraternity. Such blasphemy was more than he could handle. In a resignation letter to the order dated June 15, 1921, Fry listed his many complaints against the order:

In defiance of your threats of ‘dishonor, disgrace, and death’ as contained in your ritual—written and copyrighted by yourself—I denounce your ritualistic work as an insult to all Christian people in America, as an attempt to hypocritically obtain your money from the public under the cloak of sanctimonious piety; and, I charge that the principal feature of your ceremony of ‘naturalization’ into the ‘Invisible Empire’ is a blasphemous and sacrilegious mockery of the holy rite of baptism, wherein for political and financial purposes, you have polluted with your infamous parody those things that Christians, regardless of creed or dogma, hold most sacred.⁵⁴
The Klan was not a Christian order but rather a false rendition of a religious movement. Furthermore, the suggestion of baptism in its naturalization ceremony proved the order was heretical as well. Hiding “under the cloak of sanctimonious piety” might have served well the order’s moneymaking schemes, but Fry denounced the so-called Christian beliefs that members professed. His book detailed the contradictions and dangers of the order, but nothing ruffled the author quite as much as the Klan’s professed Protestantism.

Fry was not the only skeptic of the order’s religious leanings. W.C. Witcher of Texas created a pamphlet exposing the hypocrisies and supposed scams of the Klan. Witcher opined that the Klan “seduc[ed] the preachers of this country into believing that they should encourage and support” the order and all of its actions. He also claimed that “to impress ministers with its sham benevolence…it adopted the old worn-out political trick of ‘donating to the preacher.’”\textsuperscript{55} The author suggested that the Klan would be rebuked rather than accepted by Jesus and that the Imperial Wizard, the leader of the Invisible Empire, was the “Ruler of Darkness.”\textsuperscript{56} To demonstrate the devious attempts of the Imperial Wizard to mold Jesus to the Klan’s message, Witcher provided a fictional account of a chance meeting between the two. Witcher described the Imperial Wizard as a manipulative figure, who sought to overcome Jesus by wooing Him with worldly things. In the account, the robed leader emerged as the Devil, in the guise of a Klan leader. His desperate attempts to entice Jesus with power and prestige ultimately failed, and the parallel between Witcher’s tale and the biblical narrative of Satan’s temptation of Christ were probably quite deliberate. Jesus berated the Imperial Wizard for his blatant manipulation and cunning. The Klan leader, a “cringing coward,” “crumpled at His feet like a conquered beast before its master.” Jesus had won, and the Klan lost the support of its Savior. The order’s deceptive commitment to the Christian tradition, at least for Witcher, became visible. He continued:

The echo of that rebuke rings down through the centuries like the voice of a nightingale, and if these commercialized ministers who have prostituted their pulpits with the white-robed children of the Imperial Wizard were even susceptible of a rebuke, they would drive these character assassins from their services with the whips of scorpions. Judas committed suicide for the same kind of offense. My God! How long wilt Thou suffer these miserable hypocrites to insult Thy Name, and defile Thy Sanctuary [sic]?\textsuperscript{57}
Those vituperative statements affirmed the belief of both authors that the second revival of the Klan was not religious but heretical, devious, and dangerous. Witcher suggested that Klansmen who offered that false religion were no better than Judas, and he begged God to hold them accountable because of their defiance. He even advocated that members might want to imitate the suicide of Judas, since their actions were comparable to his. The author clearly found the Klan to be a significant threat to Christianity because of its declaration to be a Protestant Christian order. Both authors engage the Klan’s professed Christianity, and quickly, dismiss the possibility that the Klan and its members could be legitimately religious because they disagree with the Klan’s presentation of the faith. They saw only “false” religion in the actions of the fraternity. In that way, their attacks highlighted how the Klan’s allegiance to Christianity caused unease among critics and former Klansmen. Those authors, in particular, were nervous about the order’s association with their personal faith tradition, and vitriol spewed forth. The order’s practiced faith proved too similar to the faith of its detractors. The resemblance required both authors to demarcate the religion of the Klan as foreign from their own religious commitments. The Klan, in its founding, bound Christianity with Americanism, and members professed allegiance to both despite their relentless critics. The fraternity envisioned not only that members were the defenders of Protestant Christianity but also that God had a direct hand in the creation of the order.

“They built [sic] in their crude altar greater than they knew.”

On the “bleak Thanksgiving night” of 1915, seventeen men climbed atop Stone Mountain, Georgia, with a purpose and a large wooden cross. They set the cross on fire, and under its light, those “pilgrims” committed themselves to the United States Constitution, “American ideals and institutions,” and “the tenets of the Christian religion.”58 The men built an altar of granite boulders and spread the American flag over the rocks. William Simmons, the leader of the ceremony, wrote, “They built [sic] in their crude altar greater than they knew.”59 The eerie glow of the cross marked the beginning of the second Ku Klux Klan. The new order harkened back to the Reconstruction Klan, but its founder, Simmons, proclaimed a new path of militant Protestantism and sacred patriotism. 60 Simmons, who became the Imperial Wizard of the order, and his successor, Hiram Wesley Evans, promoted a vision of the Klan as a patriotic, benevolent, and Christian order. For Simmons, that altar on Stone Mountain was the “foundation” of the Invisible Empire, which was committed to “the preservation of the white,
Protestant race in America, and then, in the Providence of Almighty God, [and] to form the foundation of the Invisible Empire of the white men of the Protestant faith the world over.”

Evans noted, “As the Star of Bethlehem guided the wise men to Christ, so it is that the Klan is expected more and more to guide men to the right life under Christ’s banner.” That second revival of the Klan, therefore, was transformed and dressed in Christian virtue as well as metaphor. Protestantism served as the foundation of the movement, and the protection of its religious faith was a key component of the Klan’s mission. The religious foundation of the order, as we have seen, was not without its detractors.

Robert Moats Miller, writing in 1956, argued that the relationship between the Klan and Protestantism should not be assumed, nor asserted, since denominational newspapers as well as national conferences condemned the Klan. Miller utilized Christian journals to argue that Protestant churches were not bound to the order. National conventions and denominational governing bodies, for Miller, determined Protestantism. Yet local churches still proclaimed their affiliation despite outcry from national bodies. Miller’s study lacked detailed analysis of how religion functioned for the order, enabling him to conclude that Klansmen and Klanswomen were not authentically Protestant. Yet the Klan specifically defined that term to match the parameters of its organization.

Interpreting the role of religion in the life of Klan members, a number of questions arise. Was Protestant a term used just to suggest someone “not Catholic”? Or was the Klan drawing from larger narratives of Protestant history? How exactly did members and leaders define Protestantism? Were they evangelical, fundamentalist, both or neither? Why was religious faith crucial to how leaders constructed their order? Protestantism undergirded the membership, the rituals, and rites of the order as well as imbued the pages of Klan print culture. My study of Klan print culture suggests a different conclusion than that reached by Miller: the Klan subscribed to Protestantism, and the order created their own definition, history, and vision of the faith for its members. That vision began with Simmons and flourished in the pages of the *Imperial Night-Hawk*, *The Kourier Magazine*, and other Klan papers.

In his writing and speeches, Simmons sought to create a super fraternity that appropriated the regalia and history of the previous Klan but imported fresh symbology, which illuminated the importance of Americanism and Protestantism. As an ex-minister, Simmons combined faith with politics in his movement, and that faith washed over the pages of the *Night-Hawk*. Such might
seem surprising to those who envisioned the Klan as a racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic political organization, which it undeniably was. However, it was also an organization that required members to be Protestant Christians, who affirmed both Jesus as well as Americanism. The Klan leadership crafted a religious organization, and the Imperial Night-Hawk (which became The Kourier Magazine), the Klan’s official organ, molded a public persona that glorified its faith. Through weekly publication, the Klan presented the ideals of its community and attempted to fashion Klansmen to reflect those ideals. Being a good Protestant was key to being a good Klansman or Klanswoman. The Klan’s Protestantism was defined in a multitude of ways, from uplifting the literal meaning of the word (“to be a protestor”) to aligning the Klan as successors of the Reformation, who “cleansed” the church and provided Protestantism as a foundation for both democracy and religious freedom. Klansmen were to be “protest-ants” of systems of iniquity deriving their example from Martin Luther. Additionally, the Klan envisioned its role as the “handmaiden” of the church because of its ability to unite Protestantism in the face of denominationalism and supposed enemies. Moreover, the Klan rendered Jesus in its organizational image. Members employed Jesus’s example as a model for their lives. In print culture, robes, and rituals, the order communicated its adherence to the Protestant faith and functioned to solidify the community in the face of threats to both faith and nation. That was a tenuous process to convince readers of the Night-Hawk to live the ideals and faith that the newsmagazines proscribed.

“[T]he Reformation has taken residence in the Klan.”

According to Hiram Wesley Evans, Imperial Wizard of the Klan, “[t]he angels that have anxiously watched the Reformation from its beginning must have hovered about Stone Mountain Thanksgiving night, 1915, and shouted Hosannas to the highest Heaven.” For Evans, the founding moment of the order represented the second Reformation. Those joyous angels watched in awe as the order was born, and that event signaled that the church and society might be salvaged. Evans believed that the Klan had the potential to reform Christianity much in the same way that Martin Luther had “saved” the church within the first Reformation. The church was no longer able to lead such a movement because of fractious denominationalism, but the Klan, based on the Bible with God and Jesus as its “soul,” could bring about “universal and rock-bottom reform.” The Klan crafted its own form of Protestantism, which highlighted dissent.
Despite joyous angels and divine support, Klan leadership and newspapers editors expended much ink to make their case for the Klan’s “protest-ant” heritage. Both the *Night-Hawk* and the *Kourier* contained lengthy articles about the Klan’s Protestantism, which served to establish the Klan’s place in Protestant history, to describe religious practice, and to demand Protestant behavior from Klansmen and Klanswomen. Imperial Wizard Evans even declared the 1925 Klan program was to promote Protestant Christianity. Evans beseeched the membership:

> As the [N]ew [Y]ear dawns, I, as Imperial Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, wish to call upon the Klansmen of America for whole-hearted, united, sacrificial service to the cause of Protestant Christianity. I ask you working through the several Protestant churches to which you belong, to make this a year of Christian devotion and high service.

The Klan both protested and proclaimed allegiance to Protestantism. Members sought, and often created, similarities between their movement and historical narratives of the faith. Klansmen hoped to place themselves directly in the lineage of both Jesus and Luther as well as defined Protestantism in their own terms to reflect the purpose of their order.

A Protestant, in the most basic definition, is one who protests. For the editor of the *Kourier*, the protest could be directed at a person, event, or idea, and that protest was not confined to religious matters. The *Kourier* uplifted protest and dissent as important tools of both critique and change. Rather than limit the term to one who seceded from “the Roman Church,” he suggested that severance from Roman Catholicism was not required. Instead, protest was more generally linked to reform. Jesus was a “Protestant,” who employed that method to correct the ills of His day. His life was “one of unending protest.” According to the Klan, He contradicted priests and asserted the need for individual conscience. Jesus’s ministry was “in open defiance to the religious monopoly that prevailed in Jerusalem.” He “believed” in free speech and the power of individuals to accomplish change. For the Klan, its use of Protestantism imitated Jesus’s behavior and beliefs. Protestantism, then, suggested fair play, freedom of religion, and a more generalized vision of freedom.

The editor of the *Kourier* described fair play as the promotion of equality, love, protection, and concession. Rather than oppose ideas contrary to the order, Klansmen should have protected the ideals of others as well as supported their individual freedoms. The editor wrote, “…[W]hile we find the teachings of Jesus to have been very positive and pointed, we do
not find Him ridiculing these other religious expressions, nor placing a ban upon…the aspiration of the soul.” Since Jesus did not ridicule opposing expressions (except those of the priestly class), the order required Klansmen to respect other religious traditions. Interestingly, the Klan lauded Jesus’s ridicule of “religious monopoly” in Jerusalem while still suggesting His tolerance for other religious beliefs. The Klan’s savior, accordingly, had no problem with individual beliefs, just authoritarian religious systems. Fair play easily extended into religious matters, and the Klan argued that its Protestantism also uplifted freedom of religion. For the Kourier, Klansmen should not judge the “spiritual aspirations” of men because all people claimed the spiritual legitimacy of their own religions. How could one determine whether those aspirations were false? Protestantism, then, allowed for men to aspire to the spiritual and guaranteed that “all men have the right to the individual expression of that aspiration.” That reflected Protestantism’s commitment to individual rights, so individual liberty was somehow embedded in the religious tradition.

The Klan’s religious faith, then, rested on conceptions of freedom. Freedom reached beyond the varying conceptions of religion and also applied to civil society. Its Protestantism contained a celebration of liberty, at individual and religious levels. That allowed for religious groups to practice their beliefs as long as they were not forcing said beliefs upon others. Freedom implied the independence from religious tyranny in America. The Ku Klux Klan “being Protestant, is fighting the battle of the every religious sect and every religious denomination” in its attempts to assert America’s freedom from religion as well freedom of religion. For the order, the nation required protection from religious movements, which sought to inflict their traditions upon unwilling people. Such a notion of Protestantism demonstrated the Klan’s acute concern over non-Protestant religious movements and especially Catholicism. The editor noted that the Klan was a “friend” of Catholics. That friendship, however, was fragile because of the Klan’s fear that Catholics posed a threat to government and nation. The Kourier expounded, “Should Catholics seek to control this country to the exclusion of all other forms of religious expression, they will find the Klan fighting them until the last Klansman was [sic] dead.” In regard to the threat to government, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, or others might also find themselves on the receiving end of the Klan’s wrath should they attempt to “usurp authority.” For the Klan, Protestantism might have suggested freedom, but it still retained its anti-Catholic tone and militaristic nature to respond to religious groups who overstepped their bounds in civic life.
Inclusion meant limits. Despite the suggestion that Klansmen would risk life and limb in the pursuit of freedom, the Kourier pleaded with readers to “throw aside pre-conceived notions about Protestants and Protestantism, and dig down to the root meaning.” That “root meaning” relied upon notions of protest and fair play while simultaneously promoting exclusion, particularly for Catholics. Those notions of Protestantism resounded as more secular than religious. Freedom applied not only to Protestantism but also had larger parlance in American culture. Dissent, individual conscience, and freedom of religion did not necessarily originate from the faith tradition. Rather the Klan newspaper sought to broaden understandings of Protestantism to gain a larger appeal for the religious tradition as well as the order. The Klan expanded the umbrella of Protestantism, so that it might encompass ideas that avoided the particularities of denominations. The order generalized its Protestantism for mass appeal.

The Klan’s definition of Protestantism was not limited to a secular celebration of freedom. Protestantism did retain its spiritual aspirations. It was “the soul’s religious declaration of independence” as well as “a law in the spiritual realm.” The soul was free, but to be Protestant suggested one’s soul was truly unfettered. Jesus freed the soul from its fetters and reiterated the “Spirit of religious law.” He affirmed the “spiritual interpretation of religion” rather than “literal adherence, [which] resolves itself into formal ceremonialism.” The spirit of the law negated the need for priests and ceremonialism. The Klan’s Jesus reveled in disobedience towards the high priests. He taught His followers to rely upon their own consciences for religious practice. He taught that people “should be free to worship God, their Heavenly Father, in the way best suited to their liberated conscience, and at any time in accord with their conviction.” That law manifested again in Luther’s reformation, which was a “re-formation” of Jesus’s teachings. Luther re-articulated the vision of Jesus that had been “abandoned” by the church. Both men emphasized the importance of the individual over the collective and criticized the role of priests in religious experience. For the Klan, Luther sought to reinstate Christianity to its original and pure form. The Klan’s Jesus purported that salvation was in the hands of the individual not through official ceremonies or formalism. Ceremonialism, however, was not the central focus of Luther’s attack. The Klan found a certain belief to be more disturbing. The Kourier reported:

The same belief exists today among millions of people who look to a human intermediary for their salvation more than they look to Almighty God. This is insidious priestcraft, and is tantamount to spiritual slavery. To break the people of His day from such
enslavement, Jesus boldly declared: ‘Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’ He also declared to the people if He made them free, they would be free indeed.

Such was a veiled attack on Roman Catholicism. Its supposed “spiritual slavery” revolved around the issue of the pope, “a human intermediary,” who stood between Catholics and God. For the Klan, the centrality of the pope demonstrated the Catholic Church’s attempts to keep members bound in falsehood. The newspaper attacked the Church because of her reliance upon priests and the pope in spiritual affairs. Rather than criticize Catholicism outright, the article eluded to the similarities between the ancient Judaism and the Roman Catholic Church. Jesus’s critique of Jewish priests proved applicable to the contemporary moment because the criticism echoed the detriments of the Church. For the *Kourier*, the Church tricked Catholics into believing that obedience to the pope was necessary for salvation and that personal interpretation was unnecessary and wrong. The *Kourier* lauded the example of Jesus, “who freely encouraged people to think for themselves.”

The Klan, however, was quick to point out, despite its denouncements of Catholicism, “Klansman are not ‘against’ the Catholics…but are ‘for’ Protestant Christianity *first, last and all the time*.” Perhaps, the Klan and its leaders were not aware of the contradictions in their position on Catholicism; yet the Klan degraded that Christian tradition in attempt to assert the importance of Protestantism. In Klan thinking, the freedom of religion for Catholics was tenuous at best. An Exalted Cyclops proclaimed, “The Klan is here, and it will remain until the last son of a Protestant surrenders his manhood, and is content to see America, Catholized, mongrelized, and circumcised.”

The vilification of Catholics was not unique to the order and had historical precedence in America. The Klan was embedded in a lineage of anti-Catholicism, which emerged in the colonial period and gained much ground in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historian Peter D’Agostino pointed out that by the eighteenth century, there was “no shortage” of anti-Catholicism in America. He argued that the founders of the American nation maintained anti-Catholic prejudice, but they did not need to react to individual Catholics since they were a minority population in the new nation. If they had, D’Agostino noted, “anti-Catholic fangs would have surely shown themselves more frequently.” The early colonists and founders perpetuated that bias against Catholics. By the nineteenth century, the residual bigotry burst forth in the American cultural scene in magazines, newspapers, books, and associations. Protestants
documented their so-called encounters with Catholics as well as Catholicism in Europe and America, and Protestant writers, historians, and everyday folks crafted Catholics in their imaginations as exotic and dangerous. For Ray Allen Billington, nativism was defined as “the first American mania of hostility to Catholics.” David Brion Davis argued that the “anti” movements, including anti-Catholicism, were movements for unity of the American nation in that they were the fruit of fears about internal subversion and conspiracy.

Anti-Catholicism was wed to the mass immigration of Catholics in the mid-nineteenth century and the fear that Catholics would change the American nation. One consequence of that sentiment was the burning of an Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1834. Anti-Catholicism was imagined conspiracy, Catholics were the imagined enemies, but the consequences of those imaginings were very real. In the 1880s and 1890s, the American Protective Association (A.P.A.) feared Catholic conspiracies. They also helped fuel those fears by giving lectures to Protestant audiences, during which they suggested that Catholics were taking the jobs of Protestant workers. Thus, the A.P.A. actually played a role in two major anti-Catholic riots. Historian Mark Massa placed the second revival of the Klan firmly in that lineage due to its use of “anti-Catholicism…as the most effective rallying cry.” For Massa, the Klan proved to be the last bold presentation of mainstream prejudice until the outbreak of World War II. The order was one of the main promoters of anti-Catholicism. At the 1928 Democratic convention, the Klan attacked Al Smith’s presidential candidacy because he was a Catholic seeking the nomination. Smith lost the nomination. Massa argued that the shallow victory signaled the end of the Klan because Catholic prejudice largely dissipated in American public life.

For Massa, the Klan maligned Catholics and adopted anti-Catholicism merely as a rallying cry. However, the order’s anti-Catholicism proved more sophisticated and illuminated the supposed alterity of the Church. Its prejudice moved the order to refashion Christian history by excising Catholicism. To accomplish that goal, the Klan presented the Protestant Reformation not only as a movement to reform the church but also as a movement that began with Jesus instead of Martin Luther. H.W. Evans argued, “the Reformation—started at the first altar that declared righteousness (right living)—has been, is and will ever be one cumulative urge toward Paradise Regained.” That first altar was the mission and ministry of Jesus. Evans proposed that the Reformation had occurred as the result of many reformers, who had strived “toward the
right.”\textsuperscript{85} By marking the beginning of the Reformation with Jesus and its continuing influence with Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley and other Protestant reformers, the Imperial Wizard sought to eliminate the Catholic Church’s role in Christian history. His suggestion was that the Catholic Church’s “corruption” of Christianity neglected the “real” message of Jesus. Moreover, Evans claimed that God was the “soul—the life—of the Reformation.” God sanctioned and founded the reforming movements. Jesus became the first reformer. Evans wrote, “Jesus therefore became the soul of the Reformation, and He will be its soul until it shall have accomplished its age-long task—that of restoring pristine relations between man and God, and between man and man; reproducing normalcy.”\textsuperscript{86}

The Reformation supposedly restored Christianity to its pure form. According to a Klan minister, Martin Luther demonstrated that salvation did not come through the church but rather through Jesus. Luther substituted Christ for the pope to reclaim the “true” message of Christianity. He “maintained that Roman Catholicism had forfeited its right to support by its betrayal of Jesus Christ as the head of a Christian, or so-called Christian, organization.” The minister continued, “Martin Luther blew up that doctrine [confession], and recrowned Jesus Christ as the great central object of our devotion and for our leadership in Christianity.”\textsuperscript{87} For the Klan minister, Roman Catholicism betrayed the mission of the Christian Church, and Luther had corrected its errors. The Klan envisioned its members in the lineage of Jesus and Luther as the new reformers that would restore Christianity to its “originary” form. In retelling Christian history in a way that highlighted the importance of Protestantism, the Klan degraded the place of Catholicism. If God sanctioned the Reformation, then was the Catholic Church godless? If the Catholic Church “replaced” Jesus with the pope, were they really Christians? The Klan considered Roman Catholicism a failed attempt in Christianity. The \textit{Kourier} noted that people were turning away from Catholicism because of its failure, and he wrote that the Klan’s duty was “to show them the more acceptable interpretation of Christianity as held by Protestants.”\textsuperscript{88}

By minimizing Catholicism, the Klan strove to identify its own Protestantism. The Klan defined its Protestantism in opposition to “Catholics” as Protestants perceived them. That process of definition had historical precedent. In her work on Catholics in England in the seventeenth century, literary historian Frances Dolan argued that since Catholics were not easily distinguishable from Protestants, Protestants seeking to define Catholics as somehow different had to go to great lengths to make their case. For Dolan, the problem for Protestants was that
they shared a common religious history and tradition with Catholics. To make their movement distinct, Protestants presented their own religious movement in oppositional terms. Protestants defined their Catholic brethren by what *could have happened* rather than what actually happened historically. The Klan participated in a similar process of differentiation. Whether or not the Klan was fundamentally opposed to Catholicism and Catholics was not always clear. The Church, as an organization, served as a foil for all of the Klan’s concerns about religion and nation. Klan members’ relationships with flesh and blood Catholics proved more complicated. Their denunciations of the Roman Catholic hierarchy obscure how they related to Catholic neighbors (see Chapter Six). Despite its vitriol, the Klan strived both to portray liberating and tolerant perceptions of its faith. In presenting itself as a bastion of tolerance, the order made the Catholic Church the easy symbol of intolerance, backwardness, and authoritarianism. By showing the dangerous nature of the Church, the order hoped to appear as more progressive and advanced. A Klan minister proclaimed:

> Certainly Protestantism with its gospel of enlightenment, with its spirit of democracy, and with its idealism of the apostolic age of Christianity, has character, has righteousness, has purity of heart, has brotherhood, and certainly that type of Protestantism is at least two or three hundred feet higher than the darkness and the superstition and the rottenness and the tyranny of Roman Catholicism.

Klan conceptions of Protestantism contained values like religious freedom and individualism while simultaneously drawing boundaries of exclusion. Catholicism became the representative of all the “rottenness” that Protestantism was not. Catholics and Catholicism became the foil to the “virtues” of the reforming spirit of the Klan. The order’s anxieties about the Church reflected more its unease with changing social norms than with actual Catholic actions or presence. The negative portrayal of Catholics bolstered the Klan’s Protestantism. The order also claimed its status as the promoter of the “true” form of Christianity. To present further its Protestantism, the Klan crafted Jesus as a savior, an exemplar for character and behavior, and as a likely member of its order. In presenting Christ, the Klan continued to use the Church as a foil for the order’s dedication to correct principles and, most importantly, correct belief.

> “Jesus was a Klansman”

In the opening prayer of Klan rituals, the order proclaimed, “the living Christ is a Klansman’s criterion of character.” A Texas Klansman and minister, W.C. Wright, pondered
what those “magical, significant words” meant for the life of a Klansman. Wright wrote, “We desire to call attention to some of the outstanding characteristics of His life, as they pertain to the fundamental principles of Klankraft and the development of a real, dependable character.” Jesus had an exemplary character, and the author believed that His experiences could relate to the experience of the ordinary Klansman. In the Night-Hawk, Wright pointed out that by knowing the character of Jesus, Klansmen could emulate His behaviors and principles for the betterment of themselves and for the good of the order. After all, “Jesus was a Klansman…a member of the oldest Klan in existence—the Jewish theocracy.” While the focus on Jesus’s Jewishness might seem strange in that context, the Klansmen asserted that Jesus promoted Jewish supremacy much like the Klan supported white supremacy. The Jews, then, were just as concerned with maintaining racial purity as the Klan was. Jews “have been Klannish since the days of Abraham; and Jesus was a Jewish Klansman…by birth, blood, religion[,]…teaching and practice as well.” Jesus was important as a savior and as a member of the Jewish clan. His “allegiance” to that clan resonated with Klan members. Additionally, Jesus “sought, first of all, to deliver the people of his own race, blood, and religion.” Interestingly, the order did not reflect upon Jesus’s Jewishness; the Savior, it seems, lost more of His ethnic identification the longer He was a Klansman. His ethnicity did not matter, only his membership in a clan. Instead, the Klan’s Jesus reflected the values of the order. To bolster such, the Klan crafted the story of Jesus’s life to fit its paradigm. The order engaged His example seriously.

By harkening back to Jesus’s life, the Klan related His trials and the triumphs to those of the order and its members. The Klan’s Jesus overcame adversity, and He emerged from the Jewish clan to create His own clan, Christianity. After the resurrection, Jesus expanded beyond His previous “clan” and proclaimed a plan for salvation based on moral character rather than kinship ties. The trademarks of Jesus’s followers were “spiritual, namely, a chivalric head, a compassionate heart, a prudent tongue and a courageous will, all dedicated and devoted to the sacred and sublime principles for which He had paid the supreme sacrifice.” All of those were expected traits of 1920s Klan members. A Texas Klansman opined, “May every Klansmen develop just such a character as He exemplified when He walked among men.” If members would follow the path of Jesus, their lives and their practice of “Klankraft” would benefit from His guidance. That religion became “the Klan of Character” founded by Christ. Wright suggested that not only was Jesus part of a Jewish clan but also that Christianity was an
extension of that previous clan. The 1920s Klan, then, “mimicked” the Christian clan. Wright attempted to renarrate early Christian history so that it reflected the structure of the order. To say that Jesus was a Klansman provided the order with religious legitimacy for its cause, and thus, the order rendered Jesus as the exemplar of Klansmen’s behavior.

The Klan’s Jesus, then, was selfless, humble, meek, patient, and charitable, and He sacrificed himself for others. Thus, His actions inspired the Klan’s motto, “Non Silba sed Anthar, not for self but for others.” Jesus’s selfless nature inspired the Klan to be selfless. Members hoped that their actions would help others as well as strengthen the bonds of their community. Klansmen were to “be knit together as the members of our body, each co-operating with the other; so closely and vitally connected that when one member suffers the whole body suffers.” Wright employed Ephesians 4:16 for his rendering of Klan service, though his focus on suffering was absent from the biblical verse. Selflessness as a Klan virtue required a Klansman to discard his selfish impulses and deny glory for himself. Selflessness, then, led to equality. That corollary virtue urged Klansmen to be merciful and just to other members. The Night-Hawk declared, “Be hospitable to your fellow Klansmen, he is one of many who are many in one, devoted to a common pledge and pledged to a common cause.” As a part of the collective, the community, that common cause trumped individual turmoil. There were many in one body, and in practical terms, selflessness afforded a way to circumvent competing personalities of Klansmen. It emphasized the importance of cohesiveness in the order over the individual’s desires and wants. Selflessness placed the order first and the members a distant second. In the printed pages, the uplifting of Jesus’s example and the extolling of selflessness also illuminated members’ charitable acts. Klansmen delivered baskets of food to the poor on Christmas, donated money to Protestant benevolent associations, and even created their own charitable institutions. In Altoona, PA, the local Klan played Santa to poor children. For the Altoona Klan,

The real interpretation of the message of the angels who announced the birth of the Christ child…nearly two thousand years ago, was carried forth by the Klansmen and Klanswomen of the Altoona on the eve of Christmas day, and the lamp of happiness was lighted in more than fifty homes of the poor of the city and vicinity after the Ku Klux Santa Klaus had paid his visit to the said homes. The Night-Hawk reported that through those acts, Klan lived the “real interpretation” of Jesus’s message. In Lisbon, Ohio, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan donated baskets to the poor with “a gift for each child.” Christmas was not the only time in which the Klan exercised its charitable
spirit. In Dallas, Texas, the Klan provided an $85,000 building as an orphanage for infants entitled “Hope Cottage.” The Corpus Christi Klan started a Protestant memorial hospital in honor of a slain Klansmen. The local klavern affirmed that a Protestant hospital was a much-needed addition to the town in which “the Roman hierarchy was in control.” It was a memorial as well as proclamation of the faith. In Shreveport, Louisiana, the local Klan collected funds to start a “Protestant Home for girls” because in Louisiana the only homes for girls were Roman Catholic. That need came to the attention of the larger Klan organization when a young minister joined the Klan and hoped to “actively practice Klancraft.” He revealed that a mother was prostituting her two young daughters and had the woman arrested. Discovering that there was only a Catholic home for girls, the distraught Shreveport Klan launched a fund-raising campaign for a Protestant home. That Klan hoped to build the home and provide it “to the State with the one proviso that it be conducted by Protestants and on Protestant principles.”

Additionally, the Night-Hawk established a fund for the widow and two children of Thomas R. Abbott, a murdered Klansmen, so that his children could attain an education. The Night-Hawk encouraged Klansmen throughout the Invisible Empire to contribute money for the Abbott family. A Pennsylvania Klan even donated money to the building fund for a “Negro Church” as well as an ample number of Bibles. The Klan’s benevolence could occasionally breach racial lines, but its charitable donations did not cross religious boundaries. Many local Klans, as demonstrated above, strived to uphold their pledge to selfless service. Imperial Wizard Evans affirmed that “Klanism is altruistic or it’s [sic] nothing. Every benefit we seek not to monopolize, but to diffuse throughout our citizenship and to place, so far as may be, at the service of mankind.”

In 1924, the national Klan instituted a charitable program. At the annual Klonvocation, Evans proclaimed, “[I]t shall be the program of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (a program in line with the divine plan) that ten percent of all the monies that come to your National Organization shall be…applied to humanitarian service.” The Imperial Wizard also encouraged individuals to give ten percent of their personal incomes to help those in need. The order constructed a tithe to aid others, but aid contained requirements. White Protestant organizations generally received such funds, and the Night-Hawk reminded Klansmen to review their donations to ensure that their “tithe” supported primarily Protestant organizations.

Selfless service was only one component of Jesus’s example. The Night-Hawk rendered their savior as a fighter. In print, Jesus was the “Master Christian, who stood unflinchingly for
the cause that He knew to be right.” The Master Christian “feared no man…never wavered, and…left to all mankind a heritage that you [a Klansman] may have for the asking.” Each Klansmen should have taken “stock of their mental and physical selves” in comparison with Christ. The Night-Hawk maintained that:

[t]he Pilot Imperial, Christ Jesus, whose teaching all Klansmen follow, believed in something better yet to come and threw himself into the cause of the future. He, alone, changed the universe. Klansmen…do reverence to Him, catch the Master’s spirit.105

Klansmen embraced Christ’s example. Christ’s disciples were to be “fishers of men, who made their nets therefore [sic] of words and example to establish a principle of citizenship and duty and service to mankind.” By following the example of the disciples, Klansmen could missionize more men for the Klan. Klansmen “engaged in the championing of principles of the organization co-operating as a solidified body of Christian Americans of one mind, of one purpose and one common understanding.”106 In that spiritual warfare, Klan members sought to convert others to the faith, through their personal examples. If the individual Klansman embodied Christ’s spirit, in word, deed, and action, then he could be a “fisher of men” and bring more into the fold. He would spread the “holy principles of righteousness and truth” by following Christ.107 The Night-Hawk urged Klansmen to do as Christ would have done, so the organization and the nation could benefit. Members’ actions should reflect the Klan’s teachings, and Klansmen’s bodies, by conforming to the printed guidelines in the Night-Hawk, were to witness the Klan’s Protestant core. Since each member represented the order, conformity was also a Protestant value.

Moreover, Jesus’s crucifixion, as personal sacrifice, was also important for Klansmen because it demonstrated the lengths one man would go for others. Members of the order were encouraged to remember Jesus’s redeeming act. The cross, albeit a fiery cross, was an emblem of the Klan, which the order upheld because “the Cross…bore the Redeemer of the world,…the only begotten of the Father.” The light of the cross was a memorial to the model for Klansmen. An Indianapolis Klansman described the crucifixion and its significance in gruesome detail:

Out from Pilate’s hall, Jesus staggered down the steps to the narrow road that led to Calvary, and there under the burden of that rugged tree His physical strength failed. He fainted beneath its load—the blood clotting in His hair, the perspiration drying upon His face. He came out of the faint only to proceed to Golgotha, and there the cruel nails pierced through His hands and feet. The Cross was lifted and dropped with a thud into the earth, and upon it Jesus Christ gave Himself as a ransom for many.108
That Klansman hoped to remind his fellow members that Christ died for their sins. Members should follow Christ’s path of righteousness and goodness. Jesus set the example for both service and sacrifice. Klankraft required a “living sacrifice,” and Klansmen’s bodies were to be living sacrifices for God’s will. A column entitled, “Christian Citizenship: The Gospel According to the Klan,” reflected upon a verse from Romans 12: “I beseech you, therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God.” The Night-Hawk advised Klansmen to “present your bodies, a living sacrifice. If you are going to perform the reasonable service God demands you are going to use your body.” Since Jesus’s wounded body bore the sins of the world, a Klansman should offer his body in service of God through the Klan. A member should follow Jesus’s example to a lesser degree by bearing witness to his path (as crafted by the Klan). It was not necessary to sacrifice one’s life, but to sacrifice one’s selfhood for the greater body of Klan membership.

The bodies of Klansmen bore the weight of Jesus’s principles. The Night-Hawk advocated prayer but also “sacrifice on the altar, not only on Sunday and weekly prayer night, but week days and election days.”\footnote{109} That living sacrifice was the “supreme test.” A Klan minister wrote, “Man thinks more of his own body than anything else he possesses. He will gladly give up honor, glory, reputation, character, friends, wealth, and even his own soul, to save his body.” For the minister, the body was of utmost concern. He continued, “To lay our ‘bodies,’ yet living on the altar of service, is a supreme sacrifice….This demands a clean, consecrated life. God will not accept an unholy offering.”\footnote{110} The Klan expected members to give their bodies in service. Ideally, all their actions should reflect Jesus’s sacrifice, from charitable giving to political action to personal behavior. As a Klansman, life was no longer simply about one’s self but also about the lives of others as well as the reputation of the order. Through the focus on living sacrifice, the Klan required its members to follow the order’s doctrines. Its rendering of Jesus was the archetype for behavior. To enforce the example of Jesus for Klansmen, the white robe, the uniform, contained a theology of its own. Wrapped in white robes, Klansmen presented their bodies for service.

\textbf{“The white robe which is the righteousness of Christ”}

In the late 1860s, the Reconstruction Klan created the distinctive Klan uniform. Those uniforms consisted of long, white robes decorated with various occult symbols (Figures 4 and 5). Tall conical hats completed the outfit, and white fabric covered the individual’s face with two
openings for the eyes. The design supposedly imitated the ghosts of the Confederate dead.\textsuperscript{111} The revival of the Klan in the 1920s appropriated the uniform, but its meaning changed. William Simmons, the founder, admitted that the initial purpose “in adopting the white robes...was to keep in grateful remembrance the intrepid men who preserved Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the South during the perilous period of Reconstruction.”\textsuperscript{112} However, the uniform proved more than a memorial. Simmons wrote:

Every line, every angle, every emblem spells out to a Klansman his duty, his honor, responsibility and obligation to his fellow men and to civilization...All of it was woven into the white robes of the Ku Klux Klan for the purpose of teaching by symbolism the very best things in our national life.”\textsuperscript{113}

No longer were the robes merely a ghoulish disguise. Rather the clothing embodied a sacred meaning for Klansmen. According to Simmons, the new role of the costume was consistent with the symbolic function of robes in other religious and fraternal organizations. Moreover, Simmons asked, “Why should we the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, be singled out and condemned for adopting a symbolism...to represent our particular service to the age in which we live?”\textsuperscript{114} The uniforms mapped patriotism, chivalry and most importantly, white Protestant Christianity on the wearer’s bodies. The sacred folds of the uniform reflected the order’s white supremacist notion of Christian virtue. The costume displayed the ideology and identity of the Klan.

The robes were the material presentations of the Klan’s commitment to Protestantism and white supremacy. By 1923, Klansmen and Klanswomen manufactured the robes in a Klan plant to guarantee homogeneity of the robes and to control how the product was made.\textsuperscript{115} Since the robes had immense symbolic value for the Klansmen, the regalia factory controlled the manufacture of material artifacts much like the \textit{Night-Hawk} strived to monitor the image of the order. Despite its symbolic import, the uniform was quite simple. The average Klansman’s uniform consisted of a belted, white robe with cross insignia as well as a white hat with an apron, or mask that covered one’s face. The loose robes disguised the wearer’s body, and the mask made one’s face unrecognizable. The color white represented purity, racial and spiritual, as well as re-presented “whiteness” of the men “masked” by their uniforms (see Chapter Five). The color of the robes displayed the requirements for membership: Caucasian, Protestant and “native-born” American, all of which equated with whiteness.\textsuperscript{116} The cross insignia was a white cross in a circular field of red (Figure 6). In the middle of the white cross was a single red symbol that appeared to be a comma. The comma was actually a drop of blood that represented the blood that
Christ shed for all humanity. The cross, then, harkened to the Klan’s Christianity. The cross was a reminder of Christ’s debt for human sin as well as His example of merit-filled action. According to the *Night-Hawk*, Protestant forces in the Middle ages carried the cross “in their perilous efforts to rescue the Holy Land from heathen Turks,” so it became a sign that the Klan, embodying Protestant Christianity, could conquer the “hordes of the anti-Christ” as well as the “enemies” of Americanism. The robes functioned to represent the Klansman’s spiritual purity and his commitment to Jesus.

A Klansman, then, could wear Christ’s example, symbolized in the uniform, on his body. The white robes and the mask emerged as symbols of Christ’s righteousness. The *Night-Hawk* noted that the robe was a “symbol of the robe of righteousness to be worn by saints in the land of Yet-to-Come.” With Christ as their example, the robe was a sign that Klansmen were endeavoring to follow His teachings. A Klansman wore “this white robe to signify the desire to put on that white robe which is the righteousness of Christ, in that Empire Invisible, that lies out beyond the vale of death.” Some “scoundrel” could attempt to wear the “sacred folds of the robe,” but his soul was not a Klansman’s soul. The robe functioned both as a purifying agent and a reminder of the sinless perfection of Jesus as compared to the imperfect lives of the Klansmen. That material feature was the method for Klansmen “to cover here our filthy rags and imperfect lives with the robe,” and members hoped “through the Grace of God and by following His Christ, [to] be able to hide the scars and stains of sin with the righteousness of Christ when we stand before His Great White Throne.”

The white robed Klansmen also mimicked the white robed figures in the Book of Revelation. A Colorado minister claimed that the white garments of the order echoed the characters in the biblical text. For the minister, Protestantism had “been groping back to that memorial room where those twelve men sat for the last time with their immortal Leader.” By examining Revelation, he applied the text and its prophecy to the current age. He noted a decline of Protestantism, but he conjured the image of the white clad men, who appeared before the throne of Jesus. Their robes were “washed” and “made…white in the blood of the Lamb.” By wearing those robes, the men dedicated themselves to the worship of God and His service. The minister, then, noted the parallel between biblical narrative and the contemporary age by writing, “I wonder if God did not notice the plight of His children…[and] He raised up a new order.
wherein all Protestantism could...promulgate the teachings of the Man of Galilee.” 

The men in the white robes not only represented Christ’s example through their uniforms but also became reflections of the biblical narrative. For the minister, the Klan served to promulgate the teachings of Christ.

For another minister, Jesus would have worn the robes, if He had had the opportunity. The Rev. James Hardin Smith proclaimed, “I think Jesus would have worn a robe such as they [the Klan] use, but because He did not wear a robe a mob came and took Him and crucified Him.” For Hardin, Jesus would have used the disguise to protect Himself on missions of charity much like the Klan employed the garments. Klansman might have embodied the message of Jesus while wearing the uniform, but Hardin suggested that Jesus might have implemented the uniform as a tool for His own ministry. He continued, “I am not sure that Jesus would bid men to take off their robes.”

In the Klan’s rendering, Jesus was both exemplar of action and practical supporter of its disguise. Those garments were both sacred and practical: to uplift the Protestant message of the order and to mask the individual members of the order. For Hardin, Jesus would have supported both.

Through the sacred folds, Klansmen commemorated and lived the sacrifice of the “Master Christian,” Jesus. Their robed bodies expressed the beliefs of the Klan. The “hated mask” concealed the faces of members making them part of a faceless, white-robed collective. The mask wiped away the last traces of the individual, which allowed a Klansman to become part of the larger body of the Klan. The Night-Hawk claimed that the masks functioned in two ways: to protect the secrecy of the membership and to symbolize the unselfish nature of membership. A Texas Klan leader wrote, “With the mask we hide our individuality and sink ourselves into the great sea of Klankraft….Therefore we hide self behind the mask [so] that we may be unselfish in our service.” The individual Klansman sacrificed a sense of self to be a member. The mask eliminated the recognizable features that marked one different from others. It equalized Klansmen and subsumed them into a collective. The Texan continued:

Who can look upon a multitude of white robed Klansmen without thinking of the equality and unselfishness of that throng of white robed saints in the Glory Land? May the God in Heaven, Who looks not upon outward appearance, but upon the heart, find every Klansman worthy of the robe and mask that he wears. Then when we ‘do the things we teach’ and ‘live the lives we preach,’ the title of Klansman will be the most honorable title among men.
For the Klan, the indistinguishable multitude presented its ideal of selflessness. The outward appearance reflected the collective. The Texas Klansmen urged members to live by the Klan’s teachings because the action of an individual Klansman could make the Klan more honorable or more loathsome.

Thus, the microcosm, the individual Klansman, was the symbol for all outsiders of the macrocosm, the Klan. Each Klansman represented the larger belief structure of the order, and the order struggled to control actions and beliefs of members. Imperial Wizard Evans issued an official position on the misuse of regalia, which warned that unofficial use of regalia was “a direct violation of the rules of this Order and must be discontinued.” The Night-Hawk reminded that “untold damage might easily result from such practices.” The use of regalia required regulation to maintain the ideals of the order and its public appearance. Moreover, Evans instructed Klansmen to keep their visors (part of their masks) down. Secrecy allowed a member to perform at his best as a Klansman. If a Klansman’s identity was revealed by the careless act of lifting one’s visor, he placed himself and his fellow Klansmen in danger. The enemies of the Klan could utilize that information to exploit members. Once a Klansman’s identity was known, the enemy could easily discover who other Klansmen were by association. The Night-Hawk warned:

To expose your identity as a Klansman lessens your ability to perform constructive work for your county and your community. To divulge the membership of a fellow Klansman is nothing but the basest treason and under Klan law is punishable as such.

The apparent anxiety in the print culture illuminated the organization’s desire to control its message. That desire included monitoring the boundaries of community. Members mirrored the collective’s ideals, and obviously, there was room for human error. While wearing the sacred folds, one Klansman’s actions could put the order’s larger message of Protestantism in peril. The Klan crafted its own Protestantism, but individual members did not necessarily follow the dictates of the order. The white robes articulated the religious vision as well as the practical need for disguise, but that could not guarantee Klansmen practiced in the method that the Klan preached. The order emphasized more than one’s personal religious faith, commitment to Jesus, and collective Protestantism. The Klan hoped to unite Protestantism by moving past schisms within the faith and bringing Protestants together under one undivided banner of faith.

“Thank God for the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan”
According to the *Imperial Night-Hawk*, the Klan, at its core, was a “great American Protestant order.” To be eligible for membership, “one must have been born in the United States, of white parentage, be over 18 years of age and of the Protestant Christian faith.” As we have seen, faith was a defining feature of membership beyond eligibility requirements. The order proposed that scripture was the basis of its principles, and Jesus was the criterion of character. The Bible was “the keystone of Klan principles.” Moreover, the stated intent of the Klan was to be an auxiliary for Protestant churches. The goal of that auxiliary was to make Protestantism a more powerful force. A Louisiana Klansman remarked that one of the chief aims of the Klan was “to bring the different branches of the Protestant church into a closer relationship with one another as well as to preserve the United States as a Protestant Christian nation.”

The Klan hoped to unite the forces of Protestantism by moving past the strictures of denominationalism. To accomplish that task, the Klan sought to make members more devoted to their personal Protestantism.

The *Night-Hawk* proclaimed “one of the foremost duties of a Klansman [was] to worship God.” Klansmen should have been religious and dedicated to their churches. “Every Klansman should have a Bible in his home[,] and he and his family should read it.” Ideally, membership in the Klan improved the member’s interaction with his church, his family, and his country. For “[n]o man can be a good Klansman and not be a better citizen and a more consistent Christian by the experience” because the Klan transformed men into inspired members, who were good, church-going citizens. A leader from Texas noted, “Klansmen are taught that they become much better Klansmen if they attend divine services regularly with their wives and families and support the Sunday Schools of their city.” An anonymous author asked, “How can any man presume to call himself a one hundred per cent Protestant if he does not give one hundred per cent support to Protestant churches?” Good Klansmen became better men because of their devotion. That worship made Klansmen familiar with some form of Protestantism, and hopefully, more willing to campaign for a united faith.

Above all, Klansmen should not be “Weak Kneed Protestants,” who did not stand up for their beliefs. Rather they had to embrace the Klan’s version of Christianity as whole-heartedly as they embraced their Klan membership. According to the *Dawn*, a Klan newspaper from Chicago, real men “have long decided that sitting on the fence is not the place for a native born, white, Protestant gentile, who would save America from her enemies.” The “man on the fence” should
have felt uncomfortable about his uncertainty about the order and its faith. Moreover, the *Dawn* proclaimed, “If you are on the fence get off today. Don’t be like Mr. Weak Kneed Protestant.” The *Night-Hawk* also knowingly suggested, “The Klan is founded on the word of God: you’re not ashamed of that are you?” Both papers reverberated with defensive tones suggesting that white Protestant American men were not “REAL men” unless they belonged to Klan.

According to contributors of the both papers, Klansmen were strong Protestants as opposed to the other weaker Protestants. The Klan’s logic proceeded that if Protestant men were not ashamed of God and knew the Klan’s Protestantism, then they should join. The Klan’s print culture contained a rhetorical style that goaded Protestant men into membership and shamed Klansmen into going to church. Individual Klansmen should have been defenders of the Klan’s values, and the print culture served as a reminder of acceptable Klannish behavior. The overemphasis on “true” religious behavior arouses suspicion about whether the Klansmen’s behaviors were sulllying the ideals of the order. After all, one author warned, “God hates nothing worse than cowardice in His cause.” Individual Klansmen were to be God-fearing men or face ridicule in print.

In addition to the demand for members to be “one hundred percent Christians,” the *Night-Hawk* affirmed that Christianity was foundational to the structure of the organization. The twelfth chapter of Romans was the “Klansman’s law of life,” an example of how to live a Christian and Klannish life. After reflecting on Romans 12, “the fundamental teachings of Christ,” the *Night-Hawk* stated, “Klansmen should be so transformed, or different from the world, that [their] lives prove what is the will of God.” The Klan changed men, so that they were “new creatures,” who were modest, active, never slothful, selfless, virtuous, persecuted, honorable, and just. Klansmen became models of the will of God. A minister-defender of the Klan prayed, “May God help us, and Christ strengthen us to walk daily by the sublime law of the Divine will, that we, as Klansmen, may prove to our enemies, ‘what is good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.’” Individual men were not only Klansmen but also moral exemplars for their faith. The order dictated the personal life of a Klansmen, so the best, albeit masked, face could be put forward. Through print, the Klan strived to create God-fearing, white-robed men, who the under the banner of the faith, had the potential to unite the fragmented religious tradition.
Through those actions, the Klan strived not only to create religious Klansmen but also to bind together disparate Protestant groups. The Night-Hawk remarked that since the order was “composed of no one creed of the Protestant faith,” Klan meetings furnished an arena for “many…branches of the Protestant Church [to] rub elbows at its meetings, form lasting friendships…as they work in a common and holy cause.” A leader in the Texas realm of the Klan claimed, “[A] forward stride has been made for a United Protestantism which will present a solid front to those who would engender ill feeling among Protestants.”¹⁴¹ The Texan believed that the Klan allowed for a united faith, which enmeshed Protestant groups into a larger collective. The Night-Hawk hoped that the order would unite both the divided country and the divided faith. Due to the Civil War, Protestants tore the “Body of Christ by maintaining Northern and Southern convocations of their same sect.” The weekly envisioned the Klan as the force to mend divisions of the country as well as among denominations. The Night-Hawk noted, “The Klan platform is broad enough to accommodate all Protestant faiths and strong enough to sustain their combined weight.” The order sought to provide a program that emphasized the similarities rather than doctrinal differences of denominations. The program was the “united effort of Protestant patriots,” who supported “one Lord [Jesus], one Faith, one Baptism.”¹⁴² The attempt to mend divisions rather than create new ones was an essential goal of the Klan. Unification did not mean that the Klan was attempting to be a church. For the Rev. W. C. Wright, the Klan aided churches, but was not a church in its own right. Instead, the Klan was a “Protestant Clearing House,” which served all Protestant churches instead of affiliating with one denomination over another. Wright continued:

We cannot ‘take sides’ in religious controversies, and unprofitable wrangles; but we must strive to exalt the LIVING CHRIST as ‘A Klansman’s criterion of character,’ and stress the twelfth chapter of Romans as ‘A Klansman’s Law of Life,” by constantly exemplifying these ideals in our daily conduct.

The Klan claimed to join “the forces of a divided Protestantism.”¹⁴³ By providing an arena for Protestants to gather solely as Protestants, the Klan hoped to combat not only schisms but also enemies of Protestantism. One Klan minister suggested Martin Luther was actually responsible for the divisions. He argued, “Luther failed to secure permanent union in his own ranks.” That lack of stability led to the fracturing of Protestantism. Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church had taken advantage of the divisions. Catholics were “banking on its destruction of this great
Protestant organization [the Klan] that at last has arisen, under the glory of God…” The Klan felt that Catholics feared and criticized the order because of its efforts to mend the fragmented Protestantism. United Protestantism had the potential to save not only the faith but also the nation for Klansmen. The Klan’s efforts at unity, however, were not appealing to all Protestants.

The religious and patriotic order strived to be an auxiliary for churches yet some Protestant churches felt threatened by the order’s re-emergence. The order was also anxious about its relationship with churches, and that anxiety was well-founded because of criticisms printed in the Christian press. The Christian Century, Christian Work, the Christian Herald, and many local papers, like the New York Christian Advocate and the Arkansas Methodist, printed derogatory columns and opinions on the Klan ranging from critiques of secrecy to claims of un-Americanism and un-Christian behavior. A contributor to the Northwestern Christian Advocate claimed any minister who supported or failed to criticize the secret organization “that plots its deeds in secret and executes its purpose cruelly and under mask was not worthy to preach the gospel of an open-minded and clear-breasted Christ.” For those religious presses, the Klan did not illustrate its religious legitimacy.

To counter the printed attacks, the Imperial Night-Hawk highlighted the aid the Klan supplied churches. The weekly reported, “where the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan are active, Protestant church attendance has shown notable increase and church work generally has taken on renewed vigor.” The contributors purported confusion at denunciations of another arena for Protestants to come together. One author wrote, “But if members of Protestant churches feel disposed to band together, merely for fellowship or for some more specific purpose, who is to deny them that privilege?” He continued, “Would hundreds of Protestant ministers retain their membership in an organization that is such a menace to Protestantism as is claimed?” After all, the author stoutly believed that the Klan “compare[d] favorably with that of any church in intelligence, morals, good citizenship, and even in Christianity itself.” The order did not imagine itself as a threat to Protestantism. Rather the Night-Hawk and its contributors argued that the organization was the opposite, a “secret society” that “advanced Christianity.” The tension was apparent between what the Klansmen thought their order did for their faith and the ways others perceived their actions. In the pages of the official organ, Protestant ministers defended the Klan and its good works for Protestantism. Rev. H.R. Gebhart of Indiana proclaimed, “God is surely with the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.” For the minister, the Klan was strengthening, not
weakening, the faith. He opined, “I can see the hand of God more and more in this Klan movement…The Protestant churches have lacked unity, but through this wonderful movement they are becoming united in a common cause. All I can say is: Thank God for the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.” The Klan propagation of that worldview through its print culture proved members’ participation in the “protesting” faith. After all, Gebhart believed that the churches should have been thanking God for the Klan’s involvement in their cause.

The fashioning of a religious identity, the identity of the collective, was clearly undertaken in the pages of the *Night-Hawk*, which stressed, repeatedly, the Klan’s worldview. The editor(s), the shock troops, seemed to paint the importance of Protestantism in page after page and volume over volume. The collective identity of Klansmen was what the pages declared rather than the individual experience of Klansmen. The *Night-Hawk* presented how a typical Klansman should act but not necessarily how Klansmen acted. The official sources occasionally demonstrated that members were not necessarily performing like good Protestants, but overall, the editors and leaders were more interested in emphasizing how one could be a part of their burgeoning Protestant community. Those printed pages rendered members as part of a faith community by describing the evidence of Christian behavior. The most common script for Klansmen’s behavior was Jesus’s model of living sacrifice. Jesus was the ideal for their actions, and their uniforms mapped Jesus’s message on their bodies. The Klan’s Protestantism, then, was key to defining and understanding its membership as well as the ideals of the order. Evans, Simmons, editors, and contributors defined their generalized Protestantism through a genealogy including Jesus and Luther as well as in more secular notions of dissent. The Klan’s Jesus was crucial to how the order painted members as Protestant Christians. The burden of His example rested upon individual Klansmen. The religious faith of the order was conjured for mass appeal, but individuals were to be believers, who dedicated their lives to the righteous cause of the order. Official sources communicated expectations for members, who, through emulation, performed their commitment to Jesus and to their order. By being a Klansman, one proved his dedication to faith as well as nation, and he imbibed in the ideal worldview of the Klan. Leaders and members believed that God had smiled upon the Klan to unite the faith and save the nation. The order had God on its side. A Klansman from Arizona wrote a poem, “God in the Klan,” sacralizing the movement:

But then there came a Savior,
With a face turned from the clod.
The noble Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,
Another form of God.\textsuperscript{150}

For the poet, the Klan was arguably divine, and that sentiment would likely have troubled Fry and Witcher more than naturalization ceremonies and renditions of Jesus. To be a “form of God” suggested the Klan’s reforms, ideals, and principles were legitimate, unchangeable, and dominant. Thus, its rendering of the faith was final and eternal, and that faith proved to be essential not only in members’ personal lives and actions of the order but also in their vision of the nation. Faith became the centerpiece of the Klan’s nationalism.
CHAPTER TWO
“Take the Christ out of America, and America Fails!”: The Klan’s Nationalism

My nature is serious, righteous and just,
And tempered with the love of Christ.
My purpose is noble, far-reaching and age-lasting.
My heart is heavy, but not relenting;
Sorrowful but not hopeless;
Pure but ever able to master the unclean;
Humble but not cowardly;
Strong but not arrogant;
Simple but not foolish;
Ready, without fear.
I am the Spirit of Righteousness.
They call me the Ku Klux Klan.
I am more than uncouth robe and hood
With which I am clothed.
YEA, I AM THE SOUL OF AMERICA—Daisy Douglass Barr (1923) 151

Three times, on his bended knee, with his right hand raised to high Heaven, and his left hand placed over his heart; in the presence of a sacred altar. Over the top of the altar was spread the American flag, and on top of the American flag was laid the Holy Bible open at the twelfth chapter of Romans; hanging aloof was the ‘fiery’ [sic] cross, symbol of the Christian religion; with still another American flag unfurled from a staff, and the beauty and splendor of its wonderful standard blowing in his face. In this position he took the oath thrice binding him in solemn loyalty and serious pledge to support the laws of the city, state and nation. Therefore a Klansman, bound by patriotism[,] which inspired him to become a member and then by a three-fold oath, is pledged to the great government of the United States over and above any and every government in the whole world. He pledges his life, if necessary, his property, and his sacred honor to the unaltering purpose of perpetuating our great American country, the most dauntless lineage known to man—“To the Citizens of Wayne County” (n.d.) 152

On bended knee, each Klansman pledged allegiance to patriotism and dedicated his life to the perpetuation of “our great American country.” Americanism, more particularly 100%
Americanism, was a rallying cry for the 1920s Klan, and members prostrated themselves in front of altars of Americanism, complemented by the flag and the cross. Both the flag and the fiery cross were part of the “seven symbols” of Klan. The American flag was an unsurprising symbol, one with an obvious and long-standing tie to patriotism. 153 The fiery cross, however, seemed to demonstrate more the order’s uplifting of Protestantism and religious belief than its national character. Yet, the Klan envisioned both of those material artifacts as signifiers of nation.
The flag, “purchased by blood and suffering of American heroes,” articulated the “price paid for American liberties.” For the Klan, like other Americans, it was a symbol of liberty, democracy, the Constitution, free speech, freedom of worship, and the rights of citizens. The flag was a fabric symbol of American character (Figure 7). For W.C. Wright, a Klan minister, the colors of that emblem presented American values and history. The red stripes uplifted “the bravery and blood” of all who fought for liberty. The white stripes symbolized “the sacrifice and tears of American womanhood whose husbands and sons paid the price, as well as the purity and sanctity of the American home.” The blue was “but a path of America’s unclouded sky, snatched from the diamond-studded canopy that bends above our native land.” Finally, the stars illustrated the union of the states. Each component of the flag communicated the character of the nation, her people, and her romanticized geography. The artifact provided a nostalgic view of the country and her beneficence.

The *Kourier* reported that the flag was a gift from the forefathers presented to subsequent generations as a representation of liberty. The “Glorious Banner” connoted both liberty and law, yet the monthly purported that Old Glory was denigrated by ignorance of both. The monthly configured the meaning of the banner theologically. Red equaled devotion, which might have required “the shedding of blood.” The *Kourier* printed, “We love Jesus because He shed His blood for us, and we love the Flag because it represents the blood shed for our freedom.” The white signified purity, intelligence, and citizenship. The stars in the field of blue no longer indicated a commitment to the union but rather their meaning shifted into the realm of the metaphysical. Those stars “stand for Him Who is back of the stars in Heaven above.” The *Kourier* continued, “We may not all understand God alike, but we do believe there is a God, and we must admit that the bases of America’s Laws are the great moral laws of God. When any man turns his back on God [..] he turns his back on the Flag.” Thus, the banner connoted not only American history but also the relationship of God to the American nation. The quintessential American symbol reflected divine guidance in American history, and it also affirmed that the belief in God was essential to citizenship. The monthly, however, was not promoting a universal God that would be inclusive of citizens of all faiths. But rather the monthly understood Christianity as an important part of Americanism. The *Kourier* expounded, “Pure Americanism can only be secured by confidence in the fact that the Cross of Jesus Christ is the wisest and strongest force in existence.”
For the Klan, Christianity constructed nationalism, and the flag and the cross were symbols of both religious faith and devotion to the nation. A Klan poetess, Daisy Douglas Barr, wrote that the Klan was “more than uncouth robe and hood” but was “the soul of America.” The Klan was represented as savior and soul of the nation. The questions her poem begs prove intriguing: What if we take seriously the claim that the Klan was the “soul” of 1920s America rather than just the proclaimed “savior”? What if we understand that nativist movement as a nationalist one instead? By overlooking the impact of Protestantism on the order’s nationalism, previous historians have obscured the intimate relationship between faith and nation in 1920s America. Millions of Americans found resonance in the Klan’s vision of white Protestant America, and they wore robes and burned crosses. Both presented both the theology of the movement as well as its imagining of what America should be. Average, ordinary citizens found resonance in a movement that claimed to be both “soul” and “savior” of American culture. Those people believed that the Klan was the soul of America and that faith and nation were inseparable. Robes, flags, and crosses demonstrated how the Klan welded Protestantism and Americanism together. To understand those artifacts and renderings of Americanism in Klan print culture complicates narratives of American religious history in the 1920s by suggesting that faith and nation were not as discrete as we might like them to be. Religious exclusion was the foundation of some conceptions of nation.

Klansmen proclaimed Protestantism, and their Americanism reverberated with religious overtones. From their view, America was primarily Protestant, and the Klan romanticized the founding fathers and their “Protestantism” as the keystone in the creation of America. The Night-Hawk urged Klansmen to be defenders of the faith and Americanism by carrying the fiery cross. That faith dictated the behavior of members on personal and collective levels. The weekly also confirmed the Klan’s vision of the world, and its printed words sought to define a community of believers in homogenous faith and particular vision of America. The cross, like the flag, articulated the order’s form of nationalism, which emphasized faith as essential to the character of the nation.

“By the fire of Calvary’s cross”

William Simmons, the first Imperial Wizard, was responsible for adding the fiery cross to 1920s Klan’s rituals, though Thomas Dixon’s The Clansman (1905) introduced the idea of the burning crosses as a part of Reconstruction Klan’s mythology. In that literary work, the cross
bound the American Klan to the Scottish clans of lore. Dixon used that connection to place the order to a larger history of Anglo-Saxons. More practically, the lit cross functioned as a tool, in the novel, for Klans to communicate with one another. Much like the robe (discussed in Chapter One), the 1920s Klan recrafted the fiery symbol from Dixon’s staging to present its twin messages, Americanism and Protestantism. The cross harkened to the Klan’s Protestantism and the magnitude of Jesus’s selfless sacrifice upon the cross. It reflected the heritage of Protestantism as “the symbol of heaven’s richest gift and earth’s greatest tragedy.” As one of the seven sacred symbols of the Klan, “[t]his old cross is…a sign of the Christian religion,” which was:

[s]anctified and made holy nearly nineteen hundred years ago by the suffering and blood of the crucified Christ, bathed in the blood of fifty million martyrs who died in the most holy faith, it stands in every Klavern of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan as a constant reminder that Christ is our criterion of character…

The cross magnified Christ’s importance as the archetype for a Klansman’s behavior. The wooden object was a memorial of Christ’s debt for human sin as well as His merit-filled actions. In a poem praising the fiery cross, an Iowa Klansman noted that its light indicated that the universe was firmly under God’s control, and moreover, that God would “redeem and regenerate the world.” For the Iowan, the cross suggested that “good,” the Klan, would triumph over any “evil”: immigration, alcohol, threats to the public school, attacks on Protestantism, Catholicism, Bolshevism, and Judaism to name a few. The artifact reassured the Klansman that the universe was structured in the way he hoped. Its glow symbolized a world in which the Klan was the singular force of good, and the order would triumph.

The fire signified that Christ was “the light of the world.” That light vanquished the darkness and superstitions, though it was a beacon of truth for Klansmen only. (Victims of the order did not necessarily recognize the religious vision of the cross but rather the fear and terror the Klan inspired.) “[T]he fire of Calvary’s cross” purified Klansmen of their human sins. Much like fire purified the basest of metals, the purification process “burned off” vice, leaving only the glowing presence of virtue behind. An Exalted Cyclops reflected, “Who can look upon this sublime symbol, or sit in its sacred, holy light without being inspired with a holy desire and determination to be better man? ‘By this sign we conquer.’” For the Exalted Cyclops, the cross inspired Klansmen to become more religious, dedicated, and determined. The glowing light of the cross stirred members to be better men but also indicated their need to conquer forces
opposed to them. To conquer, I think, was an obvious goal of the Klan. The order hoped to re-conquer the nation in name of Protestantism and “100% Americanism” and envisioned its battle as a crusade for the nation and its way of life. After all, members imagined themselves as Knights in white robes, who marched under the glow of a burning cross. According to the Night-Hawk, Christ’s light emanated from the fire, but the cross was also a sign that “rall[yed] the forces of Christianity” to conquer the “hordes of the anti-Christ” as well as the “enemies” of Americanism. The artifact was both beacon and warning. For Klansmen, its glow provided comfort, but for those “enemies,” the fire terrified.

The cross was explicitly bound to the cause of “100% Americanism.” Its theology focused upon the actions and death of Jesus as well as the exclusion of all those who were not (Protestant) Christian or American. Its glowing presence was an ominous signal to those who “threatened” the nation. The Night-Hawk claimed that the object was the “emblem of real Americanism” and “flashed its message of a Nation Reborn.” The “Nation Reborn” was one in which faith adhered to nation. The rebirth affirmed what Klansmen believed was the foundation of nation, white Protestantism. Faith functioned to build the exclusionary boundaries of its nation, which marked certain religious traditions and races as unable to assimilate. For the Klan, Catholics had allegiance to a foreign entity, the pope; Jews refused to assimilate; and African Americans were a “lesser” race that could never reach the great heights of the Anglo-Saxon. (For detailed descriptions of Klan positions on each group, see Chapter Five.) All of those groups proved threatening to the “glorious” nation. For Imperial Wizard Evans, a goal of the Klan was to preserve the “good government.” He argued that preservation required “maintaining a Christian civilization in America.” For Evans, “Pre-eminence is enjoined upon us by God and by our obligations to the world. If the Klan aspires to purify America and make her impregnable, it is not any selfish reason.” The reason, instead, was divinely ordained. America, in all her glory, needed to maintain her Protestantism, or the future of the nation might be in peril. By wearing white robes and waving the flag under the light of the fiery cross, Evans and his Klan hoped to restore the faith in order to save America. Their nation was in danger, and the only way to save her was to reconnect with the nation’s religious foundations. The accounts of the flag and cross were purposeful discussions of what each should mean. Both artifacts articulated the Christianity of America to point citizens in the correct direction and to verse them in the Klan’s ideology. To illuminate the correct path, the Klan defined its Americanism in
opposition to cosmopolitanism, in retellings of national history, and in defense of the public schools.

“The Klan embodies the group mind of America.”167

In order to be a Klansman, a member followed the principles of “klanishness,” which included patriotic, domestic, racial, and imperial klanishness. For patriotic klanishness, the Klansman had to devote himself to allegiance of pure Americanism, liberty, truth, and justice. According to Imperial instructions, “[r]eal, true Americanism unadulterated, [included] a dogged devotedness to our country, its government, its ideals and its institutions.”168 That nationalism required the uplifting of the country and government by all Klansmen, which also included the protection of the precious ideals. The order’s message of Americanism contained menacing overtones because the nation appeared, at least to Klansmen, to be in grave danger. The speeches and articles of Imperial Wizard H.W. Evans tempered the hope present in the writings of Simmons. Evans feared the downfall of civilization and assessed the constant threats to American character. He argued, “We must look first at the crisis in our civilization, now near its height. Americans find today that aliens…instead of joining, challenged and attacked us. They seek to destroy Americanism.” The nation was in crisis, and the Klan needed to confront those problems to save civilization and “the American stock.” Evans continued, “The Klan embodies the group mind of America. It is representative of complete nationalism. It is not sectional, it is not personal, it is not selfish, it does not represent any private interest—it speaks for all America.”169 The Klan’s goal was to be the voice of patriotism and to safeguard an imperiled nation. The order believed that it was representative of average Americans and their concerns.

Of course, the Klan was not representative of “all America.” Instead, members presented their interests above the welfare of those who did not qualify as “true” citizens. Moreover, Evans characterized the Klan as the “group mind” of America, which suggested a collective spirit of all native-born citizens that molded their thoughts, actions, and words. Nationalism would not be effective without that group mind. Evans argued that America’s particular nationalism contained six vital elements: the “fighting instinct”, unity of kind, independence, public spirit, common sense, and conscience. Men of the “American race” were fighters, who loved their “kind,” whites or Anglo-Saxons. The American was also inventive and independent, but that independence did not interfere with the sense of public responsibility. In regard to common sense, Evans penned, “Ours is no race to deal with fine spun theories, no race to allow out purposes to be thwarted.”170
And finally, conscience guaranteed the highest standards for home, faith, and nation. Those
elements highlighted the superiority of both America and her people, but for the Imperial
Wizard, the “Cosmopolitan movement” threatened her virtues.

Cosmopolitanism was an umbrella term for many of the movements that the Evans and
his Klan identified as threats. The term referred largely to various attempts to create
understandings of a “citizen of the world unbounded” by national constraints.\textsuperscript{171} For the order,
Cosmopolitan movements included political ideologies (Communism, Socialism, and
Anarchism) as well as religious traditions (Judaism and Roman Catholicism). For Evans, those
Cosmopolitans all had group minds that proved oppositional to the American values. Evans
relayed “four different types of people” that sought to destroy America: Jews, Celts,
“Mediterranean peoples,” and “Alpine[s].” He noted material things consumed the Jews, who
had their form of ethnic and religious nationalism that trumped commitment to American
nationalism. In his writing, the Celts, Mediterranean peoples, and Alpines were unstable,
uneducated and, above all, devoted to the Catholic Church. Because of their development in
Europe, their lack of education, and their loyalty to the Church, those groups differed too
drastically from the American group mind, such that they could not assimilate to the norms and
mores of the nation. Evans wrote, “The group minds of other races and other nations have
developed differently from ours. Each nation has its own God-given qualities and its own
mission.”\textsuperscript{172} Nationalism, then, was “the right of each nation to develop the genius and instincts
with which God endowed its people.” That understanding of nationalism uplifted patriotism,
uniformity, common language, common religion, respect for the government, and common
tradition as well as history. With his rendering of nationalism, Evans emphasized qualities that
he thought were essential to the development and maintenance of a nation. Uniformity emerged
as a necessity in order to avoid conflict and strife. He wrote, “True nationhood is essentially
oneness of mind, and it recognizes certain beliefs held in common by its citizens…No person
who lacks them can be in harmony with the nation.”\textsuperscript{173}

Aliens, or foreigners, were the greatest threat to the unity of mind, or Americanism. For
an Iowa Klansman, Americans were first and foremost nation builders; foreigners were not.
Americanism fostered native-born Americans, and it was not was easily learned. He categorized
an American as “one who lives in America, and lives for America and will die for America” and
“whose oath of allegiance is to America above any other government, civil, political or
ecclesiastical in the whole world.”174 “True” Americans upheld their country before other allegiances, and they were committed to fulfilling the destiny of the nation. Evans argued that Americanism “was bred into us—native, white, Protestant Americans—it was suckled with our mother’s milk, absorbed in our homes, learned in our schools, breathed into the very air.”175 Americans were born, not naturalized. The Klan suggested that Americans could not be created through immigration legislation, since the group mind was akin to instinct. Klansmen knew American principles by nature and inheritance, which the order believed cemented members’ roles as protectors of nation. The destiny of the nation depended on native-born Americans, who had a clearer sense of their nationality.

That destiny included more than patriotic duty. It also included uniformity in (Protestant) Christianity and white supremacy. The Anglo-Saxon heritage of the Klan, and of America, directly resulted in the greatness of the nation, and racial purity insured the maintenance and development of the group mind. Americanism, then, was not simply about democratic government but also about the racial superiority of whites (discussed in detail in Chapter Five). Aliens would destroy the group mind as well as democracy, a cherished American ideal. The order noted that it was the representative of true Americanism. The Klan was “founded upon, and represents, those deep instincts and qualities of our race which have led us to high achievement.” Klansmen also believed that their order was representative of the whole of Protestantism. Evans wrote:

This unity between Americanism and Protestantism is no accident. The two spring from the same racial qualities, and each is a part of our group mind. Together they worked to build America, and together they will work to preserve it. Americanism provides politically the freedom and independence Protestantism requires in the religious field.176 Protestantism was a central element of that form of Americanism because it proved essential in the creation of the nation. In addition, the religious movement helped define the all-important group mind. Freedom emerged politically from nation and religiously from Protestantism. That merger produced the unique mind of Americans. Evans and Klansmen envisioned Protestantism as a major force in the history of nation. They looked to its influence on the founders and other major historical actors as a sign of Providence in the formation of America. Americanism had sacred elements because God had made “the native Americans distinct from other peoples.”177 Americanism and Protestantism were unified because, at her core, America was a Protestant
nation. To show that unity, the Klan strived to tell history in a way that reflected the divinity of the American mission.

“The soil of America was consecrated by the Pilgrim Fathers”

A pamphlet entitled, The Menace of Modern Immigration reported that God had favored America, “He [God] fashioned this land in surpassing beauty and placed in it and upon it a varied, exhaustless store of resources…” The nation and her bounty remained hidden until the “best” settlers could arrive and cultivate the land. The pamphlet continued:

To this Eden journeyed the best and the bravest of the Old World….There was a double refinement of these pioneer patriots, first through their strength and courage required for their emancipation abroad, and then in their triumph over the dangers and adversities of a virgin environment.

The focus on pioneer patriots, who conquered America with divine assistance, deemphasized the historical presence of indigenous peoples and the discovery of America by the Catholic Christopher Columbus. The pamphlet overlooked historical veracity to tell the story of America founded by patriots, who were “physically, mentally and morally virile, with an inherent, kindred reverence for rightly established institutions.” The nation was a blank canvas ripe with possibility, which was painted skillfully by those settlers only. The “bane” of immigration had degraded the canvas, and the only way to restore the possibility and the beauty was for native-born Americans to realign with their destiny. Restoration and redemption lay in the hands of the native-born. Klan leaders, newspapers, pamphleteers, and ordinary members bore the responsibility of redemption. Through print media, the Klan avidly molded the history of the nation to reflect its values and concerns. The order sought to demonstrate that America from inception had been a Protestant nation and to illustrate how important historical actors held similar opinions to Klan leaders.

The Imperial Night-Hawk and its contributors analyzed the issue of Americanism and how it was intricately wed to the religious founding and destiny of the nation. In an article reprinted from the American Standard, the author reflected upon the nature of 100% Americanism, and he produced a Christian foundation for that particular form of patriotism. He opined, “America’s idealism, institutions, destiny, and affluence are written in the [B]ible, and upon this Book, the Work of God, America is founded.” Americanism, then, was centered upon the nation’s religious foundation, and one could not be a citizen without recognizing that “truth.” His article was a jeremiad, a lament about the decline of the nation and the forces aligning
against her. For the author, the nation was in peril if Americans did not realize the sacred status of the peculiar place. All of the “great” documents (the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Monroe Doctrine) originated from the Bible, and “[t]herefore these documents are the basis of the logic and demonstration of every American problem.”

Christianity, thus, permeated American culture, and the land became sacred as well. “The soil of America was consecrated by the Pilgrim Fathers with the words, ‘IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN!’” The nation was exceptional in origin, doctrine, and even physical space. The distinctiveness did not entirely emerge from divine beginnings but rather America’s separation from the corruption of the “old world.” The Monroe Doctrine proved significant because it “declare[d] the unique character of the American System and its inevitable separateness from the system of the old world.” The author’s emphasis alluded to his most important point: the labors of “white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon Americans” created the country and nationalistic fervor.180

The greatest threat to the divine nation came from old world machinations, in particular “the politico-ecclesiastical despotism of Europe” and “the Roman Catholic system of political control.” The Roman Catholic political machine had an elaborate hierarchy: hundreds of thousands lay members, Knights of Columbus, priests, “crafty Jesuits,” cardinals, and a pope with the power to control them all. In the article, Roman Catholicism equaled tyranny and proved threatening to the promise of the new world. The author confirmed “the lives of the early fathers and their writings reveals that America was established by Christ…to put an end ‘their System’…Romanism.” The founding fathers were opposed to that political system masquerading as religion. For America to survive and manifest her glory, Americans had to “break these alien bonds.”181 Divine providence was bound to the actions of white Protestant Anglo-Saxon Americans. In Klan retellings of American history, those true Americans were the heroes, and Catholics and others were excised from historical records. Americanism was Christian, and the order generalized the “forefathers” of the nation into Christian patriots.

For instance, an Arkansas Klansman presented the “builders” of America as “Christian pioneers.” Those Christian men laid the foundations for all that was valuable in American life including the freedom of speech and religion. For that Klansman, it was essential to look to the example of those founders because the nation was endangered. He wrote:

America is the great nation she is, because she was born of Christian ideals, and because she is in no small way moved by them. Take Christ out of America, and America fails! Take the freedom of the Protestant Christian religion from us and expect another St.
Bartholomew’s massacre. \(^{182}\)

America was a nation that would suffer if Christianity was removed or denigrated. The Klansman noted the order’s role to protect America from alien influences and preserve her Christian character. Not surprisingly, members observed similarities between their actions in the twentieth century and the actions of the forefathers. One Klansman observed that the Boston Tea Party might have been the “first Ku Klux Klan meeting on record.” He reflected, “The members masked. They did a bit of night work, made an immense pot of tea, liberty tea at that. King George tried to break up the Klan.” \(^{183}\) The king, of course, did not succeed because of those patriots, who masked themselves in the name of liberty. The task of the Klan, then, was to embrace the legacy of historical actors, who molded nation and her character. Yet they did not just imagine historical actors as exemplars, but the order recreated various historical events to show continuities between those figures and the Klan.

In the October 1926 issue of the Kourier, W.A.H. compared H.W. Evans, the Imperial Wizard, to Abraham Lincoln to show striking commonalities in character. Both were “products of pioneer Americanism.” They were fighters and leaders, who preferred simple language. The author noted that both were fair. He affirmed, “Hiram Wesley Evans could well be called his [Lincoln’s] reincarnation.” \(^{184}\) The purported eerie similarity was not as significant, however, as what Evans’s relationship with Lincoln signaled. To make the comparison demonstrated that a Klan leader was wed to a quintessential American leader, which illustrated the Klan’s ties with the mainstream as well as the order’s place in American history. To further make the case, the Imperial Night-Hawk ran a series of articles about historical “One Hundred Percent Americans” that illuminated the resonance of Klan values with other influential historical figures. The Puritan sage, Jonathan Edwards, merited his own article, which emphasized his education, sermons, influence, and his removal from the Northampton pulpit. The Night-Hawk suggested, “Jonathan Edwards would have made a staunch Klansman” because “he preached the love of God.” Moreover, he lived the Klansman’s creed, “[b]e not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,” by not showing “any resentment” in his farewell sermon. \(^{185}\) What was notable was not whether Edwards would have been a “staunch Klansman,” though that might prove interesting, but rather that the weekly strived to convey his resonance with the order. Such was a blatant attempt not only to recraft historical actors to fit the Klan’s mold but also to establish a longer historical lineage for the order. If the order and its members could trace the origins of its ideas to
forefathers, Lincoln, the Pilgrims, or even Edwards, the Klan was the logical extension of mainstream cultural currents. The tactic gave the order cultural legitimacy and placed its members as the common inheritors of Americanism. In retelling history, Klan print culture crafted Klansmen and Klanswomen as the culmination of founding ideals, aspirations, and events. Those inheritors embodied the “legacy” of white Protestant Americans, who created and fostered the nation from her earliest moments until the 1920s.

In that imagining of American history, the forefathers of the nation fought and spilled blood to create a country explicitly for native-born Americans. In a textbook for Klansmen entitled, *Bramble Bush Government*, the author highlighted significant events and institutions for the country including Moses’s parting of the Red Sea, the settlement at Jamestown, the American Revolution, and the Civil War. Those events defined American character, and the parting of the Red Sea, I think, signified the divine heritage of the nation that could be traced from biblical origins. Each event proved notable because each was a moment in which Americanism was forged. Divine guidance, first settlements, and wars all changed the course of history, and the spilling of blood made values tangible and sacred. The bloodstained heritage made native-born Americans unique from their immigrant brethren because they were born and matured on consecrated soil. For the author, the native-born should have immense pride in their nationality and heritage because their nation was special and quite different. He wrote:

> No people should be as proud of their heritage, their traditions and forbears as America’s native sons. Why? Because in their veins run the courage of the Pilgrims, the bravery of Boone, the wisdom of Washington, sagacity of Franklin, the nobility of Lincoln and Lee. Surely the blood of kings and potentates could be no more royal…

Native-born Americans were part of an aforementioned legacy that made their nation singularly great, and they should strive to preserve her from impurity. The author continued that the land, then, was not for “the refuse populations of other lands.” The Pilgrim Fathers worked and suffered to transform a “stern and rockbound coast” into a civilized country. That “refuse” had not civilized the wilds of the nation: they hoped only to take advantage of the toil of the forefathers and pioneers. That author downplayed the fact that the builders of the nation, including the Pilgrims and the settlers of Jamestown, were immigrants as well. They were not born on native soil, yet those immigrants were coded as beneficial while the other waves of immigration in the early twentieth century were viewed as “refuse.” The early immigrants were transformed through alchemy. As soon as founding immigrants stepped foot on the soil that
became America, those people became the natural inhabitants of the land, which purified of their old world elements. The divinely crafted land was made just for them, and those “white, Protestant” settlers fashioned the nation. One of the faults of the founders was that they never created a movement to safeguard the nation; that responsibility became the burden of later generations.

The *Kourier* reported, “Our forefathers should have started a great Christian American citizen’s movement, in connection with the new or American government…But they did not do it, and the Klan got started in very late in the process—but it is working day and night to save our civilization.” According to the monthly, the forefathers might have intended to create a movement that mimicked the order, but they did not. That responsibility, then, was left for the Klan. The creation of the order was fortuitous because the Klan and its leaders envisioned that they were continuing the mission of the founders to protect a white Protestant nation from the threats of Catholics, Jews, African Americans, and “hyphenated Americans.” In the order’s perusal of the American landscape, the providential nation was in threat of annihilation, and all along the landscape, threats were apparent and imminent. They envisioned themselves saviors of the nation, and the public schools quickly became a foremost battleground. By examining the Klan’s dedication to preservation of the Bible in the public school, one can see the order’s commitment to a Christian nation and its rendering of national character. The threat to public education was essentially a threat to nation. To lose the schools would be a deathblow to the order’s defenses. Schools trained future citizens, and the Klan wanted the public schools to remain firmly in the purview of white Protestants.

“*[T]he American Public School is the Safeguard of American Liberty*”

Mrs. J. W. Northrup, a contributor to *The New Age*, lamented the decline of the public school, which she noted had to be “dear to all Americans.” For Northrup, the public schools were “where tiny minds begin to soar, where great men and great women of this country first learn the alphabet that leads to fame.” The public schools made children patriots, trained them for greatness, and informed them of the character of their nation. That patriotism, fostered and nurtured in the public school system, should have included Protestantism. Northrup’s frustrated lamentation hinged on the lack of God in public education. She wrote vehemently:

Any intelligent Protestant knows when you educate a man to believe he can be saved without the living God, that he is not a true American citizen, for it is impossible to be true to this country and at the same time believe that his existence on earth and in eternity
depends upon a foreign mortal…Americans arouse yourselves; don’t be cowards, for God hates nothing worse than cowardice.\textsuperscript{189}

Mrs. Northrup’s infuriated opinion piece crystallized the Klan opinion on the place of religion in public education. Her jeremiad was reprinted in full for the readers of the Night-Hawk. In her article, American citizenship was intimately bound to the belief in God, and American citizens could not be a people who believed instead in a foreign mortal (quite obviously the pope). Devotion should have been directed to divinity alone. She challenged her fellow Americans to move past their cowardice and protect “the little red schoolhouse.” The Klan echoed Northrup’s concern over public education in its print culture, and the order feared not only the removal of God from the schoolhouse but also the Word of God, the Bible. The public, or common, school became a sacred institution that inculcated children with a sense of American history, citizenship, and belief in God, and the Klan saw the public school as the front line to protect its threatened ideals.\textsuperscript{190} In that battle, the order spilled much ink to show the danger to the public schools and the ramifications for its beloved nation.

Not surprisingly, the Klan’s defense of the public school began with the forefathers of the nation. “The condition that existed in the early history of the Nation forced our forefathers to the conclusion that something must be done to unify the ideals of the people.” Those “early settlers” came to America for freedom and democracy, and thus, they created a system that indoctrinated those principles and emphasized the unity of language. Moreover, the public school was instituted “so that the children of the rich and poor alike might have the same opportunity by being placed on a common level and so counteract that inequality with which birth or fortune otherwise produce.” That ideal vision of the common school furnished opportunities to all children in spite of socioeconomic status and gave them a chance to absorb in the value and character of America. It was equalizing, patriotic, and necessary. Yet that form of schooling did not materialize out of vacuum. Rather it had precedence within religious institutions. The Kourier observed that the earliest schools emerged from churches, and that the schools in America “were clearly the fruits of the Protestant Reformation.”

Specifically, the Reformation shifted the approach of schooling by uplifting the Bible as crucial to personal salvation. The reformers focused upon personal salvation, which fostered the importance of personal responsibility, which stood in opposition to the “collective authority” of the Roman Catholic Church. More importantly, responsibility for one’s salvation made reading a
necessity because “one might know what the commands of God were and what was demanded of him. 191 If reading was essential for salvation, then schooling was required to train pupils in that religiously mandated skill. For the Klan, even the prominence of reading and schooling separated Protestants from Catholics. With reformers highlighting the need for schooling, the Pilgrims brought not only a commitment to religious freedom but also a commitment to education when they landed on American soil. They established homes free of “dictations of a paternalistic nature” and created “little town governments loosely bound together in colonial federations.” Education was their project, which began as a voluntary endeavor and evolved into laws that “compelled children to be educated.” For the monthly, the Pilgrims were essential to the development of American character because of their “contribution” was an “institution so essential to her [America’s] progress and welfare, The American Public School.”192

The Kourier also examined the forefathers’ contribution to the common school. The monthly reported that the forefathers “planned our public school system as one of the foundation stones of our liberties and claimed the right of the state to educate her children.” The public school system was imperative to creating new American citizens, well-versed in the liberties they were guaranteed. That Kourier article did not focus on the religious basis for the school system but rather the function of that schooling to create a solid American citizenship. The explicit aim of that institution was to foster “effective manhood and womanhood and prepare for good, useful citizenship in the various duties and callings of life.” The school created good citizens, which affected the relationships of the nation to the rest of the world. The monthly argued that “[t]he Public Schools of America have changed the mental equilibrium of the world” and produced “our best men, our strongest patriots, our sweetest daughters and our most devoted mothers.”193

Patriotism was a masculine trait, but the schools also produced well-mannered daughters, who became devoted mothers. The Imperial Night-Hawk lauded the public schools for evolving from the “schools of our fathers, wherein we taught the elements of education—loyalty to God and to our flag” to more modern institutions. The common schools laid the foundation for patriotic citizenship. Schools taught children that God and flag were components of their lives and their future development. However, the Klan organ questioned the large amount of change in schooling and pondered, “Are our children developing Christian character? Are the right principles being brought to bear on their lives?”194
Modern schools appeared ill-equipped to replicate the values of the “schools of our fathers.” The Night-Hawk called for school reform to align the current system with its predecessor, which emphasized loyalty to God and loyalty to nation. The development of the nation depended upon children, and the Kourier noted, “The life blood of the Nation pulses no less in the veins of our children of the elementary school age, than those of adult life which fill the places of leaders, and of the rank and file in business, industry, commerce and professions.” The schools represented a safeguard to American ideals and liberties because those institutions inculcated a sense of nation in the young minds of their pupils. Children were blank states to be molded into effective citizens in the venue of public education. Religious historian, Robert Orsi noted, “Children represent the future of the faith standing there in front of oneself.” Children, then, were the new faithful, and they represented both peril and promise. In their small hands, the fate of the faith and the nation lie. Those small citizens had the ability to follow in the paths of their parents or shun them in favor of their own way. Children represented a future plagued with uncertainty. For the Klan, children embodied the future of the national ideals, and children proved to be a valuable resource to create the nation how the order wanted. It is not surprising that the government did not necessarily educate children “for their own sake, but also for its own.” Education molded the young minds in the dictates, values, and history of the nation, and the Klan wanted to make sure that what children were being taught resonated with the Klan’s vision of America. Children were symbols of a future, and the order strived to influence public education to reinstate a Protestant Christian America in the minds and hearts of the nation’s smallest citizens.

For Imperial Wizard Evans, children were “the greatest asset to the state” and the “hope for a glorious national future.” The development and grandness of the nation rested on the small shoulders of American children, and the Klan’s energies focused upon those children learning certain historical events in the hopes of producing legions of patriotic children, who would become patriotic adults. Evans continued, “What nation shall be the greatest among the nations of the ‘New World’? That nation shall be the greatest that puts children first in its thought, in its politics, in its economics, in its ethics. The nation that accepts the leadership of little children…” Those children were to be both immigrant and native born, and that schooling guaranteed the nation’s legacy.
The centrality of that legacy meant the Klan complained about educational funding; the funding was so small compared with the benefits of enriched, future citizenship. In 1924, the Klan supported a law in Congress that would guarantee “every child, native, naturalized and foreign” would receive “a common school education.” The Klan was not as progressive as they might have seemed. For the foreign children, the goal was “equipping these future citizens with the proper material for successful co-operation of American children in…the affairs of the country.” With the order’s support of the educational bill, Klansmen assumed that Protestant native-born children would be more privileged. The Klan contributor opined, “[I]t is natural to assume that the Protestant children of the United States will receive proper attention and adequate tutors will be provided with funds supplied by Federal authorities.” The equalizing vision of the early public school disappeared because of the overwhelming desire to protect white Protestant America. Protestant children were the backbone of the nation, and they should have been treated as such.

Yet those “little children” were not to be leaders in their own right, but rather they were to be groomed by public education to be obedient, strong, patriotic, and devoted citizens. The Klan strived to craft the public education system to produce forbearers of nationhood. Upon small shoulders rested the fate of the nation, the order did not take that situation lightly. Its anxiety over the school reflected paranoia about what would happen to the nation if the schools did not represent the intentions of forefathers or Pilgrims. What would happen to the nation if the burden was too great for “little children”? The emphasis on child-citizens and their schooling highlighted the Klan’s concerns about the absence of the Bible in schools and about the parochial school. Education inculcated nationalism, and the removal of the sacred text and the movement of students into parochial schools suggested that the Klan’s preferred form of nationalism might be undercut, or more dramatically, attacked.

Education, in addition to patriotic leanings, should have provided moral teachings, in particular “the revealed will of the Bible.” Because a biblical focus would “make good citizens and will best promote the interests of the institutions under which they live and for they which are responsible hereafter.” For the Klan, the Bible, then, was not just central to public education but a necessity. Children could not fully become (Protestant) American citizens without biblical instruction. The Klan’s concern over the Bible in the public school arose over what the order perceived as threats to common schooling. Some wanted to remove the Bible
from the curriculum while others removed their children from the public school in favor of “sectarian” education. In an article simply entitled, “Patriotism,” the author tackled the issue of the Bible in the public schools as a part of his system of nationalism. He writes, “If we would keep this land of the free we must extend Christian principles. Let us keep the Bible in schools.”

A Kourier contributor, a self-proclaimed former educator, explained why the Bible was so important. The Bible was “holy inspiration of the word of God to man as a guide…so regarded by all denominations of Christians.” However, creeds and dogmas should have been left out of the schools, and instead, taught in the home. For the “retired teacher,” biblical instruction made good moral citizens, who were dedicated to American institutions. He could not fathom why “one denomination alone objects to the reading of the Bible in the public schools” and how that objection caused the removal of the sacred text in many instances. The retired teacher wanted the text returned to the schools, so children would “become acquainted with their relations and obligations to the Creator.” Additionally, he derided critics by noting that the Bible was not a “sectarian book,” but rather men placed sectarian theories upon it. The Bible was the center of the Christian faith, and the teacher did not see why Bible reading in schools would cause controversy. The contributor either lacked knowledge of the Douay-Rheims Bible, the Catholic Bible, or he did not considered anything other than the King James Bible to be a Bible per se. For opponents, it was a sectarian text, more specifically a Protestant text. For the teacher and the Klan, the Bible was:

the foundation upon which civilization itself and National liberty are based; it is more. It is the only guide that man has to lead him upward to God. Without it the future is all darkness and the present all gloom. It is the ray of light emanating from the throne of God that illuminates the destiny of man beyond the grave.

That sacred text was a necessity for education because civilization and national liberty were at stake with its removal. The character of nation would be changed not for the better but to reflect the concerns of one denomination, Catholicism. The Klan did not acknowledge the concern that a generalized Protestantism might indoctrinate Catholic children. The nation had caved to sectarian interests, instead of uplifting the nation’s heritage and the lineage of the common school. Moreover, the foundation of religion and nationalism civilized children. Because of the emphasis on education as civilizing, Imperial Wizard Evans noted that the public school could provide an aid to the lawlessness that he believed was overrunning the country. Evans lamented that the public schools no longer followed the approach of Horace Mann, a
prominent educational theorist. Mann, “the immortal sponsor and patron saint of education in America, believed that **national safety, prosperity and happiness could all be attained through free public schools, open to all, good enough for all and attended by all.**” If public education had followed Mann’s direction, Evans believed that the nation would free of anarchy and crime. The schools in their longevity had become somehow inadequate. The Imperial Wizard voiced his concerns that the schools “have not the institutional standing to which they are entitled; they do not prevent illiteracy, not always promote patriotism; too often they teach a divided allegiance.” The schools had been corrupted and the removal of the Bible was only a piece of the puzzle. It seemed that enemies surrounded the sacred institution.

J.S. Fleming, a Klan author, reported, “Our enemies would bar Jesus Christ and His Bible from our public schools, in order that we may forget them and thus enable aliens to cunningly substitute the pope and his creed as our God and Guide.” Without the Bible as guidance, Fleming was afraid that immigrants might be able to subvert “traditional” American culture by focusing on the pope and Roman Catholicism. Fleming conveyed the magnitude of Bible reading as part of common education, as did the contributors to the *Kourier*. He contended that the biggest threat to education was Roman Catholicism. Fleming wrote, “Subjects of the Roman Catholic government cannot avail themselves the benefits of our American public schools on account of the contaminating influence of religious heresy over their children.” The Catholic worldview contaminated children, and the public school might not prove effective for them. Like Evans had maintained, those children faced a “divided allegiance.” Catholic students would not have the experience of public education because they were enrolled in parochial schools operated by the Church. The parochial school was particularly offensive to Fleming because Catholic religious tenets were taught, and the Bible was supposedly missing “because it is dangerous to the moral and religious welfare of the children of its subjects.” Fleming did not acknowledge that the Catholics used their own Bible, the Douay-Rheims, which shows malicious degradation of, or a lack of understanding about, Catholic worship and practice. The crux of the issue for that author was that Catholic parochial schools were receiving some funding from the government, and those schools taught Catholicism. Fleming lamented that the government “cannot yet legally force loyal Americans to pay for the training of children into a religious hatred of everything American.” The Klan envisioned the parochial school as a vehicle that might destroy national
character because Catholic children were not being taught the correct form of American citizenship.

For the order, the parochial school was an affront on American culture. For one missionary, the Roman Catholic Church was replacing the necessary state education with Catholic forms of education. The missionary argued, “Evidently Rome believes that there is a radical difference between Catholic education and that given by the civil government, else her leaders would not be so bitterly opposed to the public schools.” What most concerned the writer was the “obvious” plot by Catholics to put America children in parochial schools, and then, to take over the educational system as a whole. Catholics obeyed the pope, and their priests “forbid their members to send their children to our schools” as well as threatened “them with hell-fire” if parishioners sent their children to public schools. The writer envisioned Catholics as oppositional to the ideals of democratic government and questioned their ability to maintain parochial schools. Sectarian schooling was unnecessary since state schools were created with the explicit purpose of educating the nation’s children and youth. Parochial schools supposedly taught papal infallibility, ecclesiastical law over civil law, “inferior” moral codes, and limited subject matter.

The missionary warned, “We have only to wait until they have duly trained five or ten millions of their youth to find ourselves worm-eaten with a close-knit constituency pleaded to a system of politics which is entirely subversive of our liberties.” In the order’s thinking, the parochial schools were breeding grounds for un-American ideas and foreign allegiances, and those schools created youth and children who were versed in an alien religious system. The Catholic Church and her schools were, then, a direct menace to the Klan’s America. The “Romish education” robbed the government’s right to educate children and taught “immorality and anti-democratic doctrine.” Moreover, Catholic teachers could not be trusted in the public schools because of their allegiance to their church. The missionary ended his article by affirming “[n]o Protestant Church holds or teaches such anti-democratic and iniquitous doctrines.” What becomes clear was that the missionary, like many other contributors to Klan newspapers, believed that Catholicism was an inherent threat to the nation. Catholics did not use the same Bibles as Protestants, and they often educated their children in parochial schools rather than the public schools. Their children, thus, were pedagogically un-similar to Protestant American children, and future generations of citizens would not be trained on how to be citizens by the
common school. How could Catholics and their children be trusted? They did not imbibe in the mandated patriotism of the public schools nor were they aware of whom the “forefathers” were. Catholic opposition to common schooling was coded as an enemy’s attack on sacred liberties. For the Klan, those Catholics preferred not only the degradation of public education but also the destruction of national foundations.

Despite the Klan’s attempts to present the parochial school as opposed to citizenship and real Americanism, Catholics envisioned the parochial school as “a solid bulwark of good citizenship.” Writing in Our Sunday Visitor, T. L. Bouscaren, S.J., presented the Catholic concern with the public schools in similar terms to the order. For Bouscaren, the problem with common schooling was that it excluded religious instruction because those schools were open to all citizens. Since a variety of students from diverse religious backgrounds attended school together, teachers could not force a particular religious belief upon them. He wrote:

Americans have always been, and are still a religious people. Even in the public [sic] schools, many of the most prominent teachers and directors have been either ministers of religion or at least sincere and earnest Christians. They would be shocked at the idea of regarding religion of Christ as something un-American.

For the Jesuit, religion was not antithetical to Americanism but rather a crucial part of nationalism. The problem was in the public schools’ attempts to be non-sectarian. Excluding religion proved detrimental for students and the nation. That absence of religion was why Catholics preferred parochial schools for their children; those schools guaranteed that their children received needed religious instruction. Bouscaren noted, “[T]he public schools would be better and truly American if they included much-needed religious instruction.” American citizenship still needed religion from a Catholic perspective, and the public schools were sorely lacking. In spite of the similar concerns about the absence of religious instruction, the Klan did not see the parochial schools as beneficial for the nation. In addition, the order believed Protestantism to be the only religious tradition bound to patriotism. Bouscaren supported the place of religion in schools, but only if Catholics students would learn about Catholicism and other students would learn about their own faith traditions. For the Klan, that was not a viable plan because students would not have access to the white Protestant version of American history. In Oregon, Klansmen mobilized around the issue of compulsory public education to combat the influence of the parochial school. In 1922, the Oregon Klans supported a statewide initiative, which required attendance at state schools. The hope was to diminish the impact of the
parochial school and bolster the beloved public school. Americanism was defined in general Protestant terms, and the school proved to be the battlefield to demonstrate that connection. “The spirit of Americanism and the spirit of Protestantism are one and the same.”

For the Klan, “The spirit of Americanism and the spirit of Protestantism” were not just similar but “one and the same.” To protect America required a defense of Protestantism against all those reprehensible forces that would weaken or denounce the faith. The Klan’s attack on immigration, its religious intolerance of Catholics and Jews, and its campaign to keep the Bible in the public schools emerged because of concerns about the relationship between faith and nation. Immigration introduced millions of non-Protestants into American culture, and the Klan feared that those immigrants might not assimilate to the Klan’s version of American culture. Evolution was blasphemy in the face of God, and the Bible belonged in the schools because good citizens need to experience God as part of their patriotism. Many of the Klan’s “enemies” of Americanism were supposed “enemies” of the predominantly Protestant culture of 1920s America. Protestantism was an essential facet of the Klan as a movement, and that faith shaped the order’s approach to the nation and the many different peoples within it. American culture was changing, and the Klan wanted to save its vision of the only America, white and Protestant. For Imperial Wizard Simmons, “The cross of Christ must be exalted and sustained, or our splendid civilization might be doomed.” America’s fate was intimately wed to the place of Protestantism in the nation. For Imperial Wizard Evans, the only choice to protect America was for Klansmen to step forward, proclaim their religion, and protect their nation. The Klan was needed to “sound continuously its certain Protestant note in this Protestant country.” Evans wrote:

[T]he Klansmen of the nation, unafraid and undeterred, strong in their faith in God, cherishing an open Bible, loyal to the Klansman’s Christ, firmly believing in the principles taught by Him, rejecting all traditions and opinions of men contrary to His teachings, will continue to contend to establish these principles in Protestant America.

Faith and nation were defined by exclusion. The Klan’s virtues and theologies hinted to the more nefarious side of the organization. The order hoped to be the savior of the nation, “a civic Messiah” to lead Protestant Americans in their reclamation of America. To save the nation, the Klan defined the nature of true Americanism, in opposition to all groups who were not white and Protestant, and retold American history with a selective sampling, and fought fiercely to
keep the Bible in schools. For the order to protect the nation was to keep her Christian in the face of foreign as well as domestic threats. To accomplish that goal, the Klan envisioned members as Christian Knights as the defenders of faith, nation, womanhood, and the race in the battle against all of its enemies.
CHAPTER THREE
“God Give Us Men”: The Klan’s Masculine Knights

God give us men, sun-crowned and strong, with their heads above the fog.
Give us men whose hearts beat true to the principles of personal decency
and whose souls are filled with the love of Jesus Christ.
Remove from our makeup the bane of human selfishness
and broaden out usefulness to God and man—Imperial Night-Hawk (1923)

Dear Lord, help me to do all I can
To raise my boy to be a real man
Who is kind to children, gentle to the old
Who loves his friends and God more than gold
To keep him brave and sweet and clean
To teach him to love this land so dear
And if ever it need be in time of strife
To defend his Country—with his life—Mrs. P.B. Whaley (1923)

In the Dawn, a Klan publication from Chicago, Illinois, a Klan cartoonist threw down the
 gauntlet to other Protestants. His cartoon, entitled “The ‘Man on the Fence’ Becomes
 Uncomfortable,” (Figure 8) depicted “Mr. Weak Kneed Protestant,” a dejected figure sitting on a
fence with his head in his hands. On one side of the fence, Klan figures represented the different
facets of 100% Americanism including liberty, white supremacy, protection of womanhood,
Christianity, law, and freedom. On the other side of the fence were those who pretended to
denote Americanism and the good of the nation: Catholics, Negroes, and corrupt politicians to
name a few. The caption chided the weak-kneed Protestant, who lacked the “courage and faith to
join the ranks of those whose strength he doesn’t know.” The opposition to the Klan confused
the poor misled fellow. Moreover, the caption continued, “Fortunately there are not many real
men in the position of Mr. Weak Kneed Protestant. The REAL men have long since decided that
sitting on the fence is not the place for a native born, protestant Gentile.” For the Klan
contributors and the editor of the Dawn, the message was apparent: real Protestants and real men
were a part of the Klan. The enemies of American culture, who were posing as supporters of
nation, did not sway them. Real men embraced Klan membership and were not sitting on the
proverbial fence about the issue.

The “man on the fence” should have felt discomfort about his uncertainty and
ambivalence towards the Klan, its faith, and patriotism, and the cartoon figure appeared
miserable because of his indecision. The Dawn proclaimed, “If you are on the fence get off today. Don’t be like Mr. Weak Kneed Protestant.” A Louisiana Klansman also lamented the weak-kneed Protestants and “‘jelly-bean’ Americans [who] are willing to forego Bible reading in the public school, surrender their religious convictions and, if necessary, deny Jesus Christ to avoid offending the Roman Catholics and the Jews.” What America really needed, according to the Louisianan, was for the Klan to show the weak-kneed and the jelly-beaned what a real man was. He wrote that a Klansman was not just “a one hundred percent American, but an honest law abiding Christian gentleman and a real ‘he-man.’” Both papers reverberated with defensive tones suggesting that white Protestant American men were not “REAL men” unless they belonged to Klan. According to contributors of both papers, Klansmen were strong Protestants as opposed to the other weak Protestants. The Klan’s logic proceeded that Protestant men, who were not ashamed of God and who recognized the Klan’s Protestantism, would join. Klansmen were “he-men” and real Protestants, and men who did not belong to the order were not. The Klan asserted masculinity as an essential part of membership, and non-members were lacking in their masculinity as well as in their commitment to nation and religion. The Klan emasculated opponents in print. The Kourier derided proponents of tolerance as those with “dulcet voices of flattery” who indulged in “pious platitudes” while “folding” their hands. What the opponents of the Klan did not recognize was that even tolerance was manly virtue. Tolerance was “the free, frank, manly, clear-eyed facing of facts, issues, and conflicts and disagreements without frenzy, prejudice or fanaticism.” To define the Klansmen as manly and analytical, their opponents were weak, frenzied men, who either lacked the ability to be manly or willing stood against the Klan’s ideology (which signaled a lesser form of masculinity). Klansmen were the real men, who strived to protect their religion, their nation, and their homes from other “so-called” citizens.

The masculine ideal did not just avoid being weak but also emulated the chivalrous knights of lore and the masculine Jesus. The Klan was, after all, a fraternity, and the Knight was its fraternal symbol of choice. The order had all the trappings of a fraternity from extensive ritual to elaborate costume and symbology to an obsession with secrecy. According to Mark C. Carnes, fraternities allowed men to journey from the realm of childhood into the realm of manhood through ritual. Though Carnes primarily explored the world of nineteenth century fraternal orders, his understanding of those orders was that they primarily serve to instill masculinity and
to transition young men into manhood. Such was accomplished through ritual that rehashed familiar religious norms, which, in Carnes’s example, was evangelical Christianity. For the Klan, the rituals centered upon both Christianity and patriotism. Those rituals combined the familiar and the strange and emphasized the importance of manhood. Carnes affirmed the widespread appeal of fraternal orders for American men, by turn of the twentieth century between 15 and 40 percent of men belonged to orders. The fraternity offered a sacred space for men to avoid the “feminized” religion of the Victorian Age.

The second revival of the Klan in the 1920s found solace in the fraternity as a realm in which men could reaffirm their religious faith and their patriotism in the face of an ever-changing world. Cloaked in secrecy and filled with ritualism, Klan meetings and publications uplifted the celebration of masculinity by members. In the Klan, members became men, who by virtue of membership were better at religious practice, patriotism, and fatherhood. American men found a sacred space that confirmed their fears and hopes for the nation and allowed them to reclaim a “militant” spirituality that they believed was lost. In the guise of Christian knighthood, Klansmen became the exemplars of American ideals. The Knight, in white robes with face covered, became the symbol of the order as well as the ideal for manly behavior. The Knight was chivalrous yet militant and dominating because, above all else, that symbolic figure was a soldier and protector. Robert J. Higgs argued that in both European and American history, the Christian knight has functioned as a masculine ideal, and the definition of success for that ideal included victory in both physical battle and the battle of beliefs and ideals. The Klan was not necessarily a physical army; rather those Knights were locked in a clash of wills against “Weak-kneed Protestants,” Catholics, Jews, African-Americans, and others over the state of the nation and the degradation of the national (Protestant) religion. The order was rendered as the defender of a “virile,” Protestant nation. Similar to Carnes’s example of preceding fraternities, the order also feared that its religiosity was in danger of becoming effeminate and soft.

The Klan, then, mimicked calls for a “muscular Christianity” though the members and leadership never specifically used the phrase. The heyday of muscular Christianity was from 1880-1920. The proponents of that movement lamented the more visible place of women in society and feared “feminization” of religion and society. The Men and Religion Forward Movement (1911-1912) emphasized “More men for religion. More religion for men.” They sought to masculinize religion from the clutches of overly sentimental women and the ministers,
who catered to those women. The unifying assertion of muscular Christians, ranging from the Men and Religion Forward Movement to Bruce Barton and Billy Sunday, was that Christianity needed to be more masculine. In particular, Jesus should not be portrayed as a soft, feminine savior. Billy Sunday, the “baseball evangelist,” emphasized that Jesus was the “Manly Redeemer” and perhaps the “greatest scrapper that ever lived.” According to Stephen Prothero, Sunday derided the “sissified Jesus of the feminized crowd.” For muscular Christians, Jesus became the ideal of Christian manhood: a hardworking carpenter and a fighter, who was macho and muscular. Even the Social Gospeller, Walter Rauschenbusch, called for men “to become Christian ‘knights’ in a brotherhood.” They were to fight “on behalf of their women, their families, their country, and their Savior” to “achieve a just social order they called the Kingdom of God.” Rauschenbusch’s Christian knights fought to protect their society, their religion, and their nation from forces that opposed them. The Klan’s Christian Knights sought to protect their homes, country, and God as well, but their Kingdom of God was not the one of Rauschenbusch’s hopes and desires. Rather the Klan embraced the masculine ideals found in both Protestant Christianity and in nationalism to proclaim its vision of what American society should and should not be. The Klan leadership strived to foster a form of manhood that drew from those sources at the same time that virility informed members’ practice of faith and patriotism.

Klansmen were supposed to be strong patriots, dedicated Protestants, and exemplars of masculinity. They remade knighthood and Jesus to represent the import of manliness in the face of weak-kneed and effeminate enemies. Masculinity, much like Protestantism and nationalism, colored the worldview of the 1920s Klan. The Klan articulated clear gender roles for men and women (Chapter 4 focuses upon Klan womanhood). The Klan’s masculine Jesus resonated with muscular Christianity, but the Klan’s Jesus also presented the order’s particular concerns about the relationship of virility to larger ideals. Militarism pervaded the structure of the order. Leaders described Klansman as members of a “crusading army.” Masculinity and militarism were intimately bound together in the hierarchical structure of the order and informed understandings of how Klansmen should act. The masculine Jesus’s act of self-sacrifice became the penultimate representation of a “real” man. Klan martyrs laid down their lives for the Klan’s twin messages of Protestantism and nationalism. The martyrs, like Jesus, were archetypes of Klan manhood that each member was supposed to emulate. Klan masculinity provided another glimpse into the worldview of members and how gender functioned in the creation of an ideal Protestant nation.
“Be militant knights of the religion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

For the Grand Dragon of Oregon, one of pressing issues that faced the Klan was the thousands of degenerate and delinquent boys in America. Delinquent boyhood was usually not one included as a rallying cry for the 1920s Klan, but the focus on boyhood demonstrated the importance of the example of the Knight for the order. The Grand Dragon noted, “Our boys are the masters of posterity we must win them for this glorious cause” because boys left in delinquency would likely become delinquent adults. Degenerate men, then, presented a problem for the nation because they would not be proper citizens, and perhaps, might hinder or corrupt the nation’s progress. The method to move past that degeneracy was to create a Junior Order of the Klan for boys. The Junior Order provided “serious work of character building through right thinking, by ways and means of klannishness which will appeal most strongly to the boyish heart.” The Grand Dragon believed that Klan principles coaxed boys into becoming men of character and “right” thinking, and the model of knighthood would appeal to boys. The Junior Order provided the “average Protestant boy” with “the incarnation of all manly virtues, a knight.”

The program trained boys in the “critical and trying years of boyhood,” ages twelve to eighteen, to become manly, non-delinquent men. For those young boys, a Klansman would be a hero, and hopefully, the boys, inspired by his example, would emulate their knightly heroes. For the Grand Dragon, the Klan auxiliary benefited the nation and Protestantism by “making” better boys, who would become better citizens and better Protestants. Boys became assets to their communities and their nation through lessons on how to become a principled man, “the maker of his own character” and the “molder [sic] of his own life.” The Grand Dragon received his wish when the Klan instituted the Junior Order in the same year as his speech, 1923. By 1924, fifteen states had chapters of the order for boys. The Klan hoped that the auxiliary would provide “strength” and numbers. The Grand Dragon insisted “that it is the highest duty of Klansmen…to do everything that is right and practicable for the betterment of boys, and through them, ennable and bless the entire manhood and boyhood of our nation.” The training of boys to become Knights reflected the desire of adult Klansmen to also embody that manly model. The adult men, who comprised the leadership of the Klan, articulated their vision of Knighthood to the boys that joined the Junior Order. The Knight was the epitome for both adult and adolescent.
behavior, and the adults communicated their vision of masculinity most clearly when presenting that ideal to boys through ritual materials.

The *Kloran* for men’s, women’s, and Junior orders provided the script to Klan rituals such as induction, funerals, and other ceremonies. The *Kloran* for the Junior Order of Klansmen explained the centrality of Knighthood to the young members of the order. In the manual for boys, the ritual of induction summarized the importance of Knighthood for the applicants. All the officers of the Junior Order were boys, not adults, so the boys also ran the rite of induction for prospective members. In the ceremony, the “Worthy Lieutenant” of the Junior Klan praised the applicants for their decision to become Knights, but he warned that they must receive instruction in virtues of knighthood and follow said virtues.²³³ The boys could not take their membership lightly because virtuous behavior was demanded. According to the *Kloran*, the Knight foundationally was a “gentleman.” Gentleman implied not only one “who is not a brawler or a noisy person,” but also one who was not necessarily kind or soft. Rather gentle signified a willingness to be “thoughtful and considerate.” A Knight was also to be courteous, which meant he was to be obedient.²³⁴ Moreover, Knighthood included generosity, hospitality, honesty, courage, purity, and loyalty. Another officer, the “Worthy Capitan,” urged the boys to be courageous in the face of adversity. The boys were to fight for things that were good and right but not give in to the desire to bully. Moreover, those boys, who imbibed the ideals of the Klan, should have been loyal. Loyalty was the most important virtue. The Knight was indebted to God, country, vows of service, and his fellow members. The “Worthy Knight” echoed the sentiments of his fellow officers:

> He [the Knight] fought for God and his native land, he honorably lived up to the promises he made when he was admitted into Knighthood, he kept secrets that were entrusted [sic] to him by his Order and its members, and he let no one and nothing tempt him to be disloyal to these things.²³⁵

In the ritual of induction, the young Knights encountered the dictates of their Junior order as well as their future involvement in the Klan. The Knight was the model for emulation, and the boys should mimic his example in their young lives and in adulthood. The importance of the Knight demonstrated the order’s masculine values: to fight for what one believed and to revere loyalty above all other commitments. Those young men were being prepared for their full involvement in the adult’s order as Christian Knights, who would battle not only for religious principles but for country. Interestingly, adult Keagles created the ritual manual, and the boy’s
ritual was eventually dropped because the ritual was too long and complicated. Adult men tried valiantly to express the values of Knighthood for the boys, but the rituals that they produced that proved unappealing to teenage boys. Those adults had great hopes that the boys would embody the manly ideals of the Junior Order and would become “real” men in the adult order. Thus, the adults actually articulated a vision of what they desired a Knight to be. That Knight rendered for the *Kloran* was the adult vision of manliness. The ideal Knight would fill the ranks of the Klan’s crusading army, but he was not a tangible hero for the boys. Yet that “army” was not only to be populated by Knights but also to enhance the virility of the member-soldiers. Leaders adopted the military model to improve the efficiency, discipline, and action of the order.

“A soldier in our ranks because of his beliefs”

In a document for the Exalted Cyclops, the “supreme officer” of a local Klan, the order instructed the officer to use a “COMPLETE MILITARY SYSTEM” not just to organize leadership but also to run meetings, political campaigns, and membership drives. The *Klansman’s Manual* (1924) admitted that the Klan’s form of governance was not “new” but was meant to impersonate the army. The manual, intended to be a textbook for members, noted, “As the United States Army is duly organized with its various officers and troops, so is the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan welded together as an organized force for fulfillment of its patriotic mission.” The Imperial Wizard was the commander of the army while there were also commanders of division and region (Grand Dragons), provinces (Grand Dragons), local Klans (Exalted Cyclops), and all the officers, who were under the command of that hierarchy. For the Klan, democracy proved unwieldy and possibly ineffective. The leadership argued that the militarism of the order was a necessity for efficiency and mobilization, and the officers watched over their members, or soldiers, to keep them organized and loyal. Each member was aware of the rank of the officers as well as his own rank in the organization. Moreover, that form of governance allowed for “the whole movement to respond as one unit instantly and effectively to the call” of local, regional, or national leaders. The *Manual* documented the failure of other fraternal and patriotic movements because they organized around democracy. The militarism supplied “efficient leadership, effective discipline, intelligent co-operation, active functioning, uniform methods, and unified operation,” and without that valuable feature even the Klan would decline into a society obsessed with ritual but ineffectual in its larger goals. Moreover, the militaristic government was key to the preservation of “true, patriotic Americanism” because it guaranteed
successful action. The *Manual* stated emphatically, “Both experience and history demonstrate the fallacy and futility of a so-called democratic form of government for any such movement as the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.”

Democracy proved inadequate in the face of the mass mobilization that the Klan wanted to garner, and interestingly, autocracy provided the venue through which the leadership and faithful members protected their nation and democracy.

Paul Etheridge, the Imperial Klonsel (Attorney), was perhaps concerned with the message of militarism over democracy. He argued that the Klan constitution was democratic “in principle” and valued democracy, but it was militaristic and autocratic in practice. Authority was vested in the Imperial Wizard, who organized the order in that hierarchical fashion. Etheridge repeated the problem of democracy presented in the *Klansman’s Manual*: a truly democratic order would have lacked the organizational power of a militaristic hierarchy. He pointed out how other organizations with valuable aims were lost to history because they lacked structure and efficiency. The Klan attorney even lauded the efficiency of hierarchy in the Roman Catholic Church because “no form of government…has developed such proficiency in handling the masses as the Church of Rome.” The Catholic Church could manage large amounts of people in her form of “government,” and thus, to organize a mass of Protestants in the Klan, a similar form of government must be utilized. Democracy was a principle upheld by the Klan, but hierarchy supplied a mechanism to organize masses of men to accomplish the Klan’s goals. However, Etheridge cautioned that the Klan would use militaristic hierarchy as a method for good rather than the “destructive and inimical” purposes of the Catholic Church. The Imperial Klonsel further asked, “[I]s there any good reason why the same…plans should not be perfected for the accomplishment of the good [and]…operate along constructive lines with the same degree of effectiveness?”

The Klan’s hierarchy implemented greater goals and accomplishments than the supposed machinations of the Catholic Church. For the leadership, the lack of democratic methods within the order was not a dismissal of the American form of government but a necessary means to further the purpose of the order in the most effective way possible. Militarism also proved useful because the Klan was locked in battle with enemies of religion and patriotism.

The Klan was a crusade for Protestantism and Americanism. “Military discipline” was required to maintain the order in the battle for the nation. For Etheridge, the Klan would remain a “militant, fighting organization” until the goals of the order had been accomplished.
Taylor, writing on behalf of the *Christian Century*, believed that the empathetic patriotism and militarism, were just “post-war reaction” held over from World War I. Taylor discredited the Americanism of the Klan as “short-circuited patriotism” and its method as “a great menace.” The *Christian Century* author did not see the benefit of militarism nor did he recognize Klansmen as crusaders despite their attempts to claim that mantle. Imperial Wizard H.W. Evans purposefully conjured the image of the order as crusaders for American society. For Evans, crusaders were noble, heroic men, who attempted to “rescue the Tomb of our Lord from the power of Saracens,” and Klansmen were contemporary crusaders, an army of soldiers prepared to fight for another momentous cause. Each Klansman was “a soldier in our ranks because of his beliefs.” Those soldiers represented the “mind of America” and sought to fulfill “their Divinely appointed task.” The men of the Klan constituted an army that strived to protect the “American mind” and lead Americans to better government, law enforcement, and “cleaner public thought.” Klansmen became better Americans because of their participation in the militaristic order. Evans stated, “No man becomes a Klansman and stays a Klansman without becoming a better citizen, a better Protestant, a better husband and father, a better man.”

The Imperial Wizard believed that the “manly” manhood of the fraternity improved members and the larger society. He feared that aliens, or immigrants, would trample upon American masculinity as they had upon the American mind. Evans thought that aliens had almost destroyed the American mind by scoffing at the “greatness” of American pioneers. Those aliens attempted to make Klansmen, and Americans in general, “ashamed of being American” and envious of “the slick, soft, degenerateness which they call art and culture.” Evans lamented, “[F]orgetting that manhood is the greatest thing in the world, and that all else is valuable only if it can be added unto manliness, but [art and culture] is damning if it replaces virility.” Those alien enemies of the Klan were attempting to emasculate American culture and remove the virility that made it great. Masculine virtue had informed the “pioneers” of American culture, and not surprisingly, the Klan’s nationalism was wed to masculinity. Enemies were presented as “slick” and “soft” to demonstrate their threat to rugged Americanism. Evans placed virility as “the greatest thing in the world,” which added value to all it encountered. Masculinity, then, was a crucial component of both patriotism and faith, which made both more legitimate and valuable. Manhood and militarism sustained the improvement of nation and the order as well as (Protestant) Christianity.
“Militant Protestantism” was a battle cry for the Klan, and an Exalted Cyclops noted that the nation needed a “militant Protestant organization.” The Klan would necessarily be involved in religious warfare, but it guaranteed that the religious faith would be protected. The leader worried that Protestantism might lose its “genuine” principles because of the actions of Protestants. He wrote:

Theologians may continue to split tenuous hairs; pulpit dilettantes may go on pronouncing their pretty little essays; sweet-scented sentimentalists may list their puling denunciations of the Klan;…shrinking, timorous, paling souls may deprecate the temerity of men who are bold to proclaim their Protestant Knighthood.

The Exalted Cyclops recognized the divisions within the faith, and especially, the reaction of “dilettantes” and “sweet-scented sentimentalists” to the Klan’s militant Protestantism. For him, the Klan had to continue the practice of its faith by cherishing the Bible and the “Klansman’s Christ.” Again, the Klan author emasculated his opponents and sneered at their practice of “sentimental” Protestantism. Those Protestants acted unmanly in their faith while the Klan was boldly supporting its call to “Protestant Knighthood.” Those other Protestants did not realize that both faith and nation needed defense. Militancy was required in both nationalism and religion to preserve America and her Protestant heritage. The fight required men, who were not timid, pale, or sentimental but bold and committed. For the Exalted Cyclops, the Klan was opposed because of its manly action. To protect those ideals, Klansmen sounded the battle cry and strove for militancy. Moreover, the order claimed that God required masculinity in His service as well.

In the Kourier, G.W.W. proposed, “God wants men.” For G.W.W., even God had criteria for acceptable masculinity for Christian men. “God’s measurement of a man” required faith, patience, courage, sweetness, and fairness. Not surprisingly, those were all similar traits to the Klansman’s ideal man. Klansmen needed faith in God and faith in their own abilities. Patience would allow the Klansmen to wait for the “reforms” that they were trying to cause, which would require much time. Courage was a requirement to keep up the long fight rather than giving up in the face of opposition and criticism. Klansmen should also “[k]eep sweet,” which meant they should watch their tongues by being kind rather than caustic. Sweetness was the only “measure” that did not seem to fit within the order’s previous paradigm of manhood because the term usually signaled effeminacy. The focus on sweetness, however, allowed G.W.W. to warn members to watch their words and actions because they represented the order. Sweetness was the
temperament that they all were expected to cultivate. Members also promoted fairness because “[t]he real man, the real citizen in the truest sense, the true Klansman, will not stoop to little and the low and the vile.” Those men should have been exemplars of manly behavior because participation in the order created better men and better Protestants. G.W.W. emphasized that Klansmen should follow the example of Christ as practicing Christians. He wrote, “You cannot get too much of God in your life, if you intend to make the emblem of the sacrifice of His Son your standard.” Klansmen needed God in their lives. Jesus was the example to emulate for sacrifice and also for masculinity. His example was the standard by which Klansmen could judge their behaviors, but that model proved to be an unreachable ideal to match.

“The living Christ is a Klansman’s criterion of character.”

For the Klan, Jesus stood as the moral exemplar that all Klansmen should follow (discussed in detail in Chapter One). Jesus was selfless, benevolent, and patriotic, and He was also the model of manhood. W. C. Wright, in an exposition on Klan character, congratulated Klansmen on their “manly decision to forsake the world of selfishness and fraternal alienation” by joining the order. He also urged members to embrace the example of Jesus, “the Klansman’s criterion of character.” For Wright, Jesus established a pattern for Christian manhood, which included courage, compassion, chivalry, and sacrifice. “Christ was a man of honor,” so Klansmen were expected to be honorable. In his ministry, Jesus was fearless and courageous. Wright pointed to Jesus’s courage when he drove the moneychangers out of the temple. For the author, Jesus did not flinch at that duty nor did he fear the outcome. Members of the order should have embodied courage in their actions despite the consequences. And above all, Klansmen should embrace morality as well. Wright asserted, “Christ was the living example of moral manhood…His life was clean, chaste and pure as any woman. He never swore or cursed, by taking God’s name in vain.” The minister continued, “We blush to admit that Klansmen too often indulge in such things…We have heard Klansmen curse like troopers. Klansmen, lest we forget, let’s remember Christ and His moral example.” Wright reminded members of Jesus’s example as a corrective to their own bad behaviors, and he chided them into being manly. The Klan’s Jesus was strong, full of conviction, courageous, and fearless. He was also a patriot to his “klan,” Judaism. For Wright, Jesus emerged as the epitome of Klan manhood.
Despite the emphasis on Jesus’s example, the Imperial Wizard and his Klansmen balked at the representations of Jesus in larger culture. They believed that the “popular conception” of Jesus did not match with his biography. Evans wrote:

The usual picture of the Christ is effeminate, whereas the word-pictures of Him in the New Testament reveal a virility which challenges the admiration of all who place themselves in a position to comprehend it. Jesus was a robust, toil-marked young man who conserved both His physical and mental strength—in our modern way of putting it, “He was fit.” In other words, He was prepared for life—able to think straight, to hold His propensities in leash, to endure the strain of arduous service, to bear the burden of trial. Jesus was “a man among men,” who was able to handle any situation with which he was presented. He was not “effeminate” or weak. He was a man of thought as well as action. Evans continued, “Jesus was The Man—full orbed.” For the Klan, Jesus was a reformer as well as a virile savior. Even the salvation that Jesus offered was filled with a hidden message, which was the importance of “real” manhood as well as womanhood. By using His example, Klansmen could “dethrone Wrong and enthrone Right,” but the “initial task” of the order was to make “bright and attractive its own manhood.” The Imperial Wizard Evans worried about false representations of manhood. He was afraid that most men did not look to Jesus as an exemplar man, but rather they saw manliness represented in vice. Drinking, cheating (in politics or business), and bullying were supposed hallmarks of masculinity. Additionally, those men also used profanity and told “licentious” stories. That, for Evans, was false manhood and the “lowest culture.” Real men discarded debauchery and embraced the example of Jesus. Evans believed that his Christian Knights represented the Christian soldiers mentioned by John in the Book of Revelation. Those soldiers marched “through the centuries—at war with the evil in their own inclinations and in the world about them.” More importantly, those men, aware of their baser tendencies, fought valiantly against them. As Christian soldiers, who emulated the path of Jesus, Klansmen mimicked the figures in Revelation, who would do away with evil in the world. Biblical text foretold Evans’s order, and through dedicated manhood and the example of Christ, his white-robed soldiers could right the wrongs of the world.

Other Protestants did not generally accept the Klan’s Christianity and rendering of Jesus, and The Christian Century, the liberal, non-denominational journal, took offense at the Klan’s purported faith. Sherwood Eddy, in a piece on the Klan for the Century, labeled the order both a “prostitution of ‘Protestantism’” as well as a “travesty of ‘Pure Americanism.'” Despite the
criticisms and condemnations of the order, the contributors to the journal created a similar understanding of a masculine Jesus. The renderings of Jesus in the Night-Hawk and Kourier resounded in the pages of The Christian Century. Both sought a masculine Jesus to counter effeminate portrayals of their savior. James I. Vance argued that art moved us away from “the virile and rugged simplicities” of Jerusalem and even feminized the crucifixion with haloes and radiance rather than its gruesome reality. Art removed the blood and toil from the cross, which eliminated the brutality of Jesus’s sacrifice. For Vance, Christianity was a “rugged religion,” and he feared that Christianity might become “so soft, so artistic, so dilettante, so lacking in grim reality, so empty of the rich red blood of Calvary.” Vance, similar to muscular Christians, asserted the inherent masculinity of the faith and critiqued the sallow and soft understanding that was supposedly predominant in American culture. Moreover, he noted that Jesus “never meant for his disciples to dwindle down into a race of relic-hunters and site worshippers.” Vance’s Christianity was rugged and masculine in comparison to the soft and effeminate Catholicism apparent in the use of relics and pilgrimage. Catholicism helped cause the effeminacy of Christianity, and Vance countered the Church’s influence by lauding a masculine Christ and the return of the rugged religion. Looking at the history of the tradition, he documented the religion’s “red-blooded virtues,” which included “common honesty, unpurchasable integrity, uncompromising conviction, zeal for righteousness, and a devotion to truth which does not back down at death.” That faith also demanded duty, even if it required sacrifice, and that heroism produced a certain kind of saint, who was not “a sallow face under a dim halo, but a heart courageous and a soul heroic.” Jesus was a hero, who should have been venerated as such. Similar to Vance’s rendering of the religious tradition, the Klan’s Christianity was also heroic and rugged.

Other contributors to the Century emphasized the courage and wisdom of Jesus, and some warned against the “dangers of softness” for men. What became clear to one contributor was that Jesus served as slate for “each culture and civilization…to authenticate its most cherished ideals.” In a critique of Bruce Barton’s The Man Nobody Knows (1925), the Century derided Barton’s conception of Jesus as a “regular he-man,” who “loved outdoor life.” Barton’s Jesus became a hero of “physical vitality” as well as an exemplary advertising executive. To illuminate the masculinity of Jesus meant his religious principles were diluted. That Century contributor found the masculine Jesus to be troubling rather than inspiring or comforting.
Another *Century* contributor, Kirby Page, challenged the notion of whether Jesus could be a model patriot much less a beacon of manliness. Page explored Jesus’s commitment to His race as well as His commitment to freedom. Moreover, the author argued that Jesus relied on love and forgiveness as part of His ministry. For Page, Jesus could not be a patriot if patriotism was defined in a “narrow nationalistic and militaristic sense.” However, if patriotism was understood as the “love of one’s countrymen and devotion to the highest ideals of one’s nation,” then Jesus could be patriotic. Page continued that for “real Christians,” patriotism required “genuine affection for one’s people” and “wholehearted allegiance to the noblest ideals of one’s nation.” Page envisioned a patriotism of love rather than hate, and he admitted that patriotism had been “prostituted to unholy ends.”

The patriotism of Jesus would not allow hate, evil, or revenge but would model the actions of the savior, including suffering, humiliation, and possibly, death. The Klan defined its patriotism in a similar way and understood its actions as devotion to the country and beloved faith. Jesus was a patriot for the Klan as well. Yet I am not sure that Page would have found correspondence between his rendering of Jesus and the order’s. The order’s focus on devotion to country and religion through the exclusion of others would have struck Page as harmful. Thus, the paeans to a manly Christianity and Christ by some contributors did not imply that the *Century* understood Jesus in the same fashion as the Klan despite the similarities. The Klan’s loyalty to nation and religion was founded upon exclusion while Page emphasized Jesus’s ethic of love. Yet for both Page and the order, sacrifice was essential to Jesus’s message, and for the Klan, the sacrifice of one’s life represented the ultimate masculine ideal.

“A faithful brother—who gave his life to the cause.”

Jesus’s example included His “living sacrifice.” As noted in Chapter One, Jesus sacrificed himself for the sins of the world, and the fraternity expected Klansmen to offer themselves as living sacrifices. At the first annual meeting of the Grand Dragons of the Klan in 1923, the order reflected on the example of Jesus’s sacrifice and what that action meant for membership. Jesus “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. He, therefore, Who is the Klansman’s Exemplar, sets the example to all Klansmen.”

Following His example, members of the order recognized that sacrifice was a vital part of their service. That particular kind of sacrifice “calls for a living body placed upon the altar of Service, utilized by man and dedicated to God.” Jesus had died for noble principles, and members of
the order were at the least expected to live their lives in unflinching service to Him (and the order). There was also an expectation that Klansmen might die in service to the order. Brown Hardwood, the Imperial Klazik (the second vice-president of the order), noted, “But, if our cause is worthwhile, if our principles are right, if the objectives for which we strive our worthy, though we may have our martyrs and the pernicious persecution prompted by insidious forces…right will prevail eventually.”267 The Klan, after all, was a crusade to right the wrongs present in Protestant America, and the fraternity had its fair share of enemies. In that battle, Klansmen expected persecution at the hands of their enemies, and it was possible that men might become martyrs for the cause. For Brown, the martyrs were casualties in a war, in which the Klan would ultimately prevail as Jesus had prevailed over sin. In emulations of His example, some Klansmen gave their lives. Sacrifice emerged as a key component of masculinity because those men embraced fully the selfless act of Jesus. Be sure that when Klansmen were martyred, the Imperial Night-Hawk was quick to report their deaths.

The Night-Hawk provided members with position papers of various subjects, opinion pieces, the goings-on of klaverns, and general news. Yet the Night-Hawk rarely discussed individual Klansmen or Klanswomen in its pages. Rather the editors and contributors proscribed how to be (and not to be) the ideal Protestant, patriot, and Klansman. Klan martyrs, however, provided an interesting exception to the rule. The individual stories of martyrs were glorified because of their selfless service and ultimate sacrifice for the Klan. The initial understanding of Klan martyrs can be misleading because the glorification was not necessarily a memorial of the individual but a restating of the Klan ideals that he supposedly died to protect (regardless of whether he actually died to protect those ideals). In death, the bodies of those men represented the principles of the order, and Klan martyrs became rallying points for membership as well as affirmations of the importance of manly behavior. Those martyrs also offered “concrete” examples of the supposed persecution that the “American, Protestant order” faced.268

Accusations of persecution permeated the pages of the Night-Hawk, and most articles contained at least one reference to the resistance the Klan encountered from other newspapers, Roman Catholics, Jews, Bolshevists, Communists, employers, businesses, the government, state legislatures, “unenlightened” Protestant churches, the police, Congress, immigrants, African Americans, Socialists, the Knights of Columbus, and proponents of evolution and secular schools to name several. For instance, the Night-Hawk reported that “anything [was] permissible
in slandering and vituperating this great American order by newspapers who pander to the tastes of their Catholic and Jewish advertisers.” As evidence of that resistance, the weekly reported on anti-Klan groups who attacked, and sometimes injured, Klan lecturers. In Kemblesville, Pennsylvania, an anti-Klan group mobbed Dr. D.J. Hawkins with fists and stones flying. They shot his car, and his “automobile certainly showed many marks of the bullets.” That persecution was wrongly directed because the Klan felt that the meaning of its organization had been distorted. A minister from Maine commented, “But how it [the Klan] has been willfully misrepresented and maligned by its enemies! It was to be expected that hindrance and hatred would be heaped upon this fraternity by the age-long merciless enemy of all things Protestant.” The enemy assumed many forms as mentioned earlier, and the Klan alleged members were victims of merciless persecution. The Night-Hawk reasoned that the Klan faced persecution because of its commitment to keep America Protestant. Klan martyrdom was the pinnacle of persecution because those cases affirmed that Klansmen confronted death because of their commitment to the order. Through their deaths, two Klan martyrs, Fred Roberts and Thomas Abbott, emerged as symbols of the order. In the pages of The Night-Hawk, contributors uplifted Roberts and Abbott as manly martyrs for the sacred cause.

Fred Roberts, a Klansman from Corpus Christi, Texas, was “one of the foremost and best beloved citizens of Texas,” and he died for coming to the aid of a friend. Frank Robison, the “Roman Catholic sheriff of Nueces County” and purported enemy of Roberts “because of his activity in behalf of Klan principles,” murdered Roberts. According to the Night-Hawk, the sheriff had harassed an elderly friend of Roberts, G. E. Warren, and the police department would not offer any assistance nor protection for Warren. Roberts made it his duty to check on Warren at his store. On one fateful visit, Roberts entered into the store while the sheriff remained at “the front” and “paced back and forth.” “[W]hile consoling and comforting his friends [Warren and his wife],” Roberts was watched by the sheriff. According to the reports of “Roberts’[s] martyrdom,” he returned to his car to leave, and the sheriff shot him as he sat “unarmed and defenseless, one hand on the steering wheel and the other resting on the back of the seat.” The Night-Hawk bemoaned “his life was snuffed out by the one sworn to protect and shield him from harm.” Roberts became a martyr because he was “the exponent of all that is best in the highest type of Christian citizenship.” His name would “adorn the pages of history as a martyr to the cause of one hundred per cent Americanism.” In the print culture, his life and death embodied
the ideals of Klan: clean government, religious liberty, the protection of womanhood, free press, and free speech. Interestingly, his death did not directly relate to any of the ideals, but the newspaper molded the events to reflect his dedication to the order. He died “because he stood valiantly and unafraid for these great ideals.” His sacrifice reflected the life he had led as a “good man” loved by his friends and hated by his enemies. The Night-Hawk memorialized Roberts because he lived and died by Klan principles. The Texas Klan even built a memorial hospital in Roberts’s name. Under the firm control of Protestant trustees, the hospital would use its revenues to help “suffering Klansmen and their families.” The memorial hospital reflected Roberts’s generous spirit and established the importance of his martyrdom for the order.

The Night-Hawk venerated Thomas Abbott, who was killed during a Klan ceremonial parade, in three issues. The weekly proclaimed:

MOURN, Klansmen, a brother lies dead. The Cross, symbol of Christian sacrifice and hope, is stamped and broken in the mud of a little Pennsylvania township….Yes, Klansmen, mourn. Drape your altars in black. Honor the memory of a simple and humble American who laid down his life unafraid and unshrinking for the cause which is yours.

In August 25, 1923, Klansman Abbott participated in a large naturalization ceremony (an initiation service). According to the Night-Hawk, more than 25,000 thousand Klansmen participated in the event held in Carnegie, PA. It was a “peaceful gathering.” As Klansmen paraded home, “gun fire broke out” from a nearby Catholic church. An Irish undertaker, Patrick McDermott, “emptied the magazine of an automatic pistol into the ranks of the white clad Klansmen. Klansman Abbott fell, shot through the head.” For the Night-Hawk, Abbott’s martyrdom “was merely a typical instance of the intolerance of malign forces which would grind Americanism and Protestantism into the dust and make a mock of men who are striving to live and act cleanly.” Abbott died for a “noble cause,” participation in the order, and his death demonstrated to the Klan the reality of the persecution that members faced. The sacrifice of Roberts and Abbott should have “renewed” Klansmen with “energy for the right.” Those men should have been examples to engender Klan action. To show their commitment to the order and Abbott, possibly thousands attended the funeral of Abbott to pay their respects to the Klan exemplar.

The funeral was held in Atlasburg, PA, and a Pennsylvania Klansman documented the event for the weekly. The Night-Hawk noted that the account was “printed here so that
Klansmen may realize that their brother did not die for their cause in vain.” Abbott was “a faithful brother—who gave his life to the cause.” The Klan funeral attendees and martyr were “wonderful and courageous men,” who signified a “higher type of manhood.” Abbott was a hero. The Pennsylvania Klansman also observed how grave his “sad-eyed widow” was in her effort to control her tears. At the funeral, his widow, between sobs, stated, “Tommy...met his end bravely and will be rewarded. He always loved the Klan and honored its principles. He will receive his just reward in the great beyond.”

She recognized his devotion to the order and maintained that he would be rewarded in the afterlife because of his participation. In spite of their grief, the widow and her two children appreciated his sacrifice. The Night-Hawk established an educational fund for Abbott’s children. The weekly even redescribed Abbott’s murder to emphasize why he was a martyred:

Klansman Abbott, marching beneath the flag and the fiery cross at Carnegie was shot down by a cowardly assassin who lurked in the shadow of a Catholic church. He laid down his life willingly and unflinchingly for the cause of Protestant American Christianity—the cause for which the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan stands.

For Klansmen, Abbott died because he stood for an order that upheld American Protestantism. He faced his death with courage, which demonstrated manly virtue. He was a “true martyr to the cause, hopes, and beliefs of Protestant Christianity.” His death transpired, above all, because he was a Klansman. Klan martyrs were the fruition of Klan persecution, and in the Klan’s logic, those murders were the extension of the hatred that Klansmen faced because of their principles. Abbott and Roberts epitomized the ideals of the group, and thus, attacks on them were assaults directed at the collective goals of the organization. Their bodies were symbols and targets for Klan enemies, but their dead bodies connoted the path of an ideal Klansman.

Those martyrs served as rallying points for Klansmen. The Night-Hawk urged Klansmen to be “fortified by the example of Tom Abbott of Pennsylvania and Roberts of Texas, and the others who have died and suffered for our cause, go forth and work and live with renewed energy for the right.” The deaths also bolstered the Klan’s collective agenda. The dead bodies, emptied of selves, energized the cause of the Klan because martyrdom glorified its holy cause. Their sacrifices demonstrated the virility of the order whose men would willingly give their lives. Moreover, the Night-Hawk did not discuss those individuals to venerate their lives. Rather the paper used their examples to glorify Klan membership. Roberts and Abbott became
representative Klansmen, manly Protestant Americans, and the Night-Hawk crafted their stories to portray such. Their memories became Klannish. At death, the individual could no longer choose to wear his visor up in defiance or carelessness, be nominally religious, or act in such way to harm the organization. Death allowed only a static presentation of Klan ideals on men’s bodies. Those men became the ultimate Klansmen, real men, but only in death.

“God give us men, sun-crowned and strong, with their heads above the fog.”

In the poem, “God Give Us Men,” an anonymous author described the type man the Klan needed:

God Give Us Men! The Invisible Empire demands strong
Minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands…
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honor; men who will not lie;
Men who can stand before a demagogue and damn his treacherous flattering without winking!…
Men who serve not for selfish booty,
But real men, courageous, who do not flinch at duty;
Men of dependable character; men of sterling worth;
Then wrongs will be redressed, and right will rule the earth.²⁸¹

The Klan’s “man” was portrayed with clarity and rhyme in the poem as courageous, selfless, faithful, honorable, and dependable, and the order even beckoned to God to provide that man for ranks of its crusade. The God-given man would be patriotic and noble, and he would be easily discernable from the weak-kneed and jelly-bean man who neglected the Klan. In practicality, the Klan needed men to fill the membership rolls and become advocates of the order, but the order had a lofty goal of finding “REAL” men, who would not be indecisive, selfish, dishonorable, or soft. Those men would serve the valiant role of a Christian Knight, protector of Protestant America. His sons would be trained in the values of the order.

For the Imperial Klazik, Brown Harwood, the “great movement” had found some men of the caliber they required, and the “hearts and souls of [these] manly men thrilled with such great emotion for a righteous cause.”²⁸² Those men imbibed the chivalry, patriotism, and Protestantism of the order, and they became inebriated on Klan principles and could not help but join. Klancraft encouraged “thousands of big, manly men into…filling the pews of Protestant churches throughout America.”²⁸³ The Night-Hawk and Kourier documented those emulations of the masculine Jesus and faithful service to the order. The Klan newsmagazines also memorialized the valiant souls that died for the cause, who sacrificed in support of the fraternal
order. Men could not be good patriots, Protestants, or fathers without emulating a muscular Jesus. For Evans, virility enhanced everything it touched including dedication to nation and the practice of religious faith, and Klan enemies assaulted virility. The enemies of the Klan were stripping away the “rugged” nature of America and replacing it with soft, artistic understandings of culture. Jesus was even rendered impotent, and the Klan masculinized Him in order to rejuvenate the faithful. While other men wallowed in their shallow imitations of manliness, the order claimed that real men strived to save both America and Protestantism. God wanted men, and the Klan provided.

In the pages of the *Night-Hawk*, the Klan did not actually offer “real” men. Instead, the order idyllic exemplars of masculinity. From the Christian Knight for boys to the rugged Jesus for adult men to the rigid militaristic order to martyrs transformed into quintessential Klansmen, the Klan presented manly members with unreachable ideals. The adults created rituals that emphasized the virtue of Knights, but the rites were too complicated to interest teenage boys. Jesus was the bastion of masculinity, but there were glimpses that Klansmen were not emulating Him and had to be chided for their behaviors. The support of militarism to breed masculinity and efficiency degraded a central tenet that the order upheld, democracy. Martyrs were not celebrated as the individuals they were, but because their deaths allowed the *Night-Hawk* to emphasize manliness and exemplary behavior. Above all, the masculine model was circumscribed. Those members had their actions strictly defined. They had to be rugged yet gentle, sacrificing yet tough, and virtuous but militaristic. Virility was injected into faith and nation because the Klan sought a method to reclaim its hold over both.

The emphasis on manliness conveyed the fraternity’s anxiety about the role of white Protestant men in the American nation. The leadership feared that the “weak-kneed Protestant” might have had the upper hand, which placed patriotism, faith, and masculinity all in question. The Klan’s uplifting of real men reflected its growing concerns over an America that was beginning to seem more strange than familiar, and the order’s vision of gender, both masculinity and femininity, provided a window into that concern. Those real men strived to save their religion and their nation from impending peril. Most importantly, Klansmen did not want to become the men on the proverbial fence. That defense and decisiveness rendered male members as protectors of not only the nation but also the home and family. Masculinity was not all the
order sought to define. White womanhood was described in similarly stark terms, but Klanswomen also acted to identify themselves in regards to the order and larger culture.
CHAPTER FOUR

“The chastity of womanhood, the virtue of girlhood, and the sanctity of the home”:
Notions of White Womanhood and Marriage in the 1920s Klan

We women believe that the Klan is to America what a loyal wife and mother is to the home. Her work is in a sense invisible to the eyes of the world. Yet she is ever on the lookout and ready to meet this need and to care for that one. She is the spirit of protections, of love, of idealism, of discipline and of life itself in the home—Robbie Gill Comer (1925)\textsuperscript{284}

We believe that under God, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan is a militant body of American free women by whom these principles shall be maintained, our racial purity preserved, out homes and children protected, our happiness insured, and the prosperity of our community, our state and our nation guaranteed against usurpation, disloyalty, and selfish exploitation—The Imperial Night-Hawk (1924)\textsuperscript{285}

In Thomas Dixon’s \textit{The Clansman} (1905), the inequality of Reconstruction for Southern whites as well as African American enfranchisement caused the birth of the Ku Klux Klan. The pivotal plots of the novel focused upon the danger that African American men, now in positions of power, posed to vulnerable, white women. Dixon created many female characters, but two, Elsie, the plain and kind Northerner, and Marion, the “shy elusive beauty,” were essential to the action of the novel.\textsuperscript{286} While playing her banjo in a veteran’s hospital, Elsie encountered the Confederate hero, Ben Cameron. Moved by his mother’s desperation to save her son, Elsie secured a presidential pardon for the handsome Ben and promptly fell in love with the hero. However, her father disapproved of Ben’s Confederate background, and their romance was thwarted throughout Dixon’s tale with increasingly sappy prose. Dixon described her with “warm amber eyes” and “fair skin with its gorgeous rose-tints of the North paled.”\textsuperscript{287} The tale documented not only the Klan’s rise to prominence but also Elsie and Ben’s growing love for one another, her eventual embrace of Southern culture, her growing disdain for African Americans, and Ben’s interpretation of Reconstruction.

Marion, on the other hand, was Southern by birthright, and her beauty and gentle nature even enchanted Elsie’s cantankerous father. On her outings with her horse, “every boy lifted his hat as to passing royalty, and no one, old or young, could allow her to pass without admiration” because she “had developed into the full tropic splendor of Southern girlhood.”\textsuperscript{288} Blonde and fair, dainty, and graceful, Marion was the example of a Southern woman. She was the epitome of white womanhood, who metamorphized into the tragic symbol of Southern loss in
Reconstruction. When Gus, an African American, raped her, Dixon alluded to the loss of not only a white woman’s purity but also the loss of power suffered by white men. The rape demonstrated that white men were no longer able to protect the honor of their women in the face of those African American “brutes.” Because of their dedication to racial purity and her reputation, Marion and her mother reacted with horror to the rape and lamented the loss of innocence. They decided that suicide was a far better option than allowing anyone to find out about the terrible act. The mother and young daughter threw themselves off Lover’s Leap. Their broken bodies were discovered, and Ben and others recognized the brutal attack on Marion.

That suicidal act spurred vengeance from several white men, including Ben. They sought to avenge not only Marion’s demise but also to take back control of their region. They gathered together as a clan in white robes and helmets to protest the ruin of white womanhood and their imperiled South. During their first gathering, one member uttered, “Brethren, I hold in my hand the water of your river bearing the red stain of life of a Southern woman, a priceless sacrifice on the altar of outraged civilization.”

The loss of Marion’s virginity and her death haunted Ben, and he was convinced that the Klan had to combat “dangerous” African Americans. Dixon portrayed those pivotal women as exemplars of virtue, loyalty, and love. Both Elsie and Marion were representative of white womanhood at its finest, and they both impacted Ben in his journey to save the South. Both were also vulnerable and in need of constant protection. The defense of white womanhood was a banner for the first Ku Klux Klan in the 1860s and 1870s, and the concern over the fragility of white women resonated in the 1920s Klan. However, the characterization of women changed with the second revival.

In Harold the Klansman (1923), a novel about the 1920s Klan, Ruth Babcock was not only the central female character but also the heroine. Ruth had a career as a stenographer, and she worked very hard to support her aunt and her father, who was injured in a car accident. In the early pages of the novel, the author George Alfred Brown traced her lineage through her mother’s family, who was of Confederate stock. Like Dixon’s female characters, Brown’s Ruth was also attached to that particular region, which informed her decisions through out the novel. In addition to her career and domestic duties, Ruth was also the love interest of Harold King, an architect and the Klansman for whom the novel was entitled. The novel was an elucidation of Klan principles through fiction to provide “entertainment” as well as “a greater appreciation of the Invisible Empire.” To accomplish his goal, Brown used discussions between Ruth and
Harold as well as Ruth and other characters to flesh out Klan principles. Ruth, “a girl with a kindly heart and plenty of grit,” eventually fell in love with Harold and embraced the order. She, however, faced much struggle in her path to love for the Klansman. Her journey was long and tumultuous as she slowly became aware that both Harold and the Klan were the man and the order she supported. She was a woman of honor and modesty, and Harold’s admiration for the heroine grew page by page. He, of course, was the exemplar of manhood: hard working, kind, courageous, and dedicated to his order. The plot also followed the opposition he encountered as a Klansman from the larger business establishment, which was under the control of Roman Catholics and Jews.

Interestingly, Ruth proved to be a more developed character than either Elsie or Marion because she had more agency. In a pivotal moment in the novel, she terrorized an African American janitor at the bank, where she worked, by donning a robe and a mask. Rastus, the janitor, was significantly behind in his tithing for his church, and Ruth used her costume to terrify him back into financial support. Moreover, his pastor was supportive of the Klan, and Ruth believed Rastus needed a little encouragement to back the white-robed order. Unfortunately, her bold action brought negative press upon the Klan, who the author reminded never committed such dastardly acts. The heroine eventually confessed her actions in an affidavit to a local newspaper to guarantee that the press did not malign the order. That marked Ruth’s transformation into a proponent of the Klan. When her other suitor, Chester Golter, who was also the nephew of Ruth’s prosperous boss Stover, impugned the Klan, she quickly defended the order:

I believe in the principles of the Klan; I believe that a good class of men belong; that they are doing many charitable acts, and in many places have created more respect for law and order. If I were a man I would join this order of real red-blooded Americans.

Her support of the order displeased Golter, who opposed the fraternity. More importantly, her desire to join the order, if she were a man, revealed her newfound commitment to the fraternity. That commitment emerged again when her friendship with Harold imperiled her job. Stover demanded that Ruth end the friendship, but she refused. Despite Stover’s threats and later cajoling, Ruth quit. In that moment, Brown described her as “a type of noble womanhood,” who was determined, daring, and loyal. The heroine actions enchanted the author and hopefully his readers.
However, Ruth was not a complete agent in her literary destiny. Harold saved the floundering heroine by finding her a new job and uncovering that Stover stole her father’s fortunes. The novel ended with Stover’s arrest and Ruth’s marriage to Harold in a nearby town. On the way back to their hometown of Wilford Springs, they spotted a fiery cross in the landscape, which signaled the sanctity of their marriage. Unlike Elsie or Marion, Ruth surfaced as a strong female character but still required protection from a Klansman. She worked to take care of her family, upheld her principles, and found comfort in marriage to her protector. Harold, of course, rescued her and restored her father’s dignity (and wealth), but Ruth proved responsible for her actions. The plucky heroine might have required defense, but she also had agency that Dixon refused to provide to Elsie and Marion. Ruth signified the paradox for the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (W.K.K.K.): those women claimed their agency but also encountered constraints from their male brethren about the roles of women in the American life.

In the 1920s Klan, defense of white womanhood was a slogan for members. Yet with the advent of the W.K.K.K. in 1923 (Figures 9 and 10), women were also crusaders for the order as well as supporters of their husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons who were members. For Klansmen, Klanswomen were to be virtuous white women in need of defense and protection, but those women strived to define their service in their own terms. They used their roles as wives and mothers to articulate their entrance into the order, while simultaneously the men sought to circumscribe their roles. Motherhood was a primary feature of a woman’s role along with undying support of Klansmen. Yet Klanswomen had their own notions about the role of women within the order and in larger American society. They called for political equality for white women. Those women echoed the Klan’s concerns over the sanctity of the home and the virtue of white womanhood.

To articulate their positions on gender, they relied upon Protestantism and nationalism. Both Klansmen and Klanswomen uplifted the home as a sacred altar that stoked the fires of religiosity and patriotism. The focus on the home led to the Klan preoccupation with women and marriage. The Klan supported lecturers, who were supposed ex-nuns, ex-priests, and ex-Catholics, to demonstrate the pressing danger of Catholics toward young women in both the confessional and the convent. Moreover, the 1920s Klan perceived a Catholic threat to the bonds of Protestant marriage because of reinterpretations of marriage by the hierarchy. That threat
signaled that Catholics, once again, were dangerous to nationhood and faith, except the danger was most pressing for white women.

“American women are the uncrowned partners of American men.”

For W. C. Wright, a Klan minister, the first Klan came into existence because of the “[N]egro domination” of the South. His narrative echoed Dixon’s portrayal of Reconstruction, and he argued the “Klan saved the South from [N]egro domination, protected the chastity of Southern womanhood from black brutes in human form.” The 1920s Klan was partially a memorial to celebrate the achievements of those original Klansmen, especially their desire to defend chaste white women. The second revival of the order sought “to promote good morals,” which required the protection of “the chastity of womanhood, the virtue of girlhood, and the sanctity of the home.” Morality was bound to womanhood. The defense of white women was essential for the order as well as for its predecessor, and 1920s Klansmen lamented the degradation of womanhood that they found in popular culture and society at large. The 1920s, after all, was the era of the flapper as well as the establishment of women’s right to vote (1919), which provided women with political power in the form of the ballot.

Historian Nancy MacLean noted that Athens Klansmen wrung their hands over the behavior of young women, their treatment by the men in their lives, and their need of protection because of female fragility and vulnerability. MacLean pointed to the Athens press as the cause of such anxiety because the newspapers documented the prevalence of unwed mothers, deserted wives, the abuse of women by husbands and fathers, and most disturbingly defiant young women who did not heed the warnings of their mothers or fathers. Those women were in dire need of protection not only from societal ills but also from themselves. Klan weeklies and speeches asserted the proper characteristics and roles for women to right those documented ills. In the Kluxer, a Klan weekly from Dayton, Ohio, C.B. reflected upon the essential nature of women, who possessed the “most wonderful kind of heart created.” For C.B., humans first had to acknowledge that our hearts were “inclined to do evil,” but by following the path of Jesus, one could have a change of heart. Once members realized that truth, then they could not disagree that the hearts of women might possibly be divine. Women were the more spiritual yet delicate creatures. C.B. continued:

Do you realize women, that on our every side, to the North of us, to the South, to the East and to the West of us are precious young ladies with hearts as pure as gold, and with a conscience as tender as a baby’s, which are about to blossom forth with all the splendor,
and the beauty of the purest lily growing. O God, how can I say it—it grieves my heart to know it is so, but here in America, a nation of Christian people, these precious young lives are taken in beauty and innocence with no regard for their feminine timidity, with no respect for their sense of shame, and in a cruel and pitiless manner, their lives are wrecked forever.297

Women had hearts “as pure as gold,” infantile consciences, and beauty. For C. B., the fairer sex was essentially childlike and in need of defense. Men deserted, abused, and maligned those pure and vulnerable women, so women lacked the care they rightly deserved. C.B. was astounded that in “Christian America,” the cruel treatment of women existed with no attention to their “timidity” and gentle qualities. Heartbreak, cruelty, prostitution, and suffering “wrecked” young women. C. B. was increasingly disturbed by “white-slave traffic,” which created despairing and piteous women. Only “white-robed figures” could protect the white woman with “girlish figure and innocent eyes.” The Klan was the only organization that could remedy the poor state of womanhood. The author purported that the “God-inspired army” of the Klan could guarantee that the ‘Heart of Woman’ would never suffer again. C.B. urged the men of the Klan to be a part of that campaign, and he also encouraged the W.K.K.K and ordinary young women to take a stand against such travesty. The author pleaded with America women to take up the “banner of purity” to assure “fair young creatures have their liberty too.” Those women should offer prayers to ensure the safety of all women in the supposed Christian nation. C.B. proclaimed, “[L]et us push forward and clean things up, for the protection of pure womanhood in America.”298 That protection was crucial not just because women were delicate creatures in peril but also because women were a valuable resource for nation and order. 100% American women were needed just as much as 100% American men. C.B., however, painted a disturbing portrait of fragile, timid women confronted by danger lurking around every corner. For that author, women lacked the ability to provide protection for themselves. The men of the Klan had to supply much-needed defense for white women. In spite of women’s “inherent” fragility, the order lauded women, who embraced the traditional roles of wives and mothers and maintained the home.

In “A Tribute and Challenge to American Women,” the Grand Dragon of Arkansas observed “the word ‘Woman’ always arrests the attention of every true man at once.”299 That was not because of the sexual attraction of women. Rather the Klan leader professed that no man could forget his loving and wonderful mother. Mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters were all
noble beings, who supported and fostered their men. Yet their nobility was often ignored, and women were treated as lesser than men. For the Grand Dragon, women, throughout history, faced prejudice, ignorance, and superstition until Jesus “discovered” woman and started “her on the upward road.” The presence of Christ undercut that ignorance. Christianity served to advance women in society, and despite the Catholic attachment to Mary, the author argued that the “mother of our Lord” should be reevaluated. That particular mother had much to offer, even if America sought to expunge Catholic ideology. Jesus called upon women in his ministry and demonstrated that women had the ability to impact their individual societies and the larger world.

The Grand Dragon continued that the American woman shaped the “destiny of America” as much as the American man because she reared children. Those women were more than “help-meets”; they were “help-mates” who helped build homes, churches, and schools. American women were the “uncrowned partners of American men.” For the Klan leader, they could no longer be limited to the domestic sphere. More importantly with the right to vote, those women could support the Klan ideals and principles through the ballot box. That right was a mandate that provided women with a voice in the nation’s development. The Grand Dragon remarked that his “tribute” to women came from his “tenderest recollections of a mother’s solicitude” and the “constant inspiration of a wife’s undying affections.” Women fostered him, and he believed that the Klan should encourage women to participate in the political process to repay their kindness. Additionally, he challenged women to stand beside “one hundred percent American men in their stride to restate, and reinstate, great American principles in this, our God-given Country.”

Women gained ability to reclaim the American nation with their male counterparts. Men needed to protect women, but their female counterparts were to be partners in the Klan endeavor to bolster Christian America.

“[T]he sacred remembrance of their glorious mothers”

Despite the equality offered by the Grand Dragon of Arkansas, women were more often glorified as mothers than political participants. In a letter to the Exalted Cyclops and Kligrapps in Indiana, an official reminded fellow officers of Mother’s Day, “the sacred remembrance of their glorious mothers.” The Director of the Department of Propagation wrote, “When God opened the gates of heaven and gave to all the world MOTHER, it was his greatest blessing to all humanity outside of Jesus Christ.” Mothers were considered a blessing, who were only surpassed by Jesus, which demonstrated the idealization of motherhood by Klansmen. Motherhood equaled
love and support. More importantly, motherhood was God’s gift to humanity. The Director continued:

She knows how to kiss away the sorrow of the heart, her hand knows just when and how to stroke a weary brow. Her sweet, soft voice gives the loving word of counsel and sympathy needed but—oh, how we miss her when she is gone. She has waded into the jaws of her death for her offspring and is willing to lay down her life again if need be that their lives might be spared. She has spent the long weary night in taking care of the babes, watching over them during their growing school days, planning the meals, mending the clothes, bandaging the hurts, following them closely up to young manhood and young womanhood, and then she gives them to some one else to have and to hold. THAT’S A MOTHER’S [sic] LOVE.  

For the director, mothers were counselors, sympathizers, and supporters, who guided their children from “babes” to adulthood. They gave up sleep and time for their children. Possibly those women would hand over their own lives for the lives of their children. A mother’s love was defined by self-sacrifice because women raised their children only to lose them to the adult child’s husband or wife. The Director encouraged Klansmen to reflect on their own mothers and to write her a note, which echoed the love that they had received. Contemplating a mother’s example “shall do much to strengthen the morale of our Klaverns.”

The *Christian Century* noted that New Jersey Klansmen celebrated Mother’s Day in auditorium in Ocean Grove, which the journal described as a “bed sheet revival.” That revival began with a kleagle, who gave a speech on the “sacredness of motherhood, the services of the [K]lan in the protection of motherhood, and the despicableness of the persons—presumably not white, Protestant gentiles—who do not love their mothers as they should.” The main speaker, however, was a “lady kleagle,” who was excited to speak to young women in the audience. Those young women were the “mothers of tomorrow.” She also reiterated the Indiana Director’s vision of motherhood by asserting that mothers were the second gift from God (because Jesus was the first). The lady kleagle even suggested that she would rather “hold the office of motherhood than be a President of the United States of America.” That was because mothers were the primary influence of children. All her positive attributes, at least the kleagle claimed, came from her very own mother. Motherhood was coded as a more vital role than the highest political office in America. Her commentary also alluded to the unlikely fact that she would have been elected to that office anyway. Her political autonomy was limited to her right to vote and her ability to rear her children. Moreover, she narrated how her own upbringing
influenced her work with the Klan, and she thanked her mother. The kleagle’s mother, by inculcating Klan principles in the life of her daughter, served to further the order. The Klan idealized motherhood and uplifted the primary role of women as mothers for that very reason. Women had the power and influence to raise their children by Klan principles. They taught their boys and girls a love for religion, nation, and the order. Such was to be the mother’s primary and most imperative role.

The Kluxer warned that a mother’s influence could also prove dangerous to her children. A young man with “the Ku Klux germ,” which grew into a burgeoning sense of Americanism, almost neglected the Klan because his mother did not want him to join the fraternity. The young man was “manly” and “a native born Protestant,” who admired the order and its “wonderful” reputation. Yet he feared that he was a “slacker” for both his country and Christianity. His mother, however, was against his membership. The Kluxer reported that she was a nervous creature, and “[w]hen that young man told his mother that he intended to join an organization and that he would be away at meetings at night, it nearly killed her.” His mother did not deny the efficacy of the order. Instead, she wanted to hold onto her son a bit longer. She, unlike the ideal mother, was not prepared to sacrifice herself for the betterment of her son. The young man joined the order against her wishes. Like “the heroes of fiction…are willing to sacrifice their loved ones for the common good,” that young man decided to fight for Americanism. Through his noble example, his mother forgave him, and she eventually embraced the order that her son loved. Her son’s commitment changed the heart and mind of his mother. Mothers, then, wielded much influence, good or ill, over the lives of their children.

In “American Mother’s Prayer,” published in the Night-Hawk, Mrs. P.B. Whaley emphasized her crucial role as a mother to her son. She instilled a love of nation, religious faith, bravery, and manhood. She prayed to God to make sure that her son would become a Klansman because that was her utmost duty as an “American mother.” Mrs. Whaley, unlike the mother from the Kluxer, understood what was expected of her in the maternal role. Whaley was the example, and the unnamed mother was the exception. The Klan portrayed the exemplar mother, who was motivated by self-sacrifice in the face of her children’s needs. Mrs. Whaley’s submitted poem emphasized how women desired to guarantee that their children, especially the sons, turned into “real” American citizens. The wishes of the unnamed mother, the most pressing of which was to keep her son at home, were cast aside in the face of her child’s needs and her
responsibility to raise Protestant citizens. Mothers were supposed to be supporters, but they were not sustained in their own wishes and desires. The Klan’s vision of motherhood revolved around the female figure, who sustained the order and fostered her children regardless of her own interests. She was deserving of Mother’s Day praise while the order cautioned less devoted mothers about their behaviors. In that vision, the burden the Klan placed on motherhood was an unattainable goal. Relationships with one’s children defined the archetype of maternity, but the model woman had her own desires and wants relegated behind her maternal duties. Such relegation occurred because of the mother’s relationship with the home. Mothers helped create the home, the foundation of faith and nation. Mothers, much like masculine Knights, inhabited a tightly inscribed role.

“God’s greatest earthly institution…the anteroom to the Mansion in the Skies”

Regard for the home was represented in domestic klannishness, a term employed by the first Imperial Wizard, William J. Simmons. Domestic klannishness was one of the “four-fold” applications of the order, and the main goal of that form was the protection of the “sanctity of the home” by Klansmen. The Klan warned members of the danger posed to the sacred institution, which served as the building block for both religious faith and nation. For Imperial Wizard, H.W. Evans, the fate of the national government rested in the “quality” of the American home. The Imperial Wizard argued that the home was “the highest and soundest expression of both personal and public welfare.” The strength of her homes supported America, and the failed countries were those “whose citizenship worshipped not at the fireside.” The nation, for Evans, was like a home that previous Americans built and current citizens protected. A citizen’s personal home directly impacted the national home. The families that resided within those homes were equally as important. The love of individuals for their homes and families should have produced love of nation. Familial love transformed into national love. According to Evans, the defense of the home and family life was a necessity because the home was the arena where future citizens learned patriotism.

A Texan judge, Felix D. Robertson, outlined the duties of citizenship in a public speech, reprinted in the Night-Hawk. He saw the home as pivotal to the formation of better citizens. Robertson argued that America should actively put God in history and trace the presence of God through momentous events from Mount Sinai to Civil War. The way to guarantee recognition of God’s presence in American history was to emphasize the matters in the “American home.”
Robertson called the home “God’s greatest earthly institution…the anteroom to the Mansion in the Skies.” The home represented the path to salvation for individuals and the nation. Robertson suggested each home should contain an “old style Family Altar that sacred place around which every American family ought to meet in humble supplication to the God of their Fathers twice each day.” The family altar served as a place of worship that would produce “that high and noble type of men who built [sic] our Government on its solid foundation of reverential faith.” The physical altar should contain the “starry banner” and the Bible, which were symbols for human liberty and God’s promise respectively. The altar functioned as a material artifact to show the family’s dedication to the Christian nation. Interestingly, Robertson focused primarily on the rearing of sons to become patriots. But he ignored the daughters as potential citizens despite the fact that the mother was responsible for both education and maintaining the altar. The critical feature for the betterment of the nation for Robertson was the family and the home, yet he neglected women in his plan to restore national consciousness of religion. To foster a religious and patriotic environment in the home would lead to better citizens and the restoration of a “Godly land.”

The Godly land, however, included female citizens, who wanted to do their part for the nation and their families. Women hoped to participate in the Klan’s restoration, and the women’s order allowed them to become active participants. In their creed, the Women of the Klan affirmed the American home as the “foundation upon which rests secure the American Republic, the future of its institutions, and the liberty of its citizens.” The home, the domestic space over which women had such power, was essential for citizenship, and the W.K.K.K did not take that role lightly. They, unlike Robertson, recognized the power of women to foster the order’s vision. They envisioned themselves as soldiers for the cause much as Klansmen were, and they articulated their position in both religious and patriotic terms.

“We believe in the mission of emancipated womanhood.”

In 1923, the Klan established the Women of the Ku Klux Klan as an order. The national officers adopted a creed similar to the men’s order, but it contained key differences. Both the men’s and women’s creeds emphasized Christianity, the separation of church and state, public schools, racial purity, freedom of speech, freedom for the press, freedom of worship, the Constitution, and the protest of foreign influence in American government. The women’s creed also emphasized political and social equality for men and women as well as a call for
“emancipated womanhood freed from the shackles of old-world traditions and standing unafraid in the full effulgence of equality and enlightenment.” Not surprisingly, the Klan did not focus upon rights for women but did appreciate the potential power of white women as voters. The W.K.K.K stressed that both men and women together built and could restore the nation. Those women advocated their role in protecting and fostering national culture, and they strived to be active participants. Like their male counterparts, they focused upon benevolence as well. Klanswomen in Alabama founded a Protestant orphanage, named KLANHAVEN. The orphanage connected children with Christian families. The founder was an exemplar Klanswoman, known for her religious faith as well as her mothering skills. The orphanage was just one example of the power of Klanswomen and their organizing ability. More importantly, that benevolent action signaled that the W.K.K.K. claimed leadership ability from the members’ power to nurture.

The W.K.K.K was “organized by women for women” with the aid from the Knights of the Klan. Previously, women could only help the men rather than having their own order. The W.K.K.K was headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas under the command of Lula A. Markwell, the Imperial Commander, and Robbie Gill, the Imperial Kligrapp. (Robbie Gill eventually became the Imperial Commander after Markwell.) The W.K.K.K was an order of:

[w]hite, Gentile, Protestant native-born women of America, imbued with the high ideals of patriotism and love of home, school and country, [who] recognize in the new order the agency wherewith they may make secure the emancipation for which they have been struggling from the beginning of time, and which the last few years have actually began to realize.

Klanswomen imagined their order not only as a mechanism to fight for their country but also as a vehicle for women’s rights. In Kathleen Blee’s Women of the Klan, she provided a much-need monograph on the role of women in the W.K.K.K as well as how the men’s order envisaged the women’s auxiliary. Blee examined the tension between the men’s and women’s orders as well as how the Klan understood the home and women differently than the W.K.K.K. She wrote, “[T]he W.K.K.K dissented from the idealized view of home and family that was such a powerful symbol in the men’s Klan. Instead, Klanswomen described the home as a place of labor for women.” She found that the W.K.K.K called for political equality as well as social equality. Yet she downplayed the religious emphasis of that order. Blee focused upon their drive for women’s right to vote and defense of said right while ignoring the resonance between the men’s...
and women’s orders on the place of Protestantism in women’s equality. Rather than rehearse the support of women’s suffrage, I choose to explore how the W.K.K.K and their commander, Robbie Gill (Comer), understood the role of religion in women’s equality. Blee wrote that the W.K.K.K “appropriated the Christian emphasis of the Klan and used it to support an agenda of women’s rights.” Rather than examining the purported Protestantism of the women’s order, Blee, unfortunately, dismissed the faith as appropriation. The W.K.K.K imbibed in the religious faith of the men’s order. Protestantism and nation defined the women of the Klan as much as it did the men.

“God gave him woman to be his [Adam’s] comrade and counselor.”

In “American Woman” (1924), Robbie Gill explored the relation of her order to the Klan and reflected upon the place of women in America. That speech, given at the Second Imperial Klonvocation in Kansas City, Missouri, proved to be very popular, and it was reprinted several times in the Klan press. Gill began her speech admitting her hesitancy of speaking before Klansmen about the power of a woman. She admitted that the men might have already realized their “inability” to function “regardless of her [a woman’s] whims and annoying ways.” The Imperial Commander showed deference to the men in her audience, but she continued with her theme of female power. She traced the ability of women back to the Garden of Eden. God provided Adam with Eve as “his comrade and counselor,” and Adam was her “lord and husband.” Eve was the partner of Adam, but he was the head of household. Gill, however, centered upon Adam’s name for the “first” woman. Gill observed:

[G]entlemen, that name he gave his wife on the morning of their nuptials is worth all the lectures on women ever written since. Adam…called her Eve, which in our language is Life….Eve was intended to be not only the mere life of humanity, in its literal import, but the life and spirit of all true and genuine civilization.

God’s place, then, for Eve was represented in women, who were the lifeblood of society. Rather than emphasize men’s control over women, Gill explained how women were essential for both men and the larger culture. Interestingly, she ignored Eve’s participation in the exodus from Eden and instead relied upon the significance of her name. For the leader of W.K.K.K., such signaled that God never intended for women to be slaves to men. Women should have been equal participants in society, which she purported was the divine intention. That was not the case, and women had been treated poorly throughout history. For Gill, women had achieved their
full freedom under the influence of Protestant Christianity. She continued that women were “better educated, more refined and more honored in Protestant countries than anywhere else—in Protestant countries, under free governments which are the fruits of Protestantism.” Gill lauded America, a (Protestant) Christian nation, as the country that most supported and recognized the rights of women.

Even the flag symbolized the national commitment to women. The red stripes signified the “manly blood” spilled for “women’s protection.” The white stripes represented both the purity of men and women as well as “bears silent testimony” of the men, who would protect the “honor and chastity of our home-builders—our women.” Finally, the field of blue indicated both “loyalty and royalty,” which included loyalty to country and home as well as Gill’s assessment that women in American were like royalty. American women were “queens” that toiled (spades), disciplined husbands and children (clubs), and basked in their wealth (diamonds), but more importantly, all of these women were queens of hearts who loved.323 Their love fostered their husbands and children. Such love encouraged women to support their men because women’s power rested in men’s dependence upon them. Eve might have been Adam’s helpmeet, but she had the ability to persuade him because of her support. Gill suggested that women yielded power over their husbands, and perhaps, she reminded Klansmen of their dependence and need for their female counterparts. The Imperial Commander also acknowledged that men had provided women with an honored position as well as the ability to vote. That was a crucial step in the right direction. Gill assured her listeners that she would not continue to bore them with the virtues of women, and she congratulated her audience on their commitment to suffrage for women. Gill’s apology only rang partially true because she attempted to dismantle stereotypes that her audience, primarily men, had about their female companions. Her compliments to her audience masked her intent. Gill wanted to prove to the Klan that women would took suffrage seriously and that women actually had stronger political convictions than men.

Those convictions emerged from the life stories of individual women, who experienced the detriment of alcohol, unlawfulness, and gambling because they had husbands who were drinkers, gamblers, or supporters of some other vice. Their families were at stake, and the power of the ballot gave women the voice to protect their families. The underlying message was that those women were victims to the men in their lives. With the ballot, women had the power to correct societal ills to make their own lives better, which meant they would not be subjected to
the rule of detrimental husbands. Gill’s message was that those women would be involved in the political process, but what were the men doing? She affirmed that the W.K.K.K supported the Klan’s program of Americanism and Protestantism, and she stated, “We believe with gripping conviction that a rediscovery of Jesus Christ…will be the only thing that will save our nation in these days of unrest and disturbance.”

She, then, turned her attention to the men in her audience to point out that her membership had pressing questions about the men’s order. She wanted direct answers on the objectives of the men’s order, so that both Klans together could demonstrate what they have accomplished for faith and nation. Interestingly, Gill compared the Klan to a “loyal wife” and mother, and she suggested that the Klan’s relationship to the nation was similar to the wife’s relation to the home. The maternal endeavor was not always visible yet the mother handled the needs of the home. The Klan fulfilled the maternal role for the Invisible Empire. Yet she wondered whether the Klan was living up to the goals that the order cherished. Gill wanted objectives for action. She questioned, “Are we going to be Christlike in our relationships with all men, showing to the world just why Protestant Christianity is better for it than any other religions? Or, are we going to reveal the spirit of bitter intolerance in condemning the intolerance of others?”

Gill interrogated the religious ethic of the Klan, and she affirmed the need to be “Christlike,” which she believed matched the true religious spirit of the Klan. Gill’s pointed questions revealed her frustration with the actions of the Klan, but she still deferred to the men’s authority by suggesting that Klansmen needed to provide a strong direction for both orders. In her speech, women, like Eve, were still helpmeets. She used her convictions to question their authority, but those did not give her the ability to rule the men’s order. The women wanted to put their God-given power behind the order, but they needed instructions to follow. Again, Gill emphasized the role of women to support. She asserted:

We women of America love you men of America. We believe in the things that are high and good and holy. Our homes will be kept as sanctuaries for you….We will mother your children, share your sorrows, multiply your joys and assist you to prosper in the way of this world’s good. In return, we expect you to recognize our power for good over your lives, and in the nation. We expect you to be men of no ulterior motive, of no double-dealing, of no base conduct….We pledge our power of motherhood to America. We can instill the spirit of our forefathers into the lives of our boys and girls. Our knees can be the altars of patriotism to them, and our homes the shrines of idealism where liberty can be fostered. The old saying that ‘the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world’ is true.
Klanswomen offered their support, but Gill again hinted at the power of women over men. She also affirmed the power of those women to change the world. Such God-given power gave Klanswomen the ability to stand beside Klansmen in the fight for the nation. Moreover, Gill relied upon Klan-sanctioned roles for women as mothers and wives to influence the development of the home and the nation. But her message was more radical because she alluded to the power that women held over their children as transformative power over the larger world. White women were crucial for the implementation of the Klan’s vision of Protestant America, and Gill’s speech made such clear.

The *Kourier* continued to praise women for their attachment to the home. As in Gill’s speech, Klanswomen were important as homebuilders and supporters for the Klan. The home, again, served as a foundation for nation, and a woman, “in all her purity and virtue,” made the home a sacred space. The monthly reflected not only on the connection of femininity with home but also the ability of women to engage the political realm. The *Kourier* noted the amount of control women possessed over the domestic sphere might be applied to government and politics. The monthly argued that women had historically played an indirect role in government, motivating husbands and sons, until the passage of the nineteenth amendment. “Woman gave to the world her greatest leaders, and is it at all out of place that she should now come to the front, proving her sex is fully capable of performing arduous and important duties.” Since the fairer sex gained the responsibility to pull their “share” in government, the *Kourier* affirmed the practicality of women in an age of radicalism. The hope was that white women would bring their abilities from the domestic sphere into the political realm. The “home builder” could become a nation builder. Not everyone was supportive of the new political power of women, and the *Kourier* reported that some denounced the ability of women to act in the political process.

In 1926, Robbie Gill Comer (who married) deflected criticism of her women who were accused of not employing the ballot as many deemed they should. Kathleen Blee demonstrated that Gill Comer had to explain the poor showing of women in electoral politics as well as to defend her own order. At the Third Biennial Klònokation, Gill Comer gave a speech that provided explanation. Gill Comer focused upon the mistreatment of women throughout history and argued that women faced a “handicap.” In her narration of women’s history, women started out as slaves to men, and later, wives became “toys” to men, playthings who were at the whim of
their male counterparts. As women began to assert their influence in the lives of their husbands and children, “Christian Europe,” with the emphasis on chivalry, allowed for women to advance forward. Chivalry placed women on “a pedestal of reverence and respect,” which Gill Comer recognized as “unsatisfactory” for her female contemporaries. She remarked, “[I]n the vow of Knighthood, to defend beauty, virtue, and the gentleness of womanhood, was the practical beginning of that respect in which, in Christian lands, woman is held today.” Men still lorded over women, but there was slow advancing progress. A woman “was still the keeper of the fires, and her voice was heard only beside the fires.”

Women continued to be the “keeper of the fires,” and the true destiny of those keepers occurred in America. For Gill Comer, America was not just an advanced civilization but a country that advanced because of Christianity. The Imperial Commander narrated American history from the Mayflower to the Puritans to Salem to the founding of the Republic by emphasizing the role of women in the nation’s development. Pilgrim mothers tended the fires of their husbands and endured unbearable hardships because they sought to found the nation beside their men. Gill Comer observed that men ruled women in beginnings of the American nation and neglected women’s education because they did not realize that women could be their equals with education. Such was the crux of the issue for the leader of the W.K.K.K: how could men expect women to use the ballot and learn the political system when they had been systematically held back for years? She questioned, “If we go slowly, in our share of the Nation’s management, stumbling sometimes because the path is strange, can we be blamed, whose feet were seldom set and guided in that path?”

The denial of equal rights for women had caused adversity, which meant women had yet to embrace their political duty. Confined to domestic spaces and denied access to education, women faced insurmountable odds that lead to their ignorance of politics. Gill Comer was not, however, overly negative about the potential of women. By using the examples of pioneer women and heroines in American history, she suggested women could overcome the prejudices they faced and embrace the power of the political process. Gill Comer pointed to Ann Hutchinson, “[a] woman of ambition and some brains,” and Mary Dyer, a martyr for religious freedom, as two influential women who though persecuted in their eras laid the foundation for religious freedom. Moreover, Gill Comer stressed that men and women founded the nation together, so that while men used “swords of liberty,” their female
counterparts continued to tend the fires. Women fostered the men in their heroism and bravery.

Gill Comer proclaimed:

Then—and since—woman taught her sons, encouraged her husband, held up the hands of her fathers, in the case of justice and liberty. What to her are the risks and suffering necessary to save men? She forever endured risk and suffering that men may be born. What fear does women know when her loved ones are in danger—woman—whose love has neither measurable length, nor breadth, nor height nor depth. Hers for countless centuries has been the tending of the fires. Hers forever shall be the duty that the fires she has helped to build shall not go out.332

Women tended the flames of liberty, and for Gill Comer, women, in America at least, had reached a stage of equality. Her rhetoric echoed to the Klan’s rendering of American history, in that, she selectively uplifted examples of patriotic women as an example for her Klanswomen. (For the Klan’s selective use of American history, see Chapter Two.) She used national history as evidence of the impact of women on American culture. Gill Comer continued to rely upon the language of women as helpmeets to the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

At her urging, Klanswomen were to “go about our business of helping Klansmen feed and keep bright the fires of true Americanism” rather than take charge of the push for liberty.333 The professed equality for women did not match Gill Comer’s assertion of women’s support of men. Despite the calls for equality, the K.K.K. and the W.K.K.K imagined women as essential to the domestic sphere while men remained the active participants in the public restoration of Christian civilization. Women taught sons and encouraged husbands in the pursuit of liberty. Where did their daughters fit into that paradigm? Were they taught to tend the fires like their mothers? In her discussion of a mother’s power, girls were absent. What about the “virtue of girlhood”? Gill Comer talked directly to Klanswomen as mothers, so that Klan daughters might have been viewed as future mothers. A “lady kleagle” from New Jersey was more direct. In her speech, she noted that the “girls of today are the mothers of tomorrow.”334 Girls were important as potential mothers, who would foster and support their husbands and sons, but their possibilities in other initiatives for the order fell short. In spite of her rhetoric of equality, Gill Comer affirmed the Klan’s conflation of womanhood and motherhood, and she ignored the roles of girls as patriot citizens by centering only upon sons. Klansmen and Klanswomen were not quite prepared for an active female citizenship, and Gill Comer stressed women would remain primarily the supporters of their male counterparts.
In 1928, Gill Comer addressed the Fourth Imperial Klonvokation in Chicago, Illinois, and her speech once again centered upon the American woman, her progress, promise, and problems. For Gill Comer, women had advanced. New professions as well as social and economic equalities were now open to American women, and she believed that women would not return to their previous, lowly positions. Gill Comer critiqued “women extremists,” who alleged that women had no physical limitations. For the Imperial Commander, women were still essentially “child bearers,” who were “busy through a part of their lives with the reproduction of humanity unless the race is to die and the earth become as unpopulated as before the Almighty breathed into the nostrils of the first man the breath of life.”

Even though she emphasized childrearing as the main role for women, she questioned the supposed superiority of men by suggesting again that historically women faced more limitations than men. Gill Comer interrogated the assumption that women needed men’s governance. The burden of such history rested squarely on the shoulders of women, who were not able to rid themselves of those bonds. That burden plagued Gill Comer, and she admitted it “rests upon my soul.” Due to the critical nature of her speech, she claimed hesitancy for fear of being misunderstood by both women and men. Her speech trod over familiar themes of previous speeches and leaned toward the theological. Women had to free themselves from “our progenitor’s mental servitude” to recognize their true potential. Moreover, she stressed that God established the ability of both sexes:

> Woman is half the created kingdom of mankind, which is of the Kingdom of God. He made mankind in His own image—male and female created He them. That they should be fruitful and multiply was the Divine command, and each sex has its share in obeying that mandate, with women the mothers of the race and theirs the duty to exercise care and watchfulness over the sons and daughters of the race during the years when character is formed…

By divine mandate, women were to reproduce the race. Motherhood, again, emerged as the most important role for women because it involved the molding of children into citizens. Gill Comer admitted that not all women would be mothers, but all women had instincts associated with the divinely ordained role. Womanhood and motherhood became one and the same for Gill Comer and the Klan. In that speech, she also reiterated that women were to be helpmeets to men. Together, men and women could create a better world in partnership than men had created alone. Such was crucially important because Gill Comer lamented the state of the nation, particularly the youth. She noted that boys and girls had “taken a bit of control into their teeth” and were
“dashing almost unhindered toward a future of unbridled selfishness and unhappy irresponsibility.”

Parents provided bad examples. Mothers, who lack modesty, produced immodest daughters, and children and parents embraced irreligion. Daughters became a pressing concern when they behaved immorally because said behavior was a threat to citizenship. As potential mothers, their behavior directly affected their offspring. Divorce was on the rise, which suggested the collapse of the home, the sacred foundation of nation and religious faith. There were good men and good women who could restore the nation, and women would be on the front lines to combat immorality in their ranks.

For Gill Comer, women directly impacted American life more than their counterparts in any other nation. With newfound equality, they could assist the men more than ever before. Men and women together could restore religion and order to the nation. Perhaps to assuage the minds of her male listeners, she emphasized that such equality would not mean that a woman would “neglect the home-building and home-keeping for which she is not only more experienced by better fitted than man.” It was even possible that women might move from helpmeets to true partners to their husbands with their new abilities. That partnership would lead to a better country for their children. Gill Comer, speaking for the W.K.K.K, pledged that the order would protect the government, which was “established Christian, Protestant, and white,” to make sure that it remained so. Additionally, the members would raise children that supported those values to safeguard the American home. Women would be the helpmeets who worked to protect the Klan’s vision of a religious nation. Her vision of partnership proposed men and women could accomplish their goals together. Her rendering of equality was a limited one, and it conformed somewhat to the Klan’s vision of white womanhood. Klanswomen might be strong, active participants in faith and nation, but they were still bound first and foremost to traditional roles. Gill Comer struggled to voice equality for herself and her order. But, she conflated womanhood and motherhood similarly to her male brethren. In that conflation, women remained the supporters of their husbands and sons. She made it clear that her women wanted to protect rather than to be protected, but the defense of white womanhood required that Klanswomen employ their roles as mothers to claim authority. The ability to nurture and sacrifice remained the uplifted norms for the women’s order.

However, the Klan was not only concerned with the protection of Klanswomen but also American women more generally. Klanswomen might be able to protect themselves because of
their affiliation with the order, but other American women were vulnerable to threats that they were not aware. For the Klan, threats to white womanhood took the form of Jews, African Americans, and Catholics, who might harm the purity of those delicate women. The order seemed most concerned with Catholics and their institutions. The order articulated its fear of Catholics as the danger to white women from both the confessional and the convent, and anti-Catholic lecturers, who gained popularity in Klan circles, stoked those fears to show that Catholicism was a personal as well as political threat.

“There is a continuous cry going up, from the lips of thousands of wives and daughters, to be delivered from the terrors of the confessional.”

Robbie Gill Comer asserted that Protestant civilization uplifted women, and the underlying sentiment in that affirmation was that other religious cultures had not. Klansmen and Klanswomen feared the influence of other religious traditions on young Protestant women. The order often sponsored lecturers, who documented in gruesome detail the hazard of Catholicism to the minds and bodies of young women. According to Kathleen Blee, the Indiana Klan in particular focused on “graphic tales of female enslavement and sexual exploitation” by Catholic institutions. Klan lecturers and various Klan publications obsessed about the celibacy of the priesthood, the treatment and character of nuns, and the stories of Protestant girls captured and enslaved by secretive convents. Blee contended that the apprehension about the sexual morality of white women gave the Klan a large following among Protestants, who were at best ambivalent about Catholics. However, such trepidation was more than just an attempt at public legitimacy. After all, white women were seen not only as vulnerable and delicate targets but also as potential mothers who were essential to the creation of national character. Attacks on white women were harmful to the national body. The Catholic threat revolved around issues of morality and decency, but it also concerned the centrality of women to the formation and reformation of the Christian nation. Those women kept the fires of patriotism burning and provided religious education for their children. If the purity of white women was at stake, then the Klan’s ideal nation was in danger.

Lecturers claimed that Rome targeted and captured Protestant girls. They affirmed the exaggerated fear and distrust that many Protestants and Klan members had about Catholics. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the order labeled Catholics as a menace to the Protestant foundations of the American nation as well as dangerous to the American form of government.
because of their allegiance to the pope. That allegiance affirmed what the Klan believed all along: Catholics aligned with the papacy instead of their nation. The message perpetuated by Klan lecturers that Rome targeted women for slave labor and debauchery cemented the Church’s status as a possible foe to the American way of life. On the Klan lecture circuit, Klansmen and Klanswomen heard the tales of horror, which motivated both orders to protect white womanhood at all costs. Two of the most popular lecturers were Helen Jackson, “the escaped nun,” and L.J. King, a self-proclaimed “ex-Romanist.” King became a Klansman in the early 1920s, and he and Jackson often lectured together for Klan events. They even staged revivals for the Klan in many towns in Indiana while lecturing on the depravity of priests and nuns.  

Helen Jackson’s popularity emerged from her work, *Covent Cruelties or My Life in a Convent*, which was published originally in 1919. The volume had seven editions between 1919 and 1924. Jackson documented supposed cruelties at a number of Catholic convents in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Kentucky, and her tale targeted Good Shepherd convents as particularly heinous. According to her own accounts, Helen was raised in a Polish Catholic family, and from age of thirteen, she desired to be a nun. Her mother was adamantly against her decision and forewarned, ‘Helen dear, I do not want to stop you from going to be a nun and go to hell for your lost soul but you will understand me some day and think of what your Ma-me said.’ Helen ignored her mother’s warning and claimed, instead, that the nuns somehow hypnotized her into making the decision. Even more, she reported that membership in a convent might exempt her “from hearing these embarrassing questions that were asked of me at my first confession.”  

The first convent she entered was a Felician convent. Helen quickly realized that those nuns were not the kind, enchanting nuns she knew previously. Instead they were cruel and vindictive to their charges. They punished Helen for many indiscretions from disobedience to questioning the nun’s authority to attempting to help other girls. Such was the major thrust of her “memoir,” which recorded not only the punishment that she faced but also the harsh penalties imposed upon the other young girls at convents. She even escaped, but determined nuns forced her back into the convent against her will by “pinching, punching, and nearly pulling me into pieces.” At various points in her narrative, Jackson turned her attention to the reader, especially after egregious acts by the nuns. She asked:

How many girls are struggling in those convents today, so you know? Is your daughter one of the victims, or perhaps your friend’s missing girl? If so, I advise you to do your duty according to the fundamental principles upon which this great republic was
The most important principle was liberty. Jackson asserted that the convent, a Catholic prison, blatantly ignored the founding ideal. Convents enslaved girls in secretive places, and the enslavement denied their liberty. She encouraged her readers to save those girls from the injustices they encountered. Moreover, Jackson demonstrated the abuse impacted Catholic and Protestant girls because priests prided themselves on kidnapping Protestants. The reasoning behind the kidnappings remained obscure throughout her “memoir,” especially the logic for abducting girls. One Protestant girl attempted to escape by rappelling down the side of the convent, but her rope snapped. In her plummet, she broke her leg, and her screaming alerted the nuns. However, the police saved her because she told them she was Protestant and did not belong in the convent in the first place. For young Helen, the Protestant was lucky because she was able to escape when so few other girls never had the chance.

To make obvious the gruesome punishments inflicted by the nuns, Jackson recorded the broken and bruised bodies of the girls. Body lice afflicted the girls. The nuns punished Helen, now Lena, for refusing to wear an overly warm dress while working in the laundry. (Jackson asserted that the girls’ names were changed, so their families could not locate them.) Her hands and feet were bound, and she was tossed into a small room where she licked up her sustenance “like a dog.” Many of girls were also dunked in a bathtub full of coldwater and lashed with “sewing machine straps,” which left many bruised and unable to walk. Jackson reported that the nuns often did not inflict the punishment themselves but had their young charges commit the crimes. The diabolical scheme meant the nuns could not be accused of wrongdoing. After the death of her mother, the nuns allowed Helen to return home to her family. Unfortunately, her reprieve was short-lived because a priest re-kidnapped her and sent to a different convent.

The rest of her tale focused upon the cruelties she and others faced until her successful escape. Jackson attempted to show the deceptive machinations of the nuns. If there were visitors in the convent, the nuns tied up the faces of girls with black eyes to fake a toothache. A dear friend of Helen, Modestus, died because of her chastisement. The nuns intended to give her a “cold water ducking,” but instead, tossed her into a “tub where they soaked the sanitary clothes of about one hundred and eighty girls.” Modestus’s dying wish was that her family would find out where she was located. Reflecting on the death of her friend, Jackson stated:

Oh, what would you do if your loved one was sick and dying away from home, longing
She questioned how those practices could happen in a nation that no longer tolerated slavery. Jackson’s enslavement, however, came to an end. She managed to escape with the help of her friend, Vivian. Mrs. Graeff, a Baptist, saved the girls by hiding them in her house. Jackson, then, wrote about the horrors that she had faced in many convents. She hoped that her book would lead readers to suppress convents in America and to save female inmates from the experiences that she faced as a young, vulnerable girl. On the lecture circuit, she regaled audiences with those tales of horror and reported on infanticides that covered up priests illicit relationships with nuns. Jackson’s “memoir” primarily verified the damage to the bodies of young women and the intolerable cruelty of supposed Catholic prisons.

Her comrade on the lecture circuit, L.J. King, wrote pamphlets and gave speeches on similar topics, but he perceived the threat to American women to primarily be the confessional, which he argued ruined the female mind as well as the body. King claimed to be a former Catholic, who was privy to knowledge the average Protestant might not have, and he asserted that the confessional was a den of iniquity for women because of the immodest questioning they faced. The crux of the issue for King was that the Roman Catholic Church required celibacy for their priests, and that requirement led to debauchery. For King, “horrible disorders, seductions, adulteries and abominations of every kind…have sprung from this practice of auricular confession.” King painted the penitents as “young, beautiful, and interesting females,” and the priests as men “young and vigorous, without the grace of God in their hearts, burning with fires of passion, and in many instances wrought to a frenzy by the vow of celibacy.” The Roman Catholic Church, thus, created a problem because the priests were passionate and the female penitents had to answer indecent inquiries. According to King, such questioning led to dubious behavior between the two parties. The “ex-Romanist” maintained that confession was not a practice of which young women could abstain because it was one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. He wrote:

All her faithful must pass through this cesspool [sic] of iniquity. Rome had decreed that her pious shall not escape; but that all should be bound…by the relentless irons of the confessional in order to reduce and enslave them to the will and wishes of her priest
The practice of confession guaranteed obedience of the faithful. For the author, it compromised the purity and modesty of American women. Abstaining from confession was a path to hell, so that the soul was at stake if one neglected confession. The Church forced women into the dreaded confessional as part of their religious practice. King affirmed the inquiries of priests proved detrimental to both the priest and the women. The supposed questions regarded the sexual experiences of the penitents, which he purported often led to relationships between priests and women. Basically, King envisioned the confessional as a tool used by the priests to seduce their female congregants, married or single. The “depraved” questioning demoralized those women and made them vulnerable to the “lecherous” priests. To demonstrate his claims, King used selections from other “former” nuns and priests, including ex-priest Chiniquy and Maria Monk. Using Chiniquy’s text, King claimed many noble and modest women fell victim to vile priests. Between 1874 and 1875, Chiniquy wrote The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional, which supposedly documented confessions he had heard as a priest in Canada. Bishop Duggan from Chicago, however, excommunicated him in 1858 because of his previous indiscretions with female congregants. King still culled examples from Chiniquy’s works to provide a general description of what occurred in the confessional. He described the penitent in her struggle against the priest:

She grows pale and trembles like an aspen leaf, her bosom heaves, showing the terrible storm within; her lips quiver, then move as she pleads to be spared the ordeal. She pleads, pleads for self-respect and chastity.

Her confessor, however, ignored her appeals. King characterized the priest as “the bachelor confessor,” who seeks to “uncover every secret chamber in the soul of the penitent.”

Not surprisingly, the priest won the battle of wills because of his claim that the woman must confess every sin or vile thought to be absolved. King lamented “every garment of modesty is torn in twain and the last vestige of self-respect has gone down leaving the heart bare, and open to his unhallowed gaze.” Using a metaphor akin to rape, King suggested that the priest was able to conquer the heart and minds of those women in the confessional. Through the confessional, priests seduced women, which led to illicit sexual relationships, illegitimate children, adultery, and perversion. Those confessors destroyed female virtue, and King saw such as a requirement of confession rather than a consequence. Moreover, he also asserted that nuns
and priests used the confessional as a cover for their sexual relationships. The “ex-Romanist” urged husbands and fathers to protect their wives and daughters from that evil. The Catholic machination ruined women, and female modesty and virtue were at stake. King urged Catholic women to turn away from the “deceiving words of the church of Rome” and embrace “the invitations of our Savior, who has died on the cross, that you might be saved; and who along, can give rest to your weary souls.”

For the ex-Romanist, those women should convert to Protestantism to protect their modesty rather than stay in the corrupting Catholic Church. Not surprisingly, Catholics did not welcome King’s message. He claimed that the Knights of Columbus and Catholic mobs attempted to kill him multiple times because of his exposés of the Church.

The writings and speeches of King and Jackson reverberated with tropes of anti-Catholicism from the nineteenth century. Both Marie Anne Pagliarini and Tracy Fessenden argued that anti-Catholicism functioned as a method for Protestants to renegotiate gender norms in the nineteenth century. Pagliarini pointed out that abundance of the anti-Catholic literature declared the sexual immorality of Catholicism. Building upon Jenny Franchot’s work, she reasoned that Protestants imagined the Catholic priest as sexually depraved because Protestants believed Catholicism represented “a threat to the sexual norms, gender definitions, and family values that comprised the antebellum ‘cult of domesticity.’” Anti-Catholic literature focused upon the importance of the purity of American women, and such literature had a pornographic quality that was at once appealing to Protestants while re-establishing the importance of sexual norms. Those tales portrayed young women defiled by priests or convent life. Those tragic narratives served as a lesson that Catholicism endangered both young women and family life.

For Pagliarini, the literature cast the sexually perverted priest and the dangerous convent against the pure American woman whose greatest asset was her sexual purity. Catholicism emerged as a path to sexual immorality that did not just endanger individuals but also families and the larger society. Tracy Fessenden proposed that anxiety over gender roles drove the Protestant attack on Catholics. Nuns and prostitutes surfaced in nineteenth century literature as women of sexual excess.

In particular, Fessenden maintained that anti-Catholicism served to help create and preserve the Protestant woman’s sphere in opposition to the realms of prostitutes and nuns. Those Protestant women defined their sphere by placing boundaries between themselves and
other women. Anxieties overflowed in their characterization of liminal women because nuns were enshrouded in secrecy and prostitutes participated in behavior that was too public. Both nuns and prostitutes became imagined women by whom Protestant women defined themselves and their religion. Catholicism was, once again, the imagined enemy by which Protestants sought to define themselves and project their anxieties about society. The rhetoric of anti-Catholicism served to reify the gender norms that Protestants embraced and to maintain the domestic sphere. The tales of convent horror and lecherous priests affirmed notions of what womanhood should be, and King and Jackson’s works uplifted similar themes. The depraved Catholic of the convent, or confessional, served to illuminate the delicate nature of Protestant womanhood as well as emphasized the fact that white Protestant women could not protect themselves. In their respective works, King and Jackson solidified the Klan’s representation of white womanhood as fragile, vulnerable, and defenseless. The nuns and priests proved to be the villains in their stories, and those characters emphasized the harm that women constantly faced.

The careers of both lecturers were born of fears of the Catholic Church. However, Catholics did not ignore the sordid tales and called into question the legitimacy of the narratives. A Record of Anti-Catholic Agitators listed all the known anti-Catholic lecturers as well as other Catholic detractors. The pamphlet included Jackson and King as well as various leaders of the Klan (notably, H.W. Evans). Helen Jackson surfaced as a fake ex-nun, who was sent to the House of the Good Shepherd in Detroit, Michigan because of her own misconduct, including questionable behavior with young men. King was exposed as a fake ex-priest, whose lecture tour proved controversial. After assaulting a woman in Indiana, he was charged. The assault occurred because she protested a portion of his lectures. Additionally, law enforcement arrested him for inciting riots and resisting arrest. Both were accused of acting in ways that they publicly disdained in their writings and lectures. Jackson acted immodest, and King harmed a woman. Whatever their indiscretions, however, they were both popular on the lecture circuit for the Klan because they confirmed the Klan’s worse suspicions about the Catholic Church’s treatment of women. Both Jackson and King demonstrated the helplessness of white women and their need of protection from Rome. Their stories of terror and debauchery echoed the Klan’s unease about white women and the menace to the American home. Cruel convents and lecherous priests were not the only attacks by Rome on white womanhood. Rather the Catholic hierarchy’s approach to
marriage proved threatening to the virtue of Protestant women because the Klan believed that Rome’s next line of attack involved the sanctity of marriage.

“[T]o change the established American customs concerning marriage would produce social confusion, discord, and finally civil war.”

According to Imperial Wizard Evans, “[h]omes and family life are the warp and woof of America.” Patriotism was the “overflowing of family life in National life,” and Evans found that “spiritual autocracy” damaged the sacred institution. Rome, he accused, alleged the only right to preside over the marriage ceremony. The implications of Catholic jurisdiction over marriage were frightening because the order believed that the home would be “entirely under their control.” That would mean that Catholics would have a religious as well as political advantage over Protestants, and the nation might bend to Catholic influence. For Evans, marriage, and the laws surrounding it, proved to protect the “chastity of American women” and the “honor of the mothers of America who have been united in the holy bonds of matrimony by any person authorized by the law to perform the ceremony.” A challenge to marriage equaled opposition to the honor and purity of American womanhood, and the Klan needed to act to stop any religious group from harming the American home. Changing “American customs” of marriage would prove disastrous because of the potential for social upheaval.

Moreover, Evans reported confusion as to why religion needed to be a part of a legal agreement like marriage. He wrote, “It is inconceivable to me that religion enters into the ceremony of marriage by and beyond adding approval of Almighty God to any union formed in accordance with the law of the land.” The approval from God, he asserted, likely emerged from Christian tradition because it contained no legal benefit. What troubled Evans was that Catholic practices would somehow degrade Protestant marriages. If the Protestant marriage bond was not valid, then the women in those marriages lost all claims to honor and virtue. The American home might be disrupted if Protestant marriages were declared null and void. He also feared the “intrusion of the Roman hierarchy” in the home because of a required “contract from the parties marrying when they are of different religious faiths, that the children born of marriage shall be raised in the Roman Catholic Church.” For Evans, that was another example of the Catholic attack on religious freedom because of “the religious control of minds yet unborn.” The parents in those “mixed” marriages promised their children to the Catholic Church without the child having a say in his/her religious faith. To protect the home and the nation, Evans urged the Klan
to “plead for the enactment of laws to protect the religious liberty of unborn Americans.” Catholic control over marriage could lead to their control over the nation if they were continually promised religious adherence of the unborn. In Evans’s logic, the unborn would become citizens under the auspices of Rome.

A Grand Dragon of the Klan put the matter a bit more bluntly. He asserted the arrogance of the Roman hierarchy in the realm of marriage, and he criticized the “Catholic” position of marriage being lawful only if performed by priests. He boldly stated, “I believe any person…who, by any means whatsoever, questions, denies or slurs marriage by civil law…should be heavily fined and sentenced to a long term at hard labor in State’s prison.” The Grand Dragon reported that an attack on marriage by civil law lead to “millions of worthy American men and women” being branded as “libertines and harlots” and their children as “illegitimates.” The Grand Dragon called for a federal law to defend “the sacredness of our marriages performed either by our civil magistrates or clergymen other than the Roman Catholic priesthood.” The Klan argued that members needed to prevent Rome’s offensive on marriage before the compromise of American liberties occurred. The order’s acute concern over the status of marriage was intriguing because one might wonder what caused their uproar.

Both the Klan and the W.K.K.K lamented the decline of the marital bonds. Robbie Gill Comer derided the younger generation’s careless entry and exit from the marital bond. She declared, “To tens and hundreds of thousands of our young men and young women, ‘for better or for worse, till death do us part’ has ceased to have any binding force whatever.” The “breakdown” of the home was possible because marriage was no longer forever, and divorce was becoming an option for the younger generation. With marriage in peril, the sanctity of the home would be violated.

However, much of the concern over marriage emerged from the annulment of the Marlborough-Vanderbilt marriage. In 1926, the Christian Century pondered, “When is a marriage not a marriage?” The article centered upon the annulment of the Marlborough-Vanderbilt marriage by the Catholic Church. The “salient facts” were that at age of seventeen, Consuelo Vanderbilt married a man with a “British title,” Charles Spencer-Churchill, the ninth duke of Marlborough, due to her mother’s cajoling. Two Episcopal bishops presided over the service, and the bride’s father, as part of the marriage contract, received an income of $100,000 annually. The bride and groom remained married for twenty-five years, and they had two sons.
After twenty-five years, the wife acquired a divorce and remarried. The duke entered into a new marriage as well, but he wanted to convert to Catholicism. Moreover, he wanted his new union to be considered valid by the Catholic Church. In “ecclesiastical court,” it was determined that his first marriage “was not a marriage at all.” “[H]e was never married at all until he was married to the lady whom he now calls his wife.” According to the Century, the Episcopal Church was offended by the fact that another church would “deny the validity of a marriage performed under its sanction.” 371

The Catholic Church defended its actions as not meddling with a non-Catholic marriage. Instead the Church helped a person who wanted to become a member. Moreover, the Church also asserted that the children were still legitimate. The Century argued that the case demonstrated people could be married according to the state but not according to the Catholic Church. The duke and his wife were “married enough to have legitimate children” but “not married enough to interfere with another marriage after an intervening divorce.” The periodical continued, “And all this is in the interest of maintaining a professedly higher standard of domestic morality and a level of purity in family life to which the state and the [P]rotestants do not attain!” 372 By disdaining divorce, the Catholic Church supposedly upheld a higher moral standard than their Protestant brethren, but the Century writer called that assumption into question. For the Century, the crux of the issue was that the case seemed to suggest that Catholic marriages were superior to non-Catholic marriages, so much so that a non-Catholic marriage could be deemed not a marriage after all. The periodical stated that Catholic Church’s action implied that her religious dictates were superior to the laws of the state.

The Klan also dwelled on the Marlborough-Vanderbilt case, and the Grand Dragon of the Georgia Klan disdained “the arrogant assumption of authority by Rome to interfere in the marital relationship of persons outside the church.” The Klan leader questioned why Rome had the authority to interfere with a marriage contract performed in the United States, much less the ability to judge the legitimacy of said contract. For the Georgia leader, the annulment signaled the Catholic Church’s obvious belief that the Church led by the pope was superior to the state. Thus, the Church claimed the sole responsibility to define when a union was actually a marriage. That impacted not only the husband and wife but also led to confusion as whether the children were legitimate or not. According to the Grand Dragon, the Marlborough children became illegitimate with the annulment. Additionally, he reported that Church claimed the ability to
regulate the marriage of all baptized persons. The leader questioned what that meant for all of those people, who were the fruits of Protestant marriage. He stated, “It means that you and I, unless we were so unfortunate as to have been born within the Roman Church, which thank God the writer was not, are within the eyes of the law of the Roman [C]hurch, of illegitimate birth, or to use the plain word, bastards.” For the Klan leader, Rome had judged all children of Protestant marriage as illegitimate; Protestant women were no better than harlots; and the home was an illusion that lacked moral foundation. If Rome became the dominant church in America, Protestants would lose their religious freedom and their claims to legitimacy. Such was the Catholic attack on the sacred marital bonds of Protestants, and that degradation could not be tolerated. For the Klan, the Church clearly targeted the home, via marriage, to further its conquest of America.

While the Klan warned of the Catholic threat to marital bonds, Catholics attempted to show that their sacramental view of marriage had no bearing on their Protestant brethren. *Our Sunday Visitor*, a Catholic newspaper from Huntington, Indiana, ran a series on the Code of Canon Law (1918) and its relationship to marriage to illuminate what Catholics actually thought about marriage. The Rev. H.C. Hengell wrote eight articles on the Canon and marriage for the readers of the *Visitor*. Marriage was a sacrament entered into by two baptized persons. He noted, “[T]here can be no valid marriage between baptized persons, whether baptized Catholics or baptized Protestants, which is not at the same time a Sacrament.” However, Hengell quickly stated that Protestants had valid marriages performed by ministers or civil officers. Catholics, then, did not believe that Protestant marriage was somehow illegitimate or lesser than the Catholic bond. The Klan misunderstood Catholic notions of the marital relationship, and its rendering of the Catholic threat to marriage represented their own concerns. The Klan was nervous about the status of marriage in the 1920s because of rising divorce rates and the “rebellion” of the younger generation. Catholics provided a foil to the apprehension of white Protestants about marriage and white womanhood.

Such anxiety about the status of womanhood presented in sharp relief the Klan’s fears about the American nation. The protection of white womanhood was a rallying cry in a time period in which white women were asserting their rights, including members of the W.K.K.K. Those women wanted to be partners in the struggles for nation while the Klan (and the Imperial Commander of the W.K.K.K.) stressed the importance of women as helpmeets to their men. The
perception of white womanhood reflected the Klan’s ideal for how the nation should be constructed. Women were homebuilders, who were responsible for nurturing children and cherishing the domestic space. Motherhood equaled womanhood, and the order idealized Klanswomen and other American women in that role and chided them if they did not embrace sacrifice and nurture. Young women were potential mothers to be protected by the order of Knights to guarantee that the home remained a stronghold for citizenship and religious instruction.

The home, as mentioned again and again in Klan literature, was the foundation of faith and nation. The possible destruction of the home represented fault lines in their ideal nation. To protect women from Catholics, illegitimate marriages, and even themselves was crucial to maintaining a Protestant nation that harkened back to the ideals of the founders. Those Knights, in all their masculine glory, protected women, so the nation that they envisioned could be perpetuated. Klansmen were soldiers, and Klanswomen were the keepers of domestic fires. Both men and women in those roles guaranteed the continued control of white Protestants over national culture. The control of white women also signaled alarm with the perpetuation of the race and vitality of white supremacy for the order. Whiteness was another fixture for the movement, and the trepidation over racial purity molded the order’s vision of nation and faith.
CHAPTER FIVE

“White skin will not redeem a black heart”\(^{375}\): The Klan’s Rendering of Whiteness, White Supremacy, and the American Race

We avow the distinction between the races of mankind as same has been decreed by the Creator, and shall be ever true in the faithful maintenance of White Supremacy and will strenuously oppose any compromise thereof in any and all things—H.W. Evans (n.d.)\(^{376}\)

The group minds of other races and other nations have developed differently from ours. Each nation has its own God-given qualities and its own mission: but each can do its own work only if the racial and group qualities, which depend upon the blood of the race itself, are preserved relatively pure. If any nation is mongrelized, that nation will lose its distinctive quality and its power to contribute to civilization—H.W. Evans (1924)\(^{377}\)

In the *Imperial Night-Hawk*, a Klan cartoon (Figure 11) declared the “planks” of the movement for 1924. In the middle of the cartoon, a white-robed Klansman holding a fiery cross sat upon a similarly costumed horse. In the background, the sun was rising, which suggested a new day dawned for the order. Surrounding the archetype of a Klansman and radiating from the sun were the various issues the Klan supported including Protestantism, clean politics, and restricted immigration. The Klan, as the cartoon indicated, was neither shy about its politics nor the love of race, but white supremacy was noticeably absent. Such was surprising because the 1920s Klan was historically infamous for its racial politics. White supremacy was a slogan of the order, so why was the supremacy of the white race excluded from the planks? On the other hand, in another cartoon (Figure 12) from the *Night-Hawk*, an Irish figure, and a small band, comprised of two African American men, marched down the streets of Atlanta. All were grossly stereotyped with exaggerated racial features. The “Negro” figures wore marching band attire and almost appeared to be in blackface. The Irishman appeared as a Leprechaun with a jaunty hat and a flag in hand. Lining the streets were thousands of robed Klansmen, who appeared ready to menace or attack the interlopers in the Southern city. The caption read, “St. Patrick’s Day in Atlanta, Georgia,” and the cartoon implied that the Klan, at best, was unhappy with the small parade as the white robed figures grimaced in frustration.

*Life* magazine originally published that particular cartoon to poke fun at Klansmen, but the order employed it to make commentary on race. The order did not appreciate nor respect non-whites. Moreover, as the cartoon made apparent, the figures signified a threat to the wider American culture. The cartoon signaled the order’s view of race in general and the uplifting of
the whiteness of members. In the 1924 cartoon, the ideal Klansman, surrounded in rays of light, indicated the beginning of a new era in which white supremacy would reign (even though, white supremacy had already been a force in American cultural currents). The cartoon rendered the Irish and the Negro as backward races, who all lauded a foreign holiday. All of the figures seemed ignorant of the dominance of white men, who happened to be masked and robed.

Moreover, the cartoon displayed that those outsiders were the minority when compared to the prowess of the white-garbed figures and their dominance in American culture. The 1924 cartoon lacked the mention of white supremacy because that superiority was assumed. White superiority was truth for the Klan and for many sectors of the general populace. The 1920s Klan embraced white supremacy as a founding value of its order to protect both faith and nation from the perils of lesser races and miscegenation. Klansmen were not alone in supporting that position. White superiority, like Protestantism and native birth, emerged as an element of legitimate citizenship. Klansmen embraced the privileged status of white skin, but whiteness was an invisible, though occasionally visible, racial category for them. The Klan was hyper-aware of its racial heritage as well as hyper-vigilant of the racial boundaries. Those parameters maintained racial purity and national purity. For the fraternity, white skin equaled “real” American citizenship.

William Simmons, the Klan’s founder, opined, “We are here to grasp the great problems that confront us as a people, as a Nation, as the white men of the world.” The role of the Invisible Empire was the “preservation of the white Protestant race in America.” For Simmons, a nation of white men eagerly awaited “the proclamation of the principles of the…Klan” because “the sons of the white man’s breed were feeling the tremendous pressure that threatened to crush out the Anglo-Saxon civilization.” The Imperial Wizard affirmed the assault on white men and advocated the fiery cross was their beacon of hope in a dangerous world. Simmons’s rhetoric demonstrated that the Klan confirmed its racial dominance while simultaneously fretting over the demise of said dominance. While uplifting the place of white Protestant men in the American nation, the founder also feared that those power brokers would lose control because of immigration and enfranchisement for African Americans. “Alien” elements threatened the purity of the nation, which amounted to racial purity for the order.

Membership in the Klan assuaged concerns over the threats to racial heritage. As a unified white movement, those men could maintain their hold on the national culture and on the
nation’s soul. The development of the order allowed for white men to come together, strategize, and renew their prowess over the nation. For Simmons, the “invisible phalanx of patriots” stood “as impregnable as a tower against every encroachment upon the white man’s liberty, the white man’s institutions, the white man’s ideals, in the white man’s country, under the white man’s flag.” The Klan was an organization of white men, who believed that the race was in peril. The founder articulated a vision to members of the centrality of white race to the development of American liberty and principles, so that danger to the race equated with hazard to the nation.

White supremacy proved vital to the Klan’s mission and motivation. While most Klan scholarship recorded the emphasis on white supremacy in the 1920s Klan, most works overlooked how the Klan crafted its whiteness and how members apprehended the creation of racial categories and norms. Those works assumed the whiteness of members without recognizing how the racial category impacted the Klan’s rendering of nation, religion, and gender. That scholarship also neglected how whiteness and racial awareness intermingled with religious faith and nationalism in the order’s print culture, speeches, and monographs. The exploration the Klan’s proclaimed white supremacy demonstrated how the order envisioned whiteness as a category in opposition to other races and ethnicity.

In addition, the Klan claimed a theology of whiteness, in which the divine created divisions within humanity, and the fraternity proclaimed that racism was ordained, expected, and sacred. Enforcing the boundaries of racial purity fueled understandings of other races, primarily Jews and African Americans, as models to disdain. Despite the concern for racial purity, the Klan also articulated a vision of an amalgamated American race in which hybridity led to strength and tenacity of the American character. That racial alchemy complicated its vision of divine whiteness and highlighted the order’s struggle to affirm nation, faith, and race as one and the same in its worldview.

“It is clear that our most important work is to preserve the white American race as a unified, integral and undiluted body.”

Racial heritage, much like faith, defined Klan membership, and whites joined by proving their racial purity. The order barred all who were rendered non-white from admittance. The first Imperial Wizard Simmons consciously prepared his organization as such. Various rules regulated Klansmen’s behaviors, aims for the betterment of (white) humankind, and membership. Simmons prepared the *Kloran*, the Constitution of the Klan, and several pamphlets to describe
the “true” intentions of the Klan. The Klansmen’s Creed detailed the correct beliefs of Klansmen:

I believe in God and in the tenets of Christian religion and that a Godless nation cannot long prosper.
I believe that a Church that is not grounded on the principles of morality and justice is a mockery to God and to man.
I believe that a Church that does not have the welfare of the common people at heart, is unworthy.
I believe in the eternal separation of Church and State.
I hold no allegiance to any foreign government, Emperor, King, Pope or any other foreign, political or religious power.
I hold my allegiance to the Stars and Stripes next to my allegiance of God alone…I believe in law and order.
I believe in the protection of pure womanhood.
I do not believe in mob violence but I do believe that laws should be enacted to prevent the causes of mob violence…I believe in the limitation of foreign immigration.
I am a native born American citizen and I believe my rights in this country are superior to those of foreigners.\(^{380}\)

The Creed illuminated the order’s worldview that was Christian (Protestant), anti-immigration, patriotic, and anti-mob violence, but more interestingly, Creed served to declare who was not included in the fraternity.

One had to purport belief in the Creed to become a member of the Klan, which was markedly different from the Reconstruction Klan. Simmons’s Klan revolved around rituals and symbols that expressed white Protestantism as well as patriotic sentiments. The order actively recruited Protestant ministers and offered them the Klan publications for free.\(^{381}\) Protestant theology imbued Klan symbols and actions (see Chapter One). The Reconstruction Klan had no deliberate Protestant ideas rather its focus was on the racial threat to white civil rights. The emphasis on whiteness resonated in the 1920s Klan, though Klansmen were no longer free to enforce their forms of vigilante justice in the newly bureaucratic order. Simmons regulated meaning of the order as well as the racial hue of its members. Simmons wrote, “The Klan, organized to protect and advance the cause of our native institutions, is therefore exclusive in the restriction of its membership to white native-born Americans.”\(^{382}\) H.W. Evans revised the Creed, and race became a more explicit feature that was bound to theology. That Creed stated, “We avow the distinction between the races of mankind as same has been decreed by the Creator, and shall be ever true in the faithful maintenance of White Supremacy and will strenuously oppose any compromise thereof in any and all things.”\(^{383}\) The Creator legitimated
those distinctions, and white men were on top of the paradigm. The supremacy of whiteness was
divinely mandated in the revised Creed, but the racial threat remained for Klansmen. Catholics,
Jews, and African Americans posed religious, patriotic, and racial threats to the principles of the
order. The original Creed asserted the rights of the “native born American citizen” as superior to
others, and the order maintained the centrality of white dominance in its print culture. Race was a
binding concern for the organization, but the Klan carefully crafted the Creed to not appear
overtly racist, possibly to distance the 1920s Klan from the prejudice of its Reconstruction
predecessors. The underlying sentiment of both Creeds was that white citizens were in charge of
the nation, and their rights, thus, should be superior to all others. Racial superiority guaranteed
dominance. Supremacy to other racial, religious, or ethnic peoples defined whiteness. That,
however, was not an inclusive understanding of whiteness, in which one was white by virtue of
the color of one’s skin. For the order, not all whites were “actually white” unless they embraced
white supremacy. White supremacy, a phrase that the Klan employed in print culture, was a
crucial feature of the order’s worldview. Klan authors painted several images of what the phrase
should mean.

White superiority assured that whites maintained their dominance in American culture
and abroad, so white supremacy guaranteed that vision. White supremacy, much like
Americanism and Protestantism, faced the challenges of immigration, foreign ideas, and foreign
religious movements. The white fraternity sought to preserve the racial purity of the nation and
to protect the advanced racial traits of whites. For a Louisiana Klansmen, the supremacy of
whites demonstrated that other groups were simply inassimilable. He believed that since
Catholics and Jews already had their own “all-Catholic and all-Jewish societies” that white
Protestant Christians also had the ability to organize their own orders to laud the lofty character
of their racial heritage. Despite the precedent of exclusive orders, the Klan did not appreciate the
practice for others. Exclusivity signaled the inability to blend into white American culture.
Catholics aligned themselves with a “foreigner or foreign institution,” the pope, and Jews did not
accept Christianity. Both sets of religious peoples, then, could not embrace the American nation.
Additionally, the “Negro,” who was not foreign, was “an inferior race.” That inferiority meant
“Klansmen were sworn to protect him, his rights and property and assist him in the elevation of
his moral and spiritual being and in the preservation of the purity of his race.” The Louisiana
Klansmen implicitly showed that white race was superior, especially to the Negro, by noting that
the Klan’s duty to keep not only the white race pure but also to maintain the purity of the Negro race as well. That supremacy echoed the “white man’s burden” in that Klansmen had to protect inferior races from themselves by guaranteeing that they abided by racial boundaries. Such was the burden of being a Klansman but also of being the superior race. To be white equated with “natural” superiority and dominance.

In contrast to the Louisiana Klansman, W.C. Wright further defined white supremacy as having three main tenets. First and foremost, the white race proved superior to other races, and the race was “the advance guard of all great civilizations and must ever be the leading race of people on earth.” Wright espoused the special place of whites in the advancement of global, not just American, culture because of unique talents, specifically leadership, gifted to whites. Second, the minister affirmed that America was primarily “a white man’s country, discovered, dedicated, settled, defended and developed by white men.” The superiority of white founders and members of the nation fashioned the national character, and the subtle notions behind Wright’s commentary was that the nation would only continue to advance if guided by the hands and minds of white Americans. And third, the minister proposed that divinely imposed distinctions between the races signaled the necessity of racial purity. Wright presented a vision of white supremacy in which white men were to be the rightful leaders of the world because of their advancements. Wright’s commentary alluded to his understanding that America needed to maintain her racial caste to continue her greatness. The Klan minister also noted that race was not a natural construction, but supernatural, which meant God legitimated those distinctions. Parameters of race could not be questioned or challenged. For Wright, God favored the white race, which meant that other races lacked divine support. (See section, “That we avow the distinction made by the Creator...”)

Imperial Wizard Evans also affirmed the vitality of white superiority. He noted, “The Klan law, requiring that its members be white men and women only, is an expression of this deep racial quality. It is clear that our most important work is to preserve the white American race as a unified, integral and undiluted body.” He noted that uplifting of whiteness was one of the most important campaigns for his Klan brethren because the downfall of the white race guaranteed not only the ruin of the nation but also of the world. Domination was a characteristic of that race, and the tenuous grip of whites on that dominance indicated the collapse of civilization. The Imperial Wizard affirmed the position of other Klan authors including the
centrality of skin color to membership, the leadership of the American nation, and the need to control and protect non-white peoples. White control and preservation demonstrated the order’s pride in its racial heritage but also its fear that members would lose their prominent place in society.

The pamphlet, “Fifty Reasons I am a Klansman,” declared the importance of preservation and perpetuation. The pamphlet asserted that “duty of every white, Gentile, Protestant, American citizen” was to “preserve the purity of his race and religion by choosing a mate of like color and creed.” White Protestants bore responsibility of religious and racial homogeneity to their nation. The duty of citizenship was the perpetuation of the white race to ensure the continued superiority of national character and national progress. That character was at stake due to the immigration of foreign people, ideas, and religions as well as domestic threats residing within the nation’s boundaries. Visions of the assimilative melting pot were not beacons of American progress for Klansmen but nightmarish visions of the demise of civilization. The order’s nativism was part and parcel of its defense and perpetuation of whiteness.

“Immigrants are streaming into cities to make modern Sodoms and Gomorras[sic].”

For historian Matthew Frye Jacobson, nativism emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a crisis of defining whiteness. He argued that the 1790 naturalization law provided an open and inclusive definition of white persons, which nativists attempted to redefine from the 1840s to the 1920s to limit whom could be considered a white person. Moreover, immigration legislation in 1924, the Johnson-Hartley Act, “segmented the community of ‘white persons’ and ranked its disparate members—the arrival of desirable ‘Nordics’ continued to be favored, whereas the number of ‘Alpines’ and ‘Mediterraneans’ would be dramatically curtailed.” Through the act, legislation redefined whiteness. The Klan of the 1920s was a major proponent of the Johnson-Hartley act. The Imperial Night-Hawk broadcast Klan opinions in its attempts to guarantee passage. The Night-Hawk as well as Klan pamphleteers weighed in on the dangers of unrestricted immigration. On the cover of the Klan pamphlet, The Menace of Modern Immigration, a dragon appeared at the top of the cover climbing from the recesses of a dark cave. Instead of shooting fire from its mouth, the dragon vomited a stream of immigrants who oozed down the cover in a jumbled mass. Legs and arms twisted and tangled. Clothed in various forms of ethnic dress with kerchiefs and caps upon their heads, the immigrants’ feet dangled haphazardly underneath the title. The image made the pamphlet’s position on immigration
immediately discernable. Immigrants appeared as the bile from the belly of the dragon, and the printed words of the pamphlet did not improve upon the grotesque imagery.

“God never imposes insuperable burdens and obstacles upon his children,” maintained the pamphlet. The burden of immigration was one that that Americans could bear. The *Menace* argued that America was a “superior Christian civilization” in which a “smaller superior element” gave impetus to national character. That element, of course, was white Protestant Christians. After lauding the “natural” state of American character, the pamphlet turned to jeremiad. The *Menace* stated:

> We are the melting pot of the world, a problem and a responsibility faced by no other people. Into it has been poured, almost promiscuously, perhaps in recent years designedly, every dross ingredient of citizenship that the earth produces. The good and bad have haphazardly been thrown together, to be turned out as the nation’s human metal under the same conditions. No account has been taken of the different degrees of refinement required, nor of the unmergeability of basically[sic] conflicting elements.

The melting pot was not a metaphor that lauded the benefit of Americanization and assimilation but rather signified the jumbled combinations of people of the nation. Additionally, those who praised the melting pot imagery ignored a basic fact for the pamphlet: not all had the ability to assimilate. The melting pot, instead, was a “cauldron of chaos and disaster.” The *Menace* proposed that Americans needed to decipher what God intended in the terms of immigration. Failure to interpret divine intention would lead to catastrophic combinations of cultures and races. According to the pamphlet, when assimilation was occurring, it was definitely not beneficial.

A Grand Dragon from South Carolina echoed those concerns in the *Night-Hawk*. For the South Carolinian, America was devolving into a ruinous state by becoming a “nation of nationalities chattering all the tongues of Babel.” Immigrants overran the nation, and the leader pleaded with the Klan to take action for immigration reform. He begged Klansmen to safeguard the nation from the destitute and unwashed masses. Moreover, he quoted a poet to emphasize his point: “O Liberty, white goddess, is it well/To leave the gates unguarded?” Liberty was white, and the Klan was her defender. Her purity faced numerous assaults. By opening her gates, the hue of Liberty moved away from snowy white to a less desirable shade. For Imperial Wizard Evans, the “new” immigrants were the center of the problem. The first immigrants on American soil had been dedicated religious men of correct racial stock, and the

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new immigrants were the “diseased and festered sinners of despoiled and broken Europe.” Evans continued, “[T]hese immigrants, far from being the Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian types of fifty years ago…are mostly scum of the Mediterranean and middle European countries.” They were “Italian anarchists, Irish Catholic malcontents, Russians Jews, Finns, Letts, Lithuanians and Austrians,” who all created “the present horde of immigrant invaders.” 394 Such vituperative language gave Evans’s sentiments clarity. The “horde” of immigrants was a danger to the supposed homogeneity of American culture. Those aliens were of a different racial caste, and Evans feared their influence would create a “polygot nation,” which would challenge white Protestant America. 395 Assimilation might not only be the downfall of the Klan but also the death knell of the nation that Evans held dear.

In an interview for Chicago’s Daily News, Evans’s beliefs about immigration came to the forefront. Evans argued that before 1890, ninety-five percent of immigration was Nordic, and those immigrants were “kindred, desirable, easily assimilable people.” But, only twenty years later, immigrants were “utterly and eternally hopeless from the American point of view.” He continued:

What Nordic greatness has wrought in this country, if the Ku Klux Klan has anything to say and it is going to have something to say—neither shall be torn down by political madness nor shall be dragged down by disease and imbecility. 396

Because the “new” immigrants were of lesser racial stock and mind, Evans and contributors to Klan print envisioned immigration as an evil to be stamped out. Assimilation was iniquity because it chipped away at the homogeneity white Protestant culture. The Klan supported the development and eventual passage of the Johnson-Hartley Act. Under the banner of “America must be kept American,” the Night-Hawk monitored the work of Representative Albert Johnson, who was the chairman of the House Committee on immigration. Moreover, the Klan organ documented the opposition to the bill by “Catholics, Jews, Italians and foreigners of all nations.” 397 When President Coolidge signed the bill into law, the Night-Hawk declared that patriots reaped the rewards. Moreover, the passage of that law meant “the purification of the American citizenship” and the protection from diseased bodies and minds. 398 The nation could maintain her roots.

Yet the Klan’s lament over immigration did not end because of new, more restrictive legislation. The Kourier continued the well-worn attack against immigration. In an editorial
entitled “Bramble Bush Government,” the monthly reiterated the lingering fear that America was devolving into a “polygot” nation instead of reaffirming the central white Protestant voice. Moreover, the “aliens” poisoned the minds of the young with their foreign ideologies. The order continued to be on guard against the evil of immigration. To show that the Klansmen were the preferred choice as guardians, the *Kourier* traced the racial and religious lineage of Klan members back to the founders:

The Klan is a protest against the injection of non-American elements into our government to our hurt. Since the Klan is a movement of protest, Klansmen are, therefore, Protestants. Since our government sprang from Anglo-Saxon and Nordic races we are, therefore, as Klansmen, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. And since every signer of the Declaration of Independence was a member of the white race and since it is the ambition of the Ku Klux Klan to hold this government true to the fundamentals of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, therefore, Klansmen are of necessity, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.  

The *Kourier* wanted to prove not only what the preferred national stock was but also that the Klan was representative of America is all her white, Anglo-Saxon glory. The lament about “polygotism” reflected the Klan’s anxiety about how immigrants would change the face of its beloved nation from pristine white to a cacophony of colors. Since the Declaration signers were white, according to the K.K.K., the nation should remain so. Immigrants menaced the purity and racial make-up of the nation, and the order sought to stop the flow of immigrants before the creation of another Babel, the illustration of divine disfavor.

In its language and imagery, the Klan staked its racial dominance over the nation as well as the tenuous nature of that dominance. Immigrants were poison because they had the ability to transform the character of the nation. The immigrants were considered non-white because of racial distinctions and incorrect religious and political backgrounds. Their poignant trepidation about the purity of white race echoed in their concern of immigration and their desire to limit membership in the order. The protection of whiteness not only entailed protecting the national borders from foreign elements but also the denunciation of domestic “interlopers,” who presented themselves as American.

“*Remember, my fellow Klansmen, that white supremacy…is not based upon the brawn of the brute but upon the superior culture, more, social and spiritual.*”

The concern over the purity over the white race and the assumption of white superiority were not unusual for the time period. The Klan gained popularity because of the changing social climate in the United States. Immigration, urbanization, and the migrations of African Americans
bolstered the Klan’s national appeal. Klan meetings and gatherings appealed to white folks, who could gather without the fear of integration. The paean to white supremacy mobilized white communities, who voiced similar concerns about the possible demise of the nation in face of immigration and African American enfranchisement. The banner of whiteness solidified a community of citizens.

The visibility of whiteness emerged in the clear demarcation of Klan identity in opposition to other groups. Klansmen, after all, were members of an Invisible Empire, and that invisibility meant that whiteness was sometimes less than tangible in the order’s print and spoken words. The white identity of members became quite visible in the face of Klan enemies. Those foes were hazardous to everything that the Klan championed and loved. The Klan identified not only how those groups were unfit for membership in the order but also how they were unfit citizens. Catholics, Jews, and African Americans emerged as the canvas for the Klan’s religious and racial ideologies. As we have seen in previous chapters, the order labeled Catholics as menacing to Protestantism and America because the Catholic “if he honestly believes in the Pope” as a divine agent of God “would first hold allegiance to the Pope and then allegiance to America.” The Jews were inassimilable. The Jews were “indelibly [sic] marked by persecution with no deep national attachment” and were strangers to the “emotion of patriotism as the Anglo-Saxon feels it.” In the Klansman’s mind, Jews and Catholics proved to be dangerous to (the Klan’s) American way of life. For the order, American was synonymous for white in its vision of nation.

More importantly, the Klan believed that both groups had willingly separated themselves from American life. Neither group participated in assimilation. The Klan’s nervousness about those groups centered upon their inability to assimilate, but the order insisted it was neither “religiously intolerant” nor showing racial hatred by criticizing Catholics and Jews. Rather the fraternity protected America from those “aliens” who could cause damage. The exclusion of those groups was necessary because the nation belonged to white men. Klan leaders noted again and again that Jews and Catholics had already identified themselves as different. Members, thus, reacted to the exclusionary practices of those other groups. Their reaction to Jews and African Americans, however, can be telling.

According to Imperial Wizard Evans, “the good qualities of the Jewish character” were well-known even by him. Jews had faced persecution in many times and historical places, but
Evans affirmed that America was a “better home... than almost any other land in which he [the Jew] had lived.”

Evans and other Klansmen appeared to have begrudging respect for Jews because of their self-imposed exclusion to maintain racial purity. Blood and religious heritage were required conditions of “membership.” A Klan minister lauded the Jews:

The Jews are a wonderful people: the remnant of a God-chosen race. Whatever may be said of them, one thing is sure: They have never forgotten God’s law on marriage. Through nearly forty centuries they have maintained the purity of their racial blood, refusing to intermarry with others races; because God forbade such marriages.

Their focus on racial purity and their denial of intermarriage made Klansmen appreciate the Jewish community’s emphasis on segregation. The Jews understood that God forbade intermarriage, and they remained closely allied with His mandate. Despite such respect, Jews were still suspect in the Klan’s larger racial ideology. Their focus on racial purity did not guarantee the Klan’s acceptance. Rather Evans documented supposed Jewish racial traits:

Law abiding, healthy, morally alert, energetic, loyal and reverent in his home life, the Jew is yet by primal instinct a Jew, indelibly marked by persecution, with no deep national attachment, a stranger to the emotion of patriotism as the Anglo-Saxon feels it.

In spite of the Evan’s somewhat positive list of Jewish characteristics, he still found them completely incapable of true patriotism because they were not white. Anglo-Saxons could feel patriotism, and their racial hue placed them in harmony with the needs of the nation. Moreover, Evans continued that the Jews’ “jealously guarded separatism unfits them for co-operation” in the Klan’s movement to unify “dominant strains in American life.”

The Menace of Modern Immigration affirmed that the Jew was “alien and inassimilable [sic]” and provided a laundry list of the Jew’s faults: “[t]he evil influence of persecution is upon him,” careers in banking and finance (which somehow conflicted with the agrarian emphasis on land-owning), and materialism. The Menace called upon popular stereotypes of the Jews to show their inability to assimilate to larger culture. Their ethnicity, religious practice, and careers defined them as other and non-white. The under-girding assumption was that white Americans were not “money mad,” and they had attachments to the land instead of profit. Moreover, the pamphlet confirmed that Jews could not become proper citizens through assimilation because if the “melting pot [were] to burn hundreds and hundreds of years,” the Jews would still remain distinct from Gentiles.

For the Klan, the Jews proved to be too distinct to assimilate. The impulses of the Jewish race were supposedly opposite of the instincts of white citizens.
The *Menace* also turned its attention toward the Negro as inassimilable. The Negro was a lesser race than the Anglo-Saxon, and the “low mentality of savage ancestors” coursed through the veins of the “colored race in America.”\(^{410}\) The criticism of African Americans was more scathing than the denouncements of Catholics and Jews. Imperial Wizard Simmons noted that Negroes still spoke “the jargon of the jungle,” and they were “but one generation removed from savagery.” For the Klan founder, Negroes lacked the capacity to reach a developmental stage that would make them eligible for citizenship. The citizenship in the “great white man’s Republic” was so valuable that “lower” races could not attain it. Simmons lamented the fact that “the black man from Africa” could be “clothed and vested with all the rights and privileges that the white man can claim, and are solely the white man’s heritage.”\(^ {411}\) The *Kourier* warned that the approach to the Negro should disband prejudice because they could not reach the standards of white men. In the monthly, Dr. F.L.L. noted that the “Negro in America” was an “American problem that only white Americans can solve, if it can be solved.” For F.L.L., the Negro was “a benighted race intellectually and morally,” who proved to be a “burden” in national life.\(^ {412}\) To prove his point, the contributor provided a catalogue of the problems of the Negro race including crime and the impact of enslavement. He also listed the very few Negroes who had remarkable ability, including W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington. F.L.L.’s list functioned more as accusation to prove the inferiority of the best and brightest Negroes when compared to whites. The author continued his offense on that particular race by suggesting inferiority led to African enslavement. His conclusion ignored that white Europeans and Americans willfully enslaved Africans against their will for economic gain and advancement.

For F.L.L., there were only three options to handle the Negro conundrum in America: slavery, extermination, and amalgamation. The first two he ruled out as impossible. He observed that slavery had existed once, and it was not likely to be reinstated. Extermination was also impossible not because of the barbarity of that suggestion. Rather Negroes were “breeding too fast.” Luckily, according to F.L.L., Negroes were also prone to disease, which kept their booming birthrate under control. Finally, amalgamation was unacceptable to the contributor because the inferior race breeding with the superior race was a violation of nature. He noted that “the younger generation of Negroes are beginning to dream whites dreams of amalgamation,” but that dream was unattainable. F.L.L. turned to science to prove his point. Natural law, he argued, was explicit about the danger of racial amalgamation. Those laws of nature demonstrated
that “‘wherever colored blood mingles with white blood it’s [sic] always caused a degeneracy of the white blood.’” Proponents of racial mixing could not see the untold dangers to the white race if the practice was condoned. Racial mixing would bring the downfall of white superiority, and that was an egregious crime for F.L.L. He wrote, “If ‘White Supremacy’ is to be maintained in America, then white Americans must insist that the white peoples remain white and black peoples remain black.”

Moreover, the contributor expressed his confusion over the Negro’s understanding of his race. F.L.L. could not fathom how “millions of the black race in America have been deluded into the false belief that they—already—are ‘just as good as the white man.’” Such was impossible because of the supremacy and advancement of whites. Through the Klan’s presentation of the Negro and the Jew, its support of white supremacy becomes tangible. The white race was all that those other races were not. Whiteness included mental and moral superiority, racial purity, aversion to crime, patriotism, and civilization. The Klan’s whiteness was visible in the denunciations of Jews and African Americans, and those condemnations function to bolster white superiority. Yet the question remained: why were whites understood as superior? For the Klan, the answer was found in religious renderings of the origins of races and nations.

“That we avow the distinction made by the Creator between the races of men and are pledged to forever strive to keep white Caucasian blood pure and undefiled.”

In February of 1926, the Kourier issued a terse reply to Dr. Glenn Frank, a contributor to the Christian Century. In December of 1924, Frank authored an article entitled, “Has the Ku Klux Klan a right to celebrate Christmas?” The issue most pressing for the Kourier was Frank’s presentation of the Klan’s position on race. Frank wrote, “‘The Klan has no right to celebrate Christmas as long as it holds to its dogma of racialism.’” The monthly’s cheeky response was when did the Century become the guard that protected the “Babe of Bethlehem.” The Kourier attempted to show that Frank really had no understanding of the Klan’s position on racialism, and instead, that author, like many others, caricatured the Klan. Frank misrepresented the so-called racialism of the order. First, the monthly affirmed that the Klan supported white supremacy and opposed the “deluge of aliens.” The support of white supremacy was, therefore, different from racism because it was the love of one’s race rather than a hatred of another. Second, the Kourier questioned Frank’s interpretation of biblical text. The thrust of the
issue was that Frank asserted that the Klan could not be racist and Christian by using a Pauline speech, in which Paul claimed all nations were made from the same blood.

The monthly argued, “Grant that God ‘made of one blood all nations.’ Paul also decreed the bounds of their habitations. This clearly shows that God did not intend the races to intermingle.” To press the point further, the *Kourier* confirmed that Frank’s position on intermarriage of the races was quite similar to the Klan’s. Perhaps, the author and the order did not hold such different positions. Frank did not support the complete embrace of intermarriage but instead thought the journey to that process should be slow and cautious. Moreover, the *Kourier* laid out yet another Klan defense of white supremacy in its attack on the *Century* contributor: God created race. The divisions between the races originated from the divine. How could Frank argue with the religious backing for separation of the races? By putting race in the realm of the divine, the *Kourier* used religious reasoning to counteract his argument against the Klan. For the monthly, the order had divine support, but it was questionable whether Frank or the *Christian Century* did as well.

The *Kourier* and the larger Klan understood racial boundaries to be instantiated by God. The white race, in that particular vision, was the pinnacle of civilization, and protecting the purity of whiteness reflected divine mandate. George Alfred Brown contended that Christianity was inherently white:

Christianity was born of the white race and promoted by them, and while it is destined to become universal, yet if the institutions which support it should be controlled by pagan people the source of the supply of missionaries and Christian teaching would be destroyed.

Christianity, then, was a white man’s religion. Klansmen alleged that whites were the superior race created by God. Christianity was the order’s religion, which supported the divine favor of its race and advancement of white Christians over “darker” peoples. The Klan racialized the so-called universal religion and normalized its superiority in the process. As the *Kourier* reported, Paul believed God had made racial distinctions. Whiteness demonstrated that God favored the order and its members. That was why keeping the white race pure was paramount. The Klan had divine backing not only for its religious choice but skin color as well. For Brown, “the maintenance of white supremacy” required “the propagation of the ideals and institutions that experience has shown to be best for the race.” The Klan followed the will of God, and Klan
authors noted such to show the magnitude of maintaining white supremacy through racial segregation.

To show the hand of the divine in race, F.L.L. quoted Gail Hamilton, who said, “‘If God made the white man white, the yellow man yellow, the brown man brown, the red man red, He no doubt intended them to remain that color.’” He believed that to be enough evidence to shun the practice of miscegenation. For F.L.L., if God made those boundaries, it was the duty of all races to uphold them. Interestingly, the author used science to show the travesty of miscegenation. W.C. Wright, a minister in the order, also supported the divine view of racial creation in his pamphlet on Klan ideals. For Wright, the Klan maintained “the distinction made by the Creator between the races of men,” which meant that members “pledged to forever strive to keep the white Caucasian blood pure and undefiled.” The minister also imparted that those divine differences between the races meant the Klan was “unalterably opposed to intermarriage of whites and blacks, or the amalgamation of the races in any way.” Wright continued that the “crime of the age was miscegenation.” White supremacy was crucial for the minister because it preserved the distinct characteristics of each race. Wright further suggested that “[t]he mixing of racial blood is a violation of Divine Law.” To prove his point, Wright expounded that the “flood on the world in the days of Noah” was a consequence of that particular sin. The Klan minister also questioned the idea that everything created was made by God. He wrote, “God did not create a mule or a yellow negro. They are products of men’s sin and shame.” To prevent God’s law from being broken, Wright proposed a law “to prevent the marriage of whites and blacks.” He articulated the position of many Klansmen: racism was divinely mandated, so miscegenation was a sin. When white blood degraded, amalgamation meant the decimation of the race and its advances.

For the Klan, God created racial distinctions for the preservation of all the races and their unique qualities. To follow divine will required accepting those distinctions, even if they were paramount to racism. A Klan pamphlet maintained a similar position to Wright and stated, “It is the duty of every white, Gentile, Protestant, American citizen to preserve the purity of his race and religion by choosing a mate of like color and creed.” As a part of citizenship, racial and religious purity had to be preserved. The pamphlet noted that patriotism was also based on uplifting as well as preserving religious and racial purity. Patriotism, then, could also be harmed if amalgamation was allowed. Miscegenation was also national threat. Other Klan pamphleteers
and editors were also stringent in their denunciations of intermarriage and their uplift of divine will. In another Klan pamphlet based on a series of interviews by a national magazine, the message was more strident. In response to the question, “What is the basis, then, for the distinctions which the Klan draws against members of these races and religions?” the answer followed, “Americans must face the fact that God Almighty never intended for the social equality of the negro and the white man.” The races were distinct because of divine mandate, and equality was far from guaranteed. Moreover, such signaled that God definitely did not allow for intermarriage if equality was not even acceptable. The Kourier affirmed that opinion in response to Frank. The Menace of Modern Immigration upheld a position akin to Wright’s. For the Menace, “there could never be intermarriage between whites and blacks without God’s curse upon our civilization.” Since God created the divisions, transgression would be punished harshly. The Menace wanted Klansmen and the general populace to know the danger in miscegenation: the ruin of the American civilization.

Imperial Wizard Evans also explained the divine reason for the disparity in the character of the races. For Evans, the issue revolved around the fact that each nation or race had “its own God-given qualities” and “its own mission.” But, those qualities and mission only functioned properly if the “blood of the race” remained pure. He wrote, “If any nation is mongrelized, that nation will lose its distinctive quality and its power to contribute to civilization.” Moreover, the Anglo-Saxon race, the white race, had the most to lose in disobeying the divine separation of the races. The purity and the advancement of the white race would decline with miscegenation. The anxiety over racial purity and the tenuous nature of white supremacy was apparent even in the texts in which the Klan emphasized God’s role in the race’s development. The sin of miscegenation was not only the sin of violating racial purity but also the sin of dismantling the superiority of the white race. Miscegenation and amalgamation put fear in the hearts of Klansmen because they might lose their status as the divinely favored race. The violation of racial purity was the most disastrous sin because it signaled the declension of the white race. The anxiety over the purity of white womanhood echoed that sin (see Chapter Four).

Miscegenation also led to the violation of white women. In Harold the Klansman (1923), the heroine, Ruth, made her disgust of racial mixing known. Ruth read a novel, in which a young woman was about to marry white cultured gentlemen only to find out before their wedding that he was one-sixteenth Negro. “In the end love triumphed and the girl married the man with a
strain of colored blood in his veins.” Ruth reacted vehemently to the conclusion by tossing her book to the floor and proclaiming, “‘Rot, rot, that makes me sick!’”427 Pearl Gardner, a fellow employee of the bank, witnessed the violent treatment of the book and questioned the heroine’s reaction. That, of course, allowed Ruth to become the mouthpiece for the Klan’s view of race. She argued that love could not conquer racial distinctions because “love that violates the racial instincts, that runs counter to the experience of mankind, that does violence to the highest social standards—is love run wild and does not lead to the greatest good.”428 Poor Pearl did not realize the dire consequences of intermarriage, and Ruth laid them out for her. Most importantly for Ruth, a white woman falling in love and marrying a Negro man was a violation of “the racial instincts within her as well as the social standards of the race.”429 Ruth attempted to convince misguided Pearl that the white race was damaged through miscegenation. The Klan was preserving the integrity and the purity of race through that racial ideology. The protection of the race equaled the maintenance of the home. As Ruth explained to Pearl, the “American home is a home that is based on the love of one man for one woman and requires a freedom of choice in marriage which is seldom found among the dark races.”430 White marriages allowed for freedom of choice, which the “dark races” somehow lacked. For Ruth, the Klan functioned to protect the white race from amalgamation but also to help the other races reach their potential separately. Though a fictional character, Ruth, the author resounded the previous arguments about racial distinction. The threat of miscegenation might lead not only to the damage of racial stock but also the ruin of the home.

For Imperial Wizard Evans, miscegenation signaled race suicide, which ultimately would cost whites their positions of power in American culture. Evans argued by allowing “the crowding in of foreigners,” such meant “America’s own sons and daughters…cannot support large families.”431 Immigration and amalgamation actually stunted white births. Pointing to various studies, Evans confirmed that Anglo-Saxons were already in decline. Moreover, he agreed with “some observers” who argued “every alien landing upon American shores prevents the birth of a native white American.”432 Miscegenation and immigration together, for the Imperial Wizard, caused race suicide. In the face of those threats, the dominance of white supremacy might no longer exist. Evans and his Klan feared that the rule of native white Americans might come to an end. Just because God mandated the division of the races, such did not guarantee protection of white dominance. Whites were under attack by immigration, African
American enfranchisement, and miscegenation. Even though the divine stipulated racial
distinction, the Klan worried its supremacy and homogeneity might no longer be valued. For
Evans, white people encountered persecution, and intermarriage was just one prong of the attack.
Persecution, as much as purity, described the experiences that those fair-skinned people
encountered.

“We white folks protect all these folks in their rights.”

Klansmen envisioned themselves not only as the defenders of Americanism and religious
beliefs but also as white victims surrounded by hostile minorities. Catholics, Jews, African
Americans, and various other groups victimized the Klan. As we have seen, the protection of the
community was paramount in the face of so-called persecution, and that protection occurred in
two ways, the public image of the Klan and the masked identities of individuals. The Klan had
many newspapers dedicated to describing the merit-filled actions of Klansmen and klaverns,
local chapters of the Klan. *The Imperial Nighthawk, The Kourier Magazine, The Dawn,* and *The
Fiery Cross* documented the order’s actions. As we have seen in previous chapters, the
production of print culture was one way to prove to an often-hostile audience the good works and
“true” meaning of the Klan. The explicit purpose of the *Nighthawk* was “to keep Klansmen
informed of the activities at the Imperial Palace in their behalf and of the progress and
advancement” of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.\textsuperscript{434} It was also a way to demonstrate the
order’s victimized status.

For instance, the *Nighthawk* reported the *Catholic Union and Times* slanderous remarks
about the character of Klansmen. The paper supposedly called Klansmen “‘murderous bigots
who work like rats in the dark,’” which led the *Nighthawk* to point out that such commentary was
“not the least bit bigoted.”\textsuperscript{435} The Klan became the target of bigotry as well as encountered
accusations of prejudice. The publications presented the attacks the Klan faced as an
organization that defended America, Protestantism, and whiteness. Catholic police and
legislators cracked down on “peaceful” Klan meetings, Jewish rabbis were petitioning the
removal of Christian songs from schools, and its despotic enemies destroyed Klan residences.\textsuperscript{436}
The weeklies and pamphlets deplored the Catholic, Jewish, and later Communist enemies as well
as explained the problems that each of the groups caused for America and its defender, the Klan.
The true meaning of the order was under fire, and the enemies disseminated faulty information.
In 1923, Imperial Wizard Evans documented the persecution of his members and their various attempts at peaceful assembly. In particular, an attack on the Klan in Carthage, Pennsylvania where Thomas Abbott became a Klan martyr, a riot in Wilmington Delaware, and a Catholic attack on a meeting in New Jersey. Those events were unfathomable to the Klan leader. Why couldn’t Klansmen assemble without being victimized? How were Klansmen different from any other fraternal order? To convey his surprise at those malicious attacks, he said:

You never heard of a meeting of [N]egroes being jumped on in the South; you have never heard of an assemblage of Jews being bothered, did you? We white folks protect all these other folks in their rights. Bless your soul, they [Catholics] were going to hold a meeting of the Holy Name Society in a place over in New Jersey and asked for police protection…[from] Klansmen. Within twenty miles of there gathered five, six, or seven thousand rabid Catholics and rocked and wrecked the building which Klansmen were gathered about their own business.\(^{437}\)

Such, at least for Evans, provided a clear example of the persecution the Klan met as an order of white men. Groups asked for police protection from the Klan. Yet the order needed protection of law enforcement to guarantee the safety of its members. All other groups could organize peacefully, but enemies assaulted the order’s meetings and gatherings.

According to David Goldberg, the second revival of the Klan faced much more violence than it doled out. In 1923 and 1924, anti-Klan forces employed violent tactics effectively against Klan rallies, marches, and demonstrations. In places ranging from Chicago, Illinois to Steubenville, Ohio to New Castle, Delaware to Carnegie, Pennsylvania, anti-Klan forces bloodied hooded Klansmen, destroyed electric crosses, and even killed Thomas Abbott. The martyrdom of Abbott, in particular, was clear example of vicious actions against Klansmen by Catholics (see Chapter 3). In Carnegie, Klansmen fled the scene as they were being pelted with bricks. In Perth Amboy, New Jersey, “6,000 counter-demonstrators forced Klan members to seek refuge in a local Odd Fellows hall.”\(^{438}\) What Goldberg demonstrated was that the persecution the Klan faced was not completely imaginary. The order had its fair share of enemies, who hated them because of its racial, religious, and national politics. Anti-Klan forces did not view their counter-measures as persecution but retribution for what the Klan inflicted upon them.

One dramatic example of persecution was an explosion at the \textit{Dawn} publisher’s former office. The \textit{Dawn} was a Chicago Klan weekly, and the bombing supposedly occurred at the time when the paper normally would have gone to press. Additionally, bombings occurred at a
business, which had recently advertised with the *Dawn*, as well as the pharmacy of Alfred Kurrasch, who was accused of being a Klansman by the newspaper *Tolerance*. The *Dawn* ran one story on the bombings accompanied by a picture of the wreckage and the title, “Was This Tolerance?” The article began, “This picture shows the extent to which religious or racial fanaticism may carried when lashed to the furious expression by propaganda.” The Klan was clearly the target of the explosion. The *Dawn* squarely placed blame on *Tolerance*, the journal of the American Unity League (A.U.L.). *Tolerance*, despite its title, “aroused these passions through misrepresentations, calumnies, and lies.” Moreover, the *Dawn* noted that after working up its readers, the magazine committed the egregious act of giving “them the names and addresses of Klansmen.” That meant “the sick-brained religious fanatics and morons with a race inferiority complex might know whom and where to attack.” For the *Dawn*, the irony was that *Tolerance* did not actually promote tolerance but seething hatred for the order. *Tolerance* maligned the Klan and Klansmen in its false accusations, which led to outright persecution of the order. Such inspired those with a “race inferiority complex” to create an attack on a beloved Klan publication. The *Dawn* noted:

> When those enemies of the Klan, masked in darkness more disguising than the pure white robes of a Klansman, slunk forth to murder and destroy they took a step which religious hatred although artificially inspired, made inevitable. That it did not lead to the murder of innocents…can be due only to the miraculous intervention of a good God who, even in his omnipotence must wonder what his mis-guided children mean by “Tolerance.”

The weekly reported through the intervention of the divine, no one was hurt. Members encountered persecution for the color of their skin and their dominance in the social structure of America. However, the Klan did not just blame *Tolerance* and the American Unity League for the bombing but also for other large-scale assaults on the order. The A.U.L., composed of Catholics, Jews, and African Americans, attacked the order where it was most vulnerable: the League revealed the names of members. Blatant attacks on the Klan in their journal generally were a nuisance, but the revelations of membership proved to be more damaging. For Goldberg, the A.U.L. should have been recognized for their “tactical ingenuity” because they “infiltrated the Klan, staged break-ins at various Klan offices and gathered information supplied by disillusioned former Klansmen.” The A.U.L. used the order’s commitment to secrecy as a key part of their campaign. They revealed the names of members including “over 23,000 Klan members in Illinois and Indiana alone.” The Klan fired back at the A.U.L. for the malicious
attacks, but the League formed under the banner of tolerance hit upon a Klan sore spot. Those attacks also gave much credence to the need for robes and masks to protect white members from dangerous minorities.

From the perspective of leaders and the membership, those enemies portrayed the K.K.K. unfairly. Instead, the misinformed should have relied upon Klan publications to understand its goals and works. The publications presented the new Klan as separate from the rough and rowdy types of Reconstruction Klan. No longer were Klansmen supposed to be rogue vigilantes rather they were white Protestant men that upheld American values and freedoms. Klansmen were virtuous white Knights in the Klan weeklies. Those Knights, however, did not wear bright or shining armor. Instead, they cloaked in white fabric with masks upon their faces. The robe and mask became the most identifiable symbol of a Klansmen, and the costume was also the most contentious. It hid individual identity of each Klansman at the same time that it reinforced collective identity of the white, faceless, and homogenous mass. Because of the attacks by various anti-Klan forces, the white costumes of Klansmen became a necessity. The robe functioned for protection of membership, as a religious symbol (see Chapter One) and as a racial signifier.

Imperial Wizard William Simmons confirmed that the initial purpose of the robes was “in grateful remembrance the intrepid men who preserved Anglo-Saxon supremacy…during the perilous period of Reconstruction.” The white robes for white men illuminated the second revival’s purported allegiance to white supremacy. The garments linked the 1920s Klan to the Reconstruction Klan in one similar goal: the maintenance of white dominance. For the Reconstruction Klan, the costume allowed them to claim to be vengeful ghosts from hell to frighten African Americans. However, the 1920s Klan did not attempt to frighten enemies by recalling that approach rather the robe operated differently. The sartorial sign emphasized the purity of the order and protected members. Photographs of 1920s Klansmen capture their homogenous presence and their facelessness rather than their ghostly qualities. Photographs were usually exercises in constructing an identity for an individual, but the images of the Klan showed shapeless, indistinguishable figures.

The photographs in Klan newspapers were primarily group pictures in full regalia, and the venue for personal autobiography became a method for representing a white-hooded collective. It was almost as if members displayed themselves, as they wanted their America to
be: white and homogenous with unperceivable differences between peoples. The order documented its presence in the robes for others to see in the print culture. The images depicted members in full regalia at picnics, rallies, demonstrations, and their own klaverns. The process of wearing the uniforms was the process of assimilation to Klan ideals and goals, but more importantly, those robes also served to reinforce the race of their wearers and to communicate the ascendancy of whiteness. Caucasian hands peaked underneath the shapeless visage. Members in their robes presented a snowy-white movement that uplifted the superiority of their racial heritage through the racial and religious exclusion of other groups. Robes affirmed the race of the wearers and the “white” religion of Protestantism.

By putting on the robes, Klansmen magnified their racial whiteness. Robes provided a visible whiteness to invisibility of membership. The Invisible Empire became quite visible and tangible in the images of men wearing the white cloth (Figure 13). Such demonstrated the numbers of members but not their identities. All of the members, of course, were Caucasian, but with their faces hidden, their stock became less apparent. The white cloth emphasized racial heritage and made each Klansman a towering white figure, who echoed the supposed superiority with the height on the conical hat. The whiteness of the robes magnified their racial caste as well as their spiritual righteousness (also represented by the color white). The robe also harkened to the whiteness of Christianity mentioned by Brown and others, but I would argue that the whiteness of membership was also emphasized by the focus on protection of identity.

The Klan needed robes to guarantee the secrecy of the order but also the confidential nature of membership. The robes were fundamentally related to the Klan’s interpretation of persecution. Those garments functioned as defense for Klansmen against those who would persecute them for their ideals or skin color. The garments showcased the racial homogeneity of the order but also served to protect Klansmen from becoming victims for their choice to guard their race, their religion, and their nation. The mask shielded the white men. For Imperial Wizard Evans, the mask guarded “scores of thousands of our members from intimidation, sabotage and worse.” The begrudged mask guaranteed that “the organization of native born white American Protestants” could continue to be “bent upon salving American traditions from the mongrelized and criminalized foreign deluge.” The disguise allowed white Americans to save their nation despite the adversity they faced. The cloth magnified racial purity and functioned as a necessary precaution for the white men that took up the Klan’s sacred cause. Those white men could not
accomplish their increasingly important work without the protection of the mask and robes. The robes allowed Klansmen to be saviors of nation without becoming obvious targets of persecution and hatred.

The importance of the cloth manifested in the manufacturing of the crucial sartorial symbol. Interestingly, only white hands crafted those “hated” garments. That source of shielding could not be manufactured by just anyone. Rather Evans also established a regalia factory for their production. Private companies, which also employed Klansmen, had created the garments previously, but Evans wanted Klan to economically benefit from the production of those sacred robes.\textsuperscript{449} White men produced the robes for other white men. The hands of racial others would taint the garments and the membership. The garment that represented racial purity could only be so if made by whites. The uniform was too important for protection and as a symbol to be crafted any other way. Only Klansmen could be trusted in providing robes to each klavern and its members. The uniform and the print culture demonstrated the Klan’s clear vision of its persecution and how that related to the white skin of members. Supremacy emerged through the race’s need for protection and the order’s reliance upon secrecy. The uniforms reified whiteness while also serving as a fabric form of defense. The impetus for secrecy and cloaking again illuminated the visibility of the Invisible Empire’s race. Along with the focus on racial purity and persecution, the Klan also constructed an American race that needed protection from menace and harm. That construct complicated the order’s previous racial renderings because it emerged from hybridity.

\textit{“We have inherited…the God-given qualities that have made the native Americans distinct from other peoples.”}

According to historian Edward Blum, in the nineteenth century, “almost every aspect of American Protestantism was permeated by whiteness.”\textsuperscript{450} Blum further argued that nationalism after the Civil War uplifted whiteness and a common Protestant heritage to mend the wounds caused by sectional strife. Nationalism and faith in American character combined whiteness, Protestantism, and patriotism to signify whom American citizens really were. Klansmen defined real citizenship in similar terms. Not surprisingly, the America the Klan safeguarded was the America that reflected the order’s own racial and religious values. Members codified that understanding of nationalism in their characterization of the American race. America, thus, was a divinely created and guided nation. The Klan was an agent of the divine, which was why the
order answered the call to save the nation and her institutions. Imperial Wizard Evans noted again and again that America was under attack, and only those of American stock were fighting for the soul of the nation. The order marshaled against those threats because the members “had faith in nationalism under which our racial qualities and our national genius should grow to perfect fullness.”

The white race honored nationalism and perfected it as well. That was because Evans believed that the Klan’s actions “came from the instincts with which God endowed our race.” The order proposed that the Creator gave the white race special traits, which bolstered superiority and talent over other races. However, Evans understood race beyond the categorization of whiteness, and he envisioned an American race, which combined racial and religious features. The American race was native-born, white, and Protestant. Religion played an equal part in his rendering of a special race endowed with “the greatest heritage ever given to a race of men.” The peculiar race gained land abundant in resources, “a home where racial qualities can have the fullest development,” an advanced legal system, and a slew of traditions and customs, which fostered nation-building. Evans wrote:

> We have inherited, together with a religion under which each man may hold direct communion with his Maker and consider for himself the great problems of life and death, the God-given qualities that have made the native Americans distinct from other peoples.

The racial category included a personal relationship with God and the benefit of divinely ordained traits that guarantee the success of the race. That race and its national home, however, faced the threat of alien ideas, peoples, and attempts to redefine American nationalism, which Evans noted was only suitable to the racial character of whites. “American blood,” however, did not ensure one would agree with the Klan because many of the racial caste were swayed by immigrant propaganda. The American race, for the Klan, contained a larger history unbounded by the continent.

Interestingly, the racial heritage of white Americans was a history of amalgamation. Evans argued, “There is a clear history of the peoples who were blended into what is called the Anglo-Saxon race, who were blended again in America with the blood of the Northern races of Europe.” Evans painted the process of amalgamation in which that stock gained all the worthwhile traits of the various (white) races. Americans were truly special through that mixing. Evans traced all the races and their inherited traits to show the hardiness and unique abilities of
Americans. He started with the so-called Northern races, who likely were Scandinavian. The severity of the climate molded those races into “hardy, industrious, persevering, level-headed and independent” peoples. The Northern races conquered Rome and England “where they settled and were welded into one race.”

In England, the racial mixing continued. For the Imperial Wizard, “this little island” allowed for the “mixture of Angles, Saxons, Danes and Norsemen.” The amalgamation created a people who fought against tyranny and “Cosmopolitanism.” Such was the only the beginning of what would become the American race. The English bloomed, and that new race was pivotal to the development of Evans’s beloved nation. The English peoples imbibed in liberty and fought against the tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, Evans suggested that though Protestantism emerged out of Germany, the English adopted the religious movement and brought it to its fullest potential. The “little island” nurtured Protestantism; whereas, France, Spain, and Southern Germany fell under the purview of the Catholic Church. The key to understanding England’s pivotal role in creating American stock was that because of the English influence, “Protestantism is today synonymous with Anglo-Saxonism.” Due to England’s embrace of the religious movement, Protestantism became racialized. The Imperial Wizard proposed that “[a]ll Protestants are blood cousins” of the same racial stock. Despite the importance of liberty in England, it was not “free enough for the Protestantism that built America.”

The Puritans, instead, became the creators of American Protestantism. “[T]heir faith in their religion and their race” drove them to leave England in search of a place where they could worship freely. The Puritans wanted freedom to worship their Calvinistic brand of Protestantism, but the Klan leader uplifted the color of their skin. The Puritans were white. To gain freedom, Puritans settled in Holland, a country that proved to be beneficial for worship. Evans argued they left that country “because they could not maintain there those racial qualities which were dearer than life.” They journeyed to America “to face starvation, cold and constant warfare that they might preserve their religious faith and racial integrity.” Puritan efforts lead to the birth of a new race. Evans claimed:

The history of America is the story of how those pioneers, impelled by the same heroic qualities which had brought them to America, spread across the continent. They were joined, as time went on, by the like-minded of other races—closely allied in blood and spirit with Anglo-Saxons. A new race, the American, was born as it marched across the continent—building schools and steepled churches.
The American race, then, was born of Nordic and Anglo-Saxon traits, English Protestantism, and the experience of the new land. From the white civilization, America formed her greatest liberties and accomplishments, including democracy, religious freedom, and public education. The future of America, as did her past, depended upon presence of whiteness. Evans continued, “Just as this Western march built America, so it must save America.” To protect its heritage, the order fought against “[a]lien blood” that might erode the greatness of the white American race.

For Evans, the “Klan’s peculiar mission” was a “Divinely appointed mission—to work in every way for the fulfillment of Americanism, and for the protection and correction of America.” The order, according to its leader, had four types of people of which they should be cautious: Jews, Celts, Mediterraneans, and Alpines. Jews were a threat because they were “a people apart.” Celts could assimilate, but only “a slight mixture of Celtic blood is valuable to the Anglo Saxon race.” Moreover, Celts allied with the Catholic Church. Mediterraneans were of “mixed blood,” which made them incompetent and lazy, and they, too, owed their allegiance to Rome. Finally, the Alpine was Catholic, which meant he lacked “leadership, initiative, and independence.” Each of those peoples would only harm the American race. For Evans, “[i]f any nation was mongrelized, that nation will lose its distinctive quality and its power to contribute to civilization.”

The threat of “mongrel blood” proved disastrous to the nation built by white Protestants. The American race made all the advances, and those races could only provide detriment.

Evans’s predecessor, William Simmons, emphasized that the continent was made for the white race. He also envisioned the danger of alien immigrant elements on American culture. Simmons lauded the Anglo-Saxon as the foundation for the American race. He wrote that the Anglo-Saxon “sailed untried seas and wrote his compact of white supremacy while the angels hovered in the rigging of the Mayflower.” The Pilgrims, for Simmons, were the bearers of white supremacy as well as of notions of religious freedom. Yet Evans placed more importance on how the white race created both Americanism and Protestantism. He reported:

The unity between Protestantism and Americanism is no accident. The two spring from the same racial qualities, and each is a part of our group mind. Together they worked to build America, and together they will work to preserve it….We serve God best by serving mankind, and our greatest service is rendered through the building of a unified nationalism.
Race was the foundation to the twin ideals of the fraternal order. Evans spilled much ink to prove that point. The Nordic (white) traits of Americans provided liberty and democracy. In another speech, Evans argued that “Protestantism has found a real home only in the souls of men and women of Nordic races.” The unity between Protestantism and the Nordic race meant that attacks on America by alien foes could lead to the untimely death of the religious movement. The Imperial Wizard proclaimed, “It is only through the maintenance in America of native, white supremacy…that Protestantism itself can be saved.” The religious movement was bound to the superiority and dominance of whites, which if challenged would lead to the downfall of Protestantism as a whole. White supremacy and the religious tradition were symbiotic; the ruin of one would equal the destruction of the other. Whiteness was the lynchpin of America’s Protestant Christian society. The Imperial Wizard believed that the “greatest gifts” of being white Americans were the “racial qualities and instincts” of the Nordic. The racial stock of (white Protestant) Americans was the foundation of the nation’s success and progress. He continued:

> From all these things we have in spite of our individual differences, inherited a national character, a national mind, and a joint understanding of and grasp upon the problems of life which are different from the ideas of any other race. *This national mind, which belongs to every member of our American group, and which is based upon our God-given and inbred instincts and traditions, is our most priceless inheritance and our most valuable possession.*

God provided whites with that priceless gift as their rightful inheritance. The Klan’s task was to shield the dominant position of whites in American society. For Evans, danger lurked in the form of unchecked immigration and foreign ideas. Neither nationalism nor the race could reach full potential with the presence of aliens.

There remained, however, a vexing problem. Evans and his Klan lamented “mongrel blood” yet the foundation of the great American race he proposed originated from the alchemy of races. Various racial traits materialized from the diverse white races: the Northern races of Europe, Nordics, Anglo-Saxons, and occasionally, the Celts. How could the American race be pure as well as being a mixture? The core of Klan white supremacy was the purity of the blood. In his attempts to claim the heritage of Americans, Evans culled together various racial stocks that when combined created an elevated race. That occurred despite the heated Klan warnings about the danger of amalgamation for whites. How could Evans have argued vehemently for
both? Could various white races have merged to create the American race? But, how did that reconcile with Evans’s previous assertion about the addition of any lesser races leading to mongrel populations? That precarious position on the American race demonstrated that Evans obviously imbibed in racial theory that was popular in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in America.

According to Matthew Frye Jacobson, Daniel Ullman, a leader in the Know-Nothing Party in New York, articulated a similar paradigm for America in 1868. Ullman believed that God had “hidden the continent of North America from Europe’s ‘civilized races’ until they were properly prepared to undertake the bold experiment of self-government.” Ullman favored Germanic races, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Teutons as the racial groups that influenced the formation of America. Those great races combined to form an American race, but Ullman still argued that American race could be ruined through assimilation. Scholar Carol Mason also noted that race often appeared as a matter of “character” as well as color in the early twentieth century. For Mason, “[t]he semantic slippage between being ‘colored’ or not, having good character or not, and belonging to a particular place…began in the early twentieth century when determining what it meant to be American was debated in terms” of whiteness. Mason observed that President Theodore Roosevelt uplifted the melting pot while lamenting race suicide. The American race was a key phrase for the President, and “it effectively became a euphemism for ‘the white race’ despite his outspoken admiration” of race theories that viewed some forms of miscegenation positively. Even Roosevelt maintained the contradiction that white miscegenation should be affirmed, but other varieties of race mixing should not.

Obviously, Evans promoted logic similar to Ullman and Roosevelt, but the contradiction still remained. How could one form of amalgamation be beneficial and the other detrimental? For Evans, as soon as the American race was formed from various white races and their mingling with Protestantism, it somehow transformed into a pure white race separate from its amalgam origins. The American race was the pinnacle of civilization because of that forging of similar racial elements. After the process, which was tempered through the encounter with American geography, the white American race was superior to all other racial castes. Whiteness was only diluted through its encounter with lesser “darker” races. The American race in all its pure whiteness stood the most to lose with assimilation. Yet Evans did not correlate the racial mixing that created the race he loved with other forms of miscegenation. Those two appeared like
foreign processes. Evans’s trepidation about certain racial mixtures appeared in the Klan’s pamphlets and newspapers alongside his praises of white supremacy and dominance. The creation of the American race was the only beneficial mixing. For the Klan, America was a white man’s nation with the white man’s religion, Protestantism. Evans’s American race communicated that to the membership. White saviors in robes defended the “true” American race to stave off the ruin of national civilization and culture. White men had to save the American race from all those who did not qualify.

To demonstrate the fragile position of whiteness in larger culture, the Office of the Grand Dragon in Georgia relied upon “lamentation of a full blood Indian over the passing of his race.” Under the dramatic question, “Shall the prophecy come true?”, the poetic jeremiad was to served as a warning to Klansmen about the vulnerability of their race. The Indian poet cautioned:

For hearken you Anglo Saxon,
Though your belching guns may boom,
You shall follow our father’s footsteps,
And your remnant shall march to its doom.

You shall stand with us in the sunset,
You shall follow our dying race;
In the house that your fathers builded,
An alien shall strand in your place. 465

For Evans, such might have encapsulated his fear. The white race was marching to its destruction, despite divine favor and superiority. The slogan of white supremacy ensured the protection of the nation, the faith, and the place of white men and white women. Whiteness was another component of the Klan worldview and demonstrated how the order’s concerns with racial purity were bound to understandings of nation. White supremacy functioned to inform the true Americans of their lineage and the need to protect the nation’s heritage. To protect the race and the nation, the Klan primarily fought rhetorical battles. In May of 1924, the battle became physical as Klansmen fought Notre Dame students in the town of South Bend, Indiana. The Klan-Notre Dame Riot of 1924 demonstrated how the Klan actively sought to define membership and citizenship against the un-Americanism and supposed brutality of Notre Dame students. Anti-Catholicism reared its ugly head in the order’s documentation of the riot, and the Klan retellings of the event signal how the order’s view of America intermingled with faith, gender, and race.
CONCLUSION

“Rome’s reputation is stained with Protestant blood”:
The Klan-Notre Dame Riot of May 1924

“It (the Indiana Klan) has never been accused of violence,” says Mr. Frost, “and in a recent riot which I happened to see at South Bend the aggression was entirely from the other side. That bloodshed was prevented was due to the strenuous efforts of Klan leaders”—The Truth about the Notre Dame Riot (1924).

Because of the intolerant views held by Rome, thousands of Protestants have been murdered in the past, and until Rome proves that she has discarded those murderous policies, Protestants will do well to fear her—The Imperial Night-Hawk (1924).

In his Roman Catholicism and the Ku Klux Klan (1924-5), Charles E. Jefferson sought to explain why the hooded order opposed Roman Catholicism. But the author soon made it clear that he was willing to criticize both movements for their critical flaws. Jefferson, the pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle in New York, hoped to inform the American public about the Ku Klux Klan and to serve as a meditating presence between the Klan and its foes. In a sermon of the same title as the book, Jefferson examined why “the Roman Catholic Church…excite[d] the Klan’s antagonism.” For the pastor, the Klan was not essentially an anti-Catholic order. The numerical lack of Catholics in states under the banner of the Invisible Empire did not justify such behavior. He reasoned that since Catholics only made up “one-seventieth” of Christians in Georgia and one-fourth in Texas, the Klan could not be opposed to them just because of their presence. By Jefferson’s logic, it would make no sense for the order to expend its energies on such a small population. Numerical absence, however, did not mean that Catholics were ignored either. Catholics, the pastor admitted, proved to be quite troublesome to the order because of their supposed lack of patriotism. Jefferson noted that the order was primarily a patriotic reform movement that sought to improve America for Americans.

Catholics stood in the way of that reform. The pastor centered upon the Klan view of Catholics because “the Ku Klux Klan gives the impression that a certain class of Americans are being discriminated against because of their religion.” After asserting that he was not a Klansman, he argued that the Klan was not entirely religiously intolerant. The author explicated the Klan’s complicated position on its Catholic neighbors. First and foremost, the K.K.K. did not oppose Catholics because of their worship, even if it was “Christianity in Italian dress.” Jefferson wrote, “But Americans have no objection of Catholics making use of candles and
incense, holy water and the sanctus bell, and the gorgeous robes of the priest.” Additionally, Protestants did not mind Catholic doctrines, including transubstantiation, papal infallibility, purgatory, or the adoration of the Virgin Mary. He further argued that Protestants have no problem with Catholics believing such doctrines, if Catholics were able to actually believe such things.  

The quibble between the Klan and Catholics lay firmly in the realm of politics. The Klan opposed the government of the church and hierarchy because of the threat of mass mobilization under the command of the pope. The New York pastor upheld the K.K.K. position on the Catholic Church. The danger of the papacy and the hierarchy was one that Jefferson agreed all Americans should be aware. Moreover, Jefferson asserted that Rome was partly to blame because the Church ignored and disdained Protestants. That disdain practically forced Klansmen to take up their hoods to protect white Protestant supremacy in America.

Despite his attempts to understand the Klan’s relation to the Church, Jefferson approached the issue differently from his Klan brethren. He urged his listeners and readers to recognize the patriotism and dedication of Catholics throughout American history. He pleaded with them to think of Catholicism at its best rather than obsess over the Church. Such obsession made them the “victims of hysteria” who inhabited a “whole world [that] swarms with enemies.” For Jefferson, that conspiratorial thinking elicited a divine response. Anxiety was “the penalty that God inflicts upon men who always think of their fellow men at their worst.” The pastor wanted to comprehend the Klan’s persistent fear of Catholics, and he alluded to the many portrayals of Catholics present in Klan print culture. The hierarchy and the influence of the pope made Jefferson nervous, but he did not fully agree with the order’s presentation of the Church as an enemy of Americanism. Jefferson, instead, looked for the best in Catholic neighbors and their institution rather than condemning outright the religious tradition. The order, however, did not allow such a gracious interpretation.

The K.K.K. feared Catholics because of their allegiance to an opposing religious movement, their ties to immigration, and the hierarchy of the Church, which appeared secretive and possibly dangerous. Catholic strangeness caused the order’s anxiety. Catholics were the perfect foil to the Klan’s white American Protestantism; they epitomized all that the Klan hoped not to be. Those imaginings of the Church and her members showed acute concerns with nationalism, religious orientation, womanhood and manhood, and whiteness. The Church
symbolized all that could lead to the downfall of the Protestant nation. But Catholics also fascinated the Klan. The order admired the hierarchy even as they loathed it. To say that the Klan did not simply hate Catholics obfuscated its varied attempts to articulate the Catholic threat. To explore further the Klan’s anti-Catholicism, the Klan-Notre Dame riot of 1924 demonstrated how the Klan understood and reacted to the perils of the nation. The riot also illuminated the order’s attempts to claim the dominance of white Protestants in American culture.

On May 17, 1924, a riot broke out between Notre Dame students and Klansmen in the streets of South Bend. Young men from the Catholic university attacked and ripped robes off of Klansmen who had gathered in South Bend for a rally. Klansmen fought back. The rioting lasted for a total of three days and finally came to an abrupt end. For the K.K.K, the battle quickly metamorphosed into a fight over American ideals. It was not just a fight between young college students and members of the order, but it actualized the Klan’s fears about Catholics and their place in America. In the order’s accounts, Catholics resorted to attacking Protestants in the streets. In his *Notre Dame vs. the Klan* (2004), Todd Tucker employed a Catholic narrative of the riot, in which the men of Notre Dame not only won that battle but also won the larger war. For Tucker, the riot in South Bend stopped the nefarious organization in its tracks. Despite Tucker’s earnestness, Klansmen being disrobed and threatened by Catholic students did not lead the order to the brink of destruction rather in some ways the riot emboldened Klansmen and their fellow Protestant brethren in their verbal and printed attacks on Catholics. Rather than Catholics defeating the Klan, the decline of the order in the 1920s centered on a multitude of controversies that struck at the roots of the order’s ideology. The order managed to maintain membership until 1930.

The riot was significant and underplayed in the history of the 1920s Klan but for different reasons. While Tucker’s work examined both the Notre Dame and Klan experiences of the riots, he overlooked the Klan’s religious mooring. Moreover, he assumed, like much of the literature on Klan-Catholic relations, that the Klan simply hated Catholics. The riots, and the press surrounding them, tell a dissimilar story because the order feared Catholics as a threat to nation and to white Protestant dominance, at the same time, members claimed their secure place in larger culture. For the 1920s Klan, Catholics were powerful enemies, but Protestant citizenry still dominated American life. The Notre Dame-Klan riots elucidated Jenny Franchot’s hypothesis that Protestants were attracted to and repulsed by Catholics in her work on Protestant-Catholic
relations of the nineteenth century. The Protestant K.K.K. was both attracted to and fearful of its enemy.\footnote{474}

Tucker’s provocative work, then, overlooked the intricacies of those riots as well as the rhetoric of Americanism employed by both sides. Those riots demonstrated how both Catholics and Protestants in South Bend utilized the rhetoric of faith and nation in very similar ways. The men of Notre Dame struggled with the issue of being Catholic in America, and the Klan lamented the decline of Protestant America because of the presence of Catholics and other outsiders. Both were concerned about the character of nation and how their religious affiliations affected their citizenship. To explore the riot in detail demonstrates how ideas of American nation intermingled with religious ties and white supremacy. Moreover, the examination of the riot and its place in Klan print culture highlighted how the Klan worldview functioned. Protestantism, whiteness, gender, and nationalism coalesce in Klan renderings of the riot and allowed us to see how those fixtures function together to define the order. Catholics responded to those claims in their own ways. The Klan’s characterization of Catholics, as a menace to American culture, explained why both sides interpreted the riot in such stark terms.

“\textit{Rome’s reputation is stained with Protestant blood}”.\footnote{475}

The \textit{Imperial Night-Hawk} claimed that the Klan was “unalterably opposed to religious intolerance,” but the news organ also professed common suspicions of Catholics held by Protestants. The \textit{Night-Hawk} noted the “infallibility of the church,” the disdain for Protestant marriages, and the common belief that “all Protestants are heretics” lead many to “dread its power.” Rome proved to be intolerant and inflexible not the Klan. The weekly reported that “Rome’s reputation is stained with Protestant blood.” The provocative statement said much about how the order interpreted and reinvented the Protestant relationship with Rome. Rome became the active oppressor of movements that it supposedly considered heresy. For the \textit{Night-Hawk}, the Catholic Church had a crimson-tinged history. Until the Church reckoned with that history, how could Protestants feel anything but dread? After those historical actions, Protestants could not trust the intentions of the Church. The article continued:

\begin{quote}
 It is regrettable that there is a religion in America, that cannot be trusted. It would be satisfying to feel that no religion considers our wives concubines or our children bastards. It would be equally gratifying to know that no religion stands for murder and devilish cunning in its dealings with other religions. And, it would also be pleasing to feel that no church in America wants to limit freedom. But, until Catholics prove that they do not stand for such principles…safety demands that Protestants stand together, no to molest
\end{quote}
Catholics, but to protect themselves.\textsuperscript{476} The \textit{Night-Hawk} insisted that Catholics must be watched to safeguard Protestants and American liberties, and those precautions were preventative measures. As the editorial made clear, Catholics could not be trusted because at best they were saddled with a bad reputation, and at worst they were still an active threat to Protestants. If Catholics had control of the nation, Protestants would lose their constitutional guarantee to religious freedom and control over their own marriages. The \textit{Night-Hawk} painted a dire image of the nation under the firm control of the hierarchy. A Texas Klansmen concurred with the weekly’s assessment. He argued that “Romanism” sought to “lay its slimy, blood-stained, murderous hands” upon the public schools, Protestant marriage, and the government.\textsuperscript{477} “Romanism” could corrupt American institutions if it was able. Romanism functioned as term to show the political influence on the church, and it proved to be more loathed than the Catholicism practiced by individuals.

While the order proved highly critical of the hierarchy, that did not necessarily impact members’ views of ordinary Catholics and beliefs. Individual Catholics garnered protection for the freedom to worship. Imperial Wizard H.W. Evans emphasized that the Klan had no quarrel with the individual’s right to worship. He argued, “The right to worship God according to the dictates of one’s own conscience is necessarily one of the fundamental principles of human liberty.” However, that right could be compromised if religious practitioners intruded upon the state. Evans affirmed that those “devotees” would have to “abstain” from political behavior for “their own protection.”\textsuperscript{478} The order grudgingly admired the efficiency of the hierarchy and employed it as a model for the Klan’s own bureaucracy (see Chapter Two). The Klan could not deny the efficiency of the loathsome hierarchy. The Catholics had created a successful bureaucracy, which Klansmen groused about while they secretly hoped they could create a similar Protestant model. The difference, of course, was that Protestant bureaucracy would be on the side of good intent unlike the Catholic counterpart.

In a position paper on Roman Catholic hierarchy, H.W. Evans pinpointed one particular threat. The position of the pope within the tradition unnerved Evans, especially the pope’s supposed challenge to the separation of church and state. He wrote, “The individual Klansman recognizes the right of the individual Catholic to worship God, pope, or idol…but the claim of the pope that he is God’s divinely appointed…representative on earth complicates” the Catholic position in the nation. Evans believed that the pope’s position gave him special power over the
state. As God’s human agent, the pope might hold more sway over the minds of practitioners than calls to patriotism by national governments. For the Imperial Wizard, that signified Catholics would be loyal first to the pope and then to America. Those citizens, thus, supported faith over government, which meant that Catholics might not be prepared to support the state in all necessary arenas because of their religious allegiance. Evans, who was more subtle and cautious than the previous Klansman, observed:

“The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan do not believe that persons of the Roman Catholic faith necessarily are un-patriotic, or in any way inferior to people of other beliefs, but we do hold that a system of Church government which claims dominance over state governments is dangerous to the state.”

The Klan fretted about the Church because of her potential for political interference. In the Klan view, her system of teaching and government contradicted American principles and values. Individualism and religious liberty were not foundations of the Catholic tradition, but rather those traits created difficulty for Catholics to fully embrace the character and heritage of the nation. Bound by hierarchy and dominated by priests, bishops, and the pope, Catholics were unable to make their own decisions or to embrace fully American institutions. Evans feared that Catholics would destroy sacred American liberties because of the pope’s influence upon their hearts, their minds, and especially their votes. Through the pope’s dictate, the faithful might block vote, which could prove ruinous not only to democracy but also the sacred separation of church and state. To protect the nation from the Church might be viewed as intolerance. Evans believed it to be a defense of all that he held dear. He continued:

“For the Roman Catholic as a man we are sorry, for the Roman Catholic hierarchy as a semi-political religious organization we have an antipathy bred into us from the loins of our forefathers, the men who conquered the wilderness and built a nation, and set ablaze the beacon fires of liberty that all the world might see by that light the true road of happiness.”

Evans was not demure in his denunciation of the Church’s political organization, and he made it clear to his Klansmen that Catholics were a threat to the liberty of their Protestant nation. Interestingly, that logic could have legitimated Klan persecution and intolerance of Catholics, but the print culture remained remarkably silent about the Klan’s actual treatment of the Church and her members. Various Klan journals denounced Catholicism in their pages, but there was no documentation of how the Klan reacted to adherents of the faith.
Instead, the print culture highlighted the persecution of the Klan by Catholics. The order’s opposition to the hierarchy led to the maltreatment of the Klan at the hands of hierarchy and some willful individuals. Evans warned his members “the heavy weight of Catholic persecution…is a cross we will bear,” and bear they did.\(^{481}\) The *Night-Hawk* documented various incidents of Catholic harassment of the Klan. In New York, Catholics and Jews supposedly championed the Walker Bill, which applied only to the order, instead of broadly to all secret organizations. The Walker Bill required anti-masking, filing membership lists with the state, and limiting mailing and political participation of the order. Walker, according to the weekly, was a supposed Catholic or at least sympathetic to the Catholic cause.\(^{482}\) The support of that bill demonstrated to Klansmen what they believed all along: their foes were out to get them.

In one bizarre instance of Catholic harassment, Nelson B. Burrows claimed that the Klan abducted him and branded the letter “K” on three different body parts, including his forehead. At first, Burrows, a Catholic convert and a member of the Knights of Columbus, received support from his community of Rochester, New Hampshire. However, once the attorney general began questioning him on the attack, it became apparent that Burrows concocted the whole scheme to place the blame on the Klan. He staged the hoax and branded himself. The *Night-Hawk* reported that Burrows hatched the elaborate plot to harm the reputation of the order in Rochester because of a recent spike in Klan membership. Burrows, who fancied himself a religious martyr, hoped to turn the public against the order. The *Night-Hawk* noted that many people attempted to blame the K.K.K, but “the truth always comes out, sooner or later.”\(^{483}\) That plot, in particular, represented the fanatic persecution that the order confronted not only from the hierarchy but also from rogue individuals. Moreover, Burrows was a member of the Knights of Columbus, a fraternal order that the Klan believed was full of nefarious intentions towards Protestants in general and the Klan in particular. Thus, if Catholicism made the Klan anxious, the Knights of Columbus (K.C.) proved more menacing. The fraternal order, an organization of Catholic men, appeared harmful to the purpose of the order. Klan leaders conspiratorially noted that the K.C. engineered schemes against them.

To demonstrate the hazard of the K.C., an Arkansas Klansman submitted an article from the Memphis *News Scimeter*, which detailed the dangers of Catholicism as well as his own analysis of the threat, to the *Night-Hawk*. The *Scimeter* pointed to the creation of two new American cardinals and the prowess of the K.C. The addition of cardinals made visible Rome’s
encroachment on America. However, he proved more concerned about the possible power of the K.C. Overall, the Arkansas Klansmen’s position was a similar to the standard line about the Catholic Church being a “master of political intrigue, masquerading under the guise of religion.” More importantly, he uplifted the threat of the K.C. as the “militant arm” of the church. He pondered, “Or is it true, that the Roman Catholic Church…has so organized its militant arm…that it is now ready to remove its mask, throw down the gauntlet and defy patriotic American Protestants to do their worst?” America, in all her focus on liberty, created “a Frankenstein monster which now shamelessly threatens to devour its benefactor.” By allowing freedom of worship and immigration, the nation had opened her doors to the Church, her political apparatus, and varied missionary attempts. The Church was powerful, and her fraternal order might have proved to be the most powerful in America according to the Klansman’s rendering. Those Catholic Knights took their orders directly from Rome, and the protection of the hierarchy was their central goal. With the power and support of the K.C., the Klansman dreaded that the Church might prove unstoppable. However, the K.K.K.’s opposition meant that the hierarchy could not maintain reprehensible plans for America. The order imagined that its Protestant Knights were the only ones defending the nation from the Catholic danger. To differentiate the order from the other Knights, the Klan sought to demonstrate that it was the truly American order with the “blood of pure Americanism coursing” through members’ veins. The other Knights, by default, were not actually American but rather pawns of a foreign interloper.

American or not, the K.C. had to be exposed to show its militant intentions and its hatred for Protestants. To further document the menace of the K.C., the Klan issued a pamphlet entitled, Knights of the Klan Versus Knights of Columbus. The pamphlet represented the issue in stark terms. One could either be allied with “the Roman Catholic hierarchy as representative of the Pope of Rome, or with the Ku Klux Klan representing Americanism in this country.” That “with us or against us” stand, according to the pamphlet, was no fault of its members. Rather Catholics caused the divisive rift by attempting to take over American government. The Catholic Knights were the strength behind that attempt. Additionally, the K.C. was to Catholicism what the Klan hoped to be to Protestantism: a militant, religious army fated with the task of protecting the faithful. Interestingly, the order ignored that they were parallel organizations and instead demonized the other Knights and their hypothetical practices. The K.C. was dangerous precisely
members sought to defend Catholicism, which was ironic considering the Klan envisioned itself functioning in a same but legitimate way for Protestantism. The defense of the faith was a virtuous task, but the defense of other religious movements was only represented as harmful and intolerant in the order’s writings.

To present the motivations of the K.C., the aforementioned pamphlet contained a supposed K.C. Oath interspersed with various images presenting Catholic torture of Protestants, supposedly from the Inquisition. The images of Catholics hanging, burning at the stake, and generally threatening and harming Protestants provided the visual evidence for the legitimacy of the oath. The images made the claims of the oath tangible and concrete, and Protestant readers might have been duly convinced by those depictions of torture. The interlacing of words and image clarified the Klan’s intentions: to malign the Catholic fraternal order. The oath declared:

…I will defend this doctrine [Roman Catholic positions on Jesus, the Virgin Birth, the papacy, etc.] and His Holiness’s right and custom against all usurpers of the heretical or [P]rotestant authority…I do further promise and declare that I have no opinion or will of my own or any mental reservation whatsoever, even as a corpse or cadaver…but will unhesitatingly obey each and every command that I may receive from my superiors in the militia of the Pope, and of Jesus Christ….I do further promise and declare that I will when opportunity presents, make and wage relentless war, secretly and openly, against all heretics, Protestants and Masons, as I am directed to do, to extirpate them from the face of the whole earth; and that I will spare neither age, sex, or condition, and that I will hang, burn, waste, boil, flay, strangle, and bury alive these infamous heretics: rip up the stomachs and wombs of their women and crush their infants’ heads against the walls in order to annihilate their execrable race.

The graphic words made the images appear tame. The oath avowed the destruction of heretical Protestants in grotesque and visceral methods. It proved what the Klan believed all along: the hierarchy was waging secret and open wars against them. The oath confirmed the worst of fears about the K.C., including the unquestioning devotion to the pope. Catholics, again, became the unthinking followers of a powerful religious leader. Additionally, the pamphlet provided “evidence” that Catholics harmed heretical Protestants as well as the permissible violence committed by the K.C. under the dictate of the larger Church structure. Men, women, nor children were safe from the Catholic fraternal order and its wicked intentions. The violence was not limited to Protestants, however. If a Knight of Columbus was weak or uncommitted, the oath detailed his fate as well. The member might have “his brethren…of the Pope cut off my hands and feet and my throat from ear to ear, my belly opened and sulphur burned…and my soul shall
be tortured by demons in eternal hell forever.” For the Klan, what more evidence would one need to show the violent tendencies of the K.C. or of Catholics more generally? The oath served as a warning to those who did not align with the order that if Catholics conquered America, torture might await all Protestants. It was clear that unlike Pastor Jefferson, the Klan wanted to view Catholics at their worst, even if it was an imagined worst.

Not surprisingly, Catholics responded to the K.C. Oath and asserted its falsehood. *Our Sunday Visitor*, a national Catholic weekly, denounced the fake oath and its continued popularity. The “bogus” oath continued to be used despite “a committee of prominent Masons,” who vouched that “no such obligation forms any part of the ritual work” of the K.C. The fraternal order even published the real oath as a countermeasure. The *Visitor* noted that the *New York World* proclaimed the oath was fake and documented that “paid organizers of the Klan” circulated it. Moreover, the *Visitor* questioned the Klan’s own oath as dangerous and harmful. For the weekly, the Klan willfully used a bogus oath to malign Catholics while its own oath recorded the threatening nature of its order. To support those denouncements, the *Visitor* offered $1000 reward to anyone who could prove the oath was “genuine.” The reward was also offered for any documentation of “misstatement of facts concerning real Catholic belief and practice on subjects treated.” For the weekly, the Klan’s persecution of the Catholic Church actually helped the Church in her cause. The Church could not change bigoted minds, so Klan membership demonstrated who the bigots really were.

The *Visitor* reported that the Church benefited from all of the negative press and argued, “The more Protestantism espouses the Klan, the more its cause is sure to be injured, because where the Klan disgraces itself, Protestantism must be disgraced.” The order, in its attempts to discredit other religious movements, was presenting a seamy side of its own faith. Protestants, then, had to repudiate the Klan or suffer a fall from grace at the hands of the order. Additionally, the *Visitor* claimed that those tactics actually helped the Church because members and new converts came to her defense. The weekly reported, “In a nearby city, where the Klan became very powerful, every Catholic became zealous; the Knights of Columbus Council initiated one hundred new members” and “a wealthy Catholic donated a home to the Knights.” Klan actions, according to the weekly, actually lead to growth of the K.C., which was obviously not the order’s intention. The *Visitor* also responded to Klansmen in a gentler manner than the hierarchy was treated in Klan newspapers. The weekly affirmed the order’s anti-Catholicism, but “we must not
presume that every person who has joined the Klan has anti-Catholic antipathies in advance.”489 The motivation to join was not necessarily driven by that antipathy, and the Visitor sought to give Klan members the benefit of the doubt.

The order was not so gracious in its renderings of the K.C. or the Church as an institution. Klansmen were at best ambivalent about Catholics and their position in the nation and in the world. Their condemnations of the Church and the Catholic Knights bordered upon hatred and were fueled by deep mistrust of the Church’s intentions. The order was on the defensive, watching and waiting for the despicable intents of Rome to become public. Catholics repulsed and attracted Klansmen, and more often than not, the order chose to interpret the church as a political organization in religious clothing. The order feared what impact Catholics might have on the political realm yet much of the ambivalence about the Church revolved around the Klan’s professed Protestantism. To prove the distance between the religious movements required exaggeration and accusation. The riot in South Bend proved to be a candid example of Catholic intolerance and persecution for the Klan as well as evidence of the order’s fight to uphold true Americanism. The battle in the streets became a canvas colored by Klan fears and anxieties about Catholics. For many Klansmen, that event proved that even ordinary Catholics could have despicable intentions towards the order. It was a self-fulfilling prophecy, which allowed the order to present all that they upheld as under vicious attack. Much like its understanding of the K.C., the Klan portrayed those events to fit previous narratives about Catholics and their avid loathing of all things Protestant and American. The riots, similarly, gave “evidence” to Klan claims about the peril of the nation.

“Students of Notre Dame [sic] College…are the latest to commit an outrage against citizens of the Invisible Empire.”490

“In South Bend, Indiana, while it seems impossible, students of Notre Dame, a Catholic university, burning with hatred, attacked men and women…and trampled under their feet the American flag.”491 So began the Fiery Cross’s reporting on the Klan-Notre Dame Riot of 1924. The paper demonstrated that the riot was interpreted quite dramatically by the order. The riot became a pitched battle between Protestants and their fierce attackers, Notre Dame students (who represented the whole of Catholicism). The order viewed that event as indicative of Catholic affronts on Americanism, their hatred for Protestants, and their continued persecution of the Klan. In essence, the riot proved to Klansmen that their beloved nation was under attack, and
they were the victims as well as defenders of the noble heritage of the nation. Their depictions, then, present their victimization. Moreover, reports of the rioting served as a rallying cry to mobilize not only the white Protestants of South Bend but also of the nation. The riot legitimized the Klan’s worldview and demonstrated that its concerns were tangible and real. The assault by Notre Dame students illuminated that Catholics were a menace that needed to be stopped.

Interestingly, the riot in many ways was unremarkable. It was catalogued as one of many incidents of persecution. For the Klan, the event was only the “latest outrage” faced by “citizens of the Invisible Empire,” which suggested the normality of persecution that the Knights faced. According to the Night-Hawk, May 17th started as a mundane Saturday. Klansmen gathered in South Bend for an ordinary ceremonial and parade. The villains of the weekly’s rendering were the Notre Dame students, who opposed a “peaceful assembly of one hundred percent Americanism.” Those students uncovered the location of the Klonclave, the assembly, and they “booed and hissed” at all the men, who gathered at the hall. The Night-Hawk characterized the beginning of the riot in the following terms:

[A]t about half past eleven, when the students realized that the Klansmen intended to carry out their purpose in a quiet and orderly manner, they [the students] became violent and began to stone an American flag hanging from the Klavern window and to smash the windows of the building. As the Klansmen left the hall, they were pounced upon [,] beaten and cursed by the students of Notre Dame. The Klansmen, as is their custom, refrained from fighting back those who opposed their movements and actions, again proving to the world that they are law-abiding citizens, willing and ready to let the law take its course.492

The Klan news organ presented the Klansmen as innocent victims many indignities. According to the weekly, the police did not come to the order’s aid because much of the police force was Catholic. Those sectarian police officers did nothing to halt the student escapades. By the late afternoon, Protestant policeman joined the fray to protect their kindred citizenry of South Bend. Interestingly, the South Bend News-Times described the police presence as more substantial in number. According to the News-Times, all available police reserve was called in to quell the riot. Policemen wielded clubs indiscriminately at both parties and arrested Klan and anti-Klan factions.493 The order, however, emphasized not only the lack of police presence but also the larger motivations of the rioters: to assault all the Protestant citizenry. By the order’s accounts, the students enlarged their attack to include any Protestants, whether they were affiliated with the Klan or not. All white Protestants became potential targets and victims of the rowdy students. On
May 18th, the rioting was quieted by rain, and the students returned to the university. However, the street clashes began fresh on Monday, May 19th, until Father Matthew Walsh, C.S.C., the president of Notre Dame intervened. For the _Night-Hawk_, students mercilessly trampled American flags and harmed the citizenry. From the order’s perspective, the riot boiled down to attacks on Klansmen, Klanswomen, and civilians because they were Protestant and American, and their enemies, those students, lacked patriotism.

To document the persecution, the _Night-Hawk_ described the event, and the order also crafted a pamphlet entitled, _The Truth About the Notre Dame Riot_. In the twenty-one page document, the Klan inserted editorials, eyewitness accounts by Klan and non-Klan writers, and opinion pieces. The pamphlet documented the injustice Klansmen faced at the hands of riotous Notre Dame students and a cover-up by the media that revealed the press’s support for Catholics. It also provided a timeline from the first attack to the development of “general rioting.” In the so-called general rioting, students attacked Protestant men, women, and children. Students trampled flags, accosted women, destroyed robes and even harmed the young and the elderly in the fray. The students were clearly on a rampage. Robes “were torn from them and torn into strips,” and students tied “the strips about their arms” and gave “them to girl sympathizers to mark them as friends.”

One eyewitness, Wingfoot, noted that the students quickly outnumbered the Klan. The order decided not to hold its parade not because of numerical disadvantage but because members feared more bloodshed. Wingfoot also reported the savage beating of an elderly couple. He wrote, “One of the most distracting scenes was the beating of an old white-haired couple who carried small American flags.” The elderly woman was injured. According to a the _Fiery Cross_, police sustained countless injuries and “[h]undreds of women suffered the injured indignities of receiving threats and scurrilous names.” In one incident mentioned again and again in the pamphlet, a student accosted a baby girl in the tumult. One account rendered the story most dramatically:

Finally, at one of the cross streets, I saw several of them [students] run across the street and surround a woman who was pushing a baby carriage on which was fastened a small American flag. One of them tore the flag from the carriage and pulled out the baby. He slapped the baby first on one side of the face and then on the other, and threw it, literally threw it, to the woman I suppose was the mother.

According to Wingfoot, that was one of the “worst outrages of the day” because the “baby girl was struck in the face by a student and her mouth was badly lacerated.” For the Klan,
one student stooped so slow as to slap a baby because her carriage sported a flag. Such showed the desire of the students to attack any Protestant Americans no matter what age. The elderly and the young were full-fledged targets. The assaults were not limited to people, but also to symbols of Americanism. Students trampled, ripped, stomped, and otherwise desecrated flags. Wingfoot reported, “When appeals came from American citizens not to stone and trample flags, students cursed and said they ‘were not American flags.’”

In excerpts from the *Noble Country Democrat*, a purported non-Klan editor commented on the calamitous events and the defilement of the flag. The editor of the *Democrat* disdained the South Bend police as Catholic and as “appear[ing] to be more ignorant than they sound.” He also interviewed “a very gentlemanly Catholic,” who claimed “he didn’t like Klansmen” but “he could not condone the desecration of the flag.” The editor continued at length to make sense of the riot and the possible Catholic responsibility for the event. He wrote:

> We much prefer to think this whole disgraceful affair at South Bend was fostered by that small thirty to thirty-five per cent of the students who do not owe allegiance to this country, but facts ascertained by close investigation do no bear this out. They—the foreign element—were undoubtedly of the mob hurled on a peaceful citizenship from the gold-domed college, but they were not all of it. They were augmented and assisted and undoubtedly directed by religious fanatics who are citizens of the United States, but feel called upon to disgrace the flag of this free land just because it is given a place of honor in an organization they oppose.

By trampling the flag and rioting against the Klan, Catholics proved that they showed no allegiance to nation. For that editor, they were fanatics, who possibly did not deserve the honor of citizenship.

Notre Dame students, then, showed their true colors in the riot: they did not support the peaceful nation, which provided “the foreign element” a home. According to the pamphlet, those students were not patriots. Moreover, the Klan impugned the faculty of Notre Dame, who supposedly did nothing to punish their students for the “outrage.” Wingfoot reported that the riot lasted a full day without response by the faculty “to stop thugs who were beating women and children, dishonoring the American flag and causing riot.” He also reported that the “gates” of Notre Dame had been locked down with no reason given. For the eyewitness, the institution had not sufficiently punished the students for their malfeasance and their apparent lack of patriotism. The students had harmed innocent bystanders, including vulnerable women and children, and defiled the flag. Yet no action was taken. To add insult to Klan injury, Mayor
Seebirt of South Bend requested the Klan “lower” its emblem from the order’s headquarters. A Klan officer rebutted, “the Knights of Columbus display their emblem at lodge halls…and that Roman Catholic churches display crosses.” According to the account, the Mayor did not continue his request.  

Despite the uneventful end to the riot, various authors of the Klan pamphlet affirmed that the persecution did not end with those events. Rather the press attempted to cover-up of the students’ actions in South Bend. For the Fiery Cross, the reactions of the press made it more apparent to the residents of South Bend that the Klan stood for law and order. Those residents witnessed the dramatic events of the riot and read local newspapers that “made an effort to gloss over the actions of the mob.” One “prominent business man” questioned whether the press could ever be trusted to fairly represent the Klan since the actions of the Notre Dame students were hidden. To show the prejudice of the local papers, the Klan paper pointed to an article on Edward Dinneen, a Notre Dame student who supposedly lost his life in the riot. The article placed the blame for the riot squarely on the shoulders of the order and claimed the students protected themselves and their university from the attack. That story was evidence of the press’s bias against the Klan and the distortion of the events to benefit Catholics. Klansmen were the victims in that event, but the press defended the unpatriotic Catholics. Even though the persecution continued, the Klan adamantly believed that they had won the war, even if they lost that particular battle to the students.

According to the Night-Hawk, the riot led to a boon in applications in Indiana. The “state organization” was “clogged by applications from American citizens seeking membership in the Klan.” Additionally, the states nearest to Indiana also gained in membership applications. From the Klan perspective, the riot proved to be beneficial because it demonstrated to white Protestant Americans the real threat of Catholics and Catholicism to the nation. The riot, in some ways, proved that the Church actively maligned the Klan and Protestants. The Klan, despite the beatings, flag trampling, and robe ripping, had won a significant battle against the enemies of Americanism, who might have altered the face of its beloved nation. For Catholics, the riot was interpreted in dissimilar terms. In the Catholic narrative of the riot, the order impugned the Americanism and dedicated patriotism of not only the Notre Dame students but of all Catholics. The riot for the both the Klan and the students was interpreted as a battle for Americanism, but each side rendered their efforts as a defense of national pride and culture.
“There is no loyalty that is greater than the patriotism of a Notre Dame student.”

In the Notre Dame Daily, on Saturday, May 17, 1924, an editorial ran entitled “Heads, Not Fists.” The editorial reported that an “organization formed of men who do not think deeply nor well plans to parade in South Bend this evening.” The organization was obviously the Klan, and the Daily reported that Mayor Seebirt forbade the order to parade and beseeched “the Notre Dame men to remain at the university on that evening so possible trouble could be avoided.” Moreover, Seebirt confirmed that South Bend’s officials had the situation under control. The Daily warned Notre Dame students that ignoring the mayor’s request would only cause trouble. The editorial continued:

Some children need to be whipped, but the approved correction is an appeal to growing intellect. The approved correction is a means, not of administering bruises that surely pass with time, but of impressing mental blows that do not pass but remain to germinate. Tonight, we are sure, Notre Dame will give some shallow-minded ones an example of respect for the law. Tonight, Notre Dame men will use their heads and not their fists.

The Daily reported that those students would not provoke the Klan, who planned to march against the mayor’s order. Instead the Catholic students would provide a shining example to the order of how to be law-abiding. The president of Notre Dame, Fr. Matthew Walsh, C.S.C., also issued a bulletin on the Klan rally and parade on May 17, and it was reprinted in the Daily on May 18. He noted that Notre Dame was “interested in the proposed meeting of the Klan,” but the university planned not to interfere. Interference in Klan events, according to Walsh, led the order to “flaunt its strength,” which “resulted in riotous situations, sometimes in the loss of life.” Walsh also acknowledged why Notre Dame students might feel the need to react to the order:

However aggravating the appearance of the Klan may be, remember that lawlessness begets lawlessness. Young blood and thoughtlessness may consider it a duty to show what a real American thinks of the Klan. There is only one duty that presents itself to Notre Dame men, under the circumstances, and that is to ignore whatever demonstration may take place today….It is my wish that the Klan be ignored, as they deserve to be ignored, and that the students avoid any occasion coming into contact with our Klan brethren during their visit to South Bend.

Unfortunately, some Notre Dame men did not heed the warning of Walsh to stay on campus. According to Todd Tucker’s account, curiosity motivated some Notre Dame students to disobey the directives of the president. The Klan gathering and parade could not be missed. For Tucker, the events began when Notre Dame students scared, attacked, and even disrobed Klansmen in alleys and on the streets. One student that Tucker chronicled William “Bill” Foohey even had his
picture taken in a tattered Klan robe (Figure 14). The fun quickly turned violent as Klansmen decided to arm themselves with handguns underneath their official costumes. Tucker noted that Deputy sheriff John Cully, a Klansman, called the governor in hopes of mobilizing the Indiana National Guard. 508

From that account, the students had caused a full retreat of timid Klansmen, and they began to gather at the Klan headquarters. Luckily for the students, the first floor of the headquarters housed a grocery from which the creative students plucked potatoes and took aim at an electric fiery cross that was mounted upon the building. Tucker wrote:

The first potato shattered the third-floor window that shielded the cross, showering a few pedestrians with glass as they ran for shelter. A fusillade of potatoes followed. Each time one hit its target, a red bulb would burst with a pop and a shower of golden sparks. Occasionally, an angry-looking Klansman would peek out through a window, but a barrage [of potatoes] would quickly drive him back into the shadows. Soon, only the top bulb of the cross remained glowing. Throw after throw fell short. The men had exhausted their arms trying to hit the bulb, and their throws were becoming weaker and wilder. The remaining red bulb mocked them from above.

Eventually, Harry Stuhldreher, the Notre Dame quarterback, burst the final bulb. The fiery cross that seemed to taunt the students was annihilated with the help of potatoes. 509 Some students, then, decided to enter into the headquarters. According to their accounts, one Klansman confronted them with a gun. Tucker noted that priests from Notre Dame attempted to have the chief of police intervene in the riot, but he was dismissive of their concerns. 510 Luckily, rain dampened the excitement of the day. Our Sunday Visitor, in agreement with the South Bend News-Times, noted that a “thunder shower” kept the violence at bay. 511 Due to the rain, Sunday was a day of rest. The violence and attacks had appeared to subside, but by Monday, May 19, Notre Dame and Klan forces again clashed in the streets (Figure 15).

The News-Times reported that the rioting began again when the Klan hung a fiery cross from the window of its headquarters. Police stationed near the headquarters noticed “500 members of the anti-Klan forces began a march.” Faced with such a large presence of Klansmen and Notre Dame students, “policemen charged the crowd and wielded their clubs at random members of both factions.” In the process, the police clubbed some “innocent bystanders.” Fights broke out all over the city. Even “railroad detectives” were called in for reserve. The police force arrested both Klan and Notre Dame rioters, and members of both groups sustained injuries in the brawl. Catholic students claimed that they “were attacked with clubs, bottles and other weapons
carried by men who wore white handkerchiefs as arm bands.” The order eventually removed the fiery cross, and the crowds dispersed somewhat. For the News-Times, the appearance of Fr. Walsh calmed the calamity. The Notre Dame president talked to the students in an attempt to hamper their tempers and sooth bruised bodies and egos. Walsh stated:

> Whatever challenge may have been offered tonight to your patriotism, whatever insult may have been offered your religion, you can show your loyalty to Notre Dame and to South Bend by ignoring all threats….If tonight there have been violations of the law, it is not the duty of you and your companions to search out the offenders. I know that in the midst of excitement you are swayed by emotions that impel you to answer the challenge with force. As I said in the statement issued last Saturday, a single injury to a Notre Dame student would be too great a price to pay for any deed or any program that concerned itself with antagonisms….There is no loyalty that is greater than the patriotism of a Notre Dame student There is no conception of duty higher than that which a Notre Dame man holds for his religion or for his university.

Walsh’s measured statements affirmed the indignities that the students faced at the hands of Klansmen and the dismissal of their patriotism. He argued that it was not necessarily their fight to correct the ills of the Klan but rather to focus on their own loyalty and duty. Notre Dame men were patriotic. They did not have to assault members of the order to prove their dedication to the nation or their local community. The News-Times did not comment on Walsh’s statement about the patriotism of the students but rather summarized the events of the three previous days. The order scheduled a Klan parade. Students and Klansmen clashed in the streets. Rain prohibited further rioting on Saturday, and Monday proved to be the day of most vigorous fighting. Finally, Walsh stepped in to save the day.

What the accounts demonstrated was that the Notre Dame students were culpable. They did antagonize Klansmen, and Klansmen returned the favor. Both sides were involved in the street fights, and neither could really claim to be victims. The Klan narratives presented wild-eyed college students attacking Protestants. The Catholic understandings of the events did not necessarily support the students’ actions. What started out as pranks led to destruction of personal and public property, injuries within both factions, and chaos in the streets of South Bend. The event was calamitous to say the least. Patriotism was an issue for the Notre Dame students as much as it was for the Klan. Walsh attempted to show the students that street fighting did not necessarily affirm their patriotism. Some students, however, believed their attacks on the Klan were retribution for the order’s degradation of Catholic loyalty to the nation. For Walsh, the K.K.K. was not powerful enough to impugn the patriotism and duty of his students. Rioting did
not legitimate the Catholic presence in South Bend or more largely in the nation. Despite Walsh’s sentiments, those events also caused some members of the community to question further the Catholic university’s commitment to nationalism.

Walsh received letters decrying Notre Dame’s role in the riot. In a letter from Toledo, Ohio, J.E. Hutchison admitted that he was shocked to hear of the events that took place in South Bend and that previously he had admired the university in its educational efforts. However, the destruction of the flag by students swayed his opinion. He believed that the particular incident could have happened in a foreign country but on American soil, it was unbelievable. He ended his letter, “This Un-American demonstration has lost for Notre Dame University many ardent Protestant supporters in this section.”

In another letter from a self-proclaimed “Kluxer,” the author noted that Walsh should “thank your lucky stars” that Klansmen were not as destructive as “your bunch of lawless Anarchist students.” If they were, Notre Dame might have been razed to the ground. For the Kluxer, Klansmen were law-abiding as opposed to the “Anarchist Ruffians” of the university who had attacked him. The Notre Dame students showed obvious disregard for the law. The Kluxer explained that Walsh should start teaching patriotism because those Catholics students “tore the American flag to bits.” He wrote:

I have heard the Knights of Columbus deny that they have took such an oath as has been circulated among the public, but after reading in history of the bloody murders during the French Revolution, and knowing conditions as they exist today under Catholic domination [sic] in South America, and seeing with my own eyes some of the things that the bunch of Mackerel Smacking Anarchists from Notre Dame did last Saturday, I can easily believe that every world of the K of C oath is true.

For the Kluxer, the Notre Dame riot proved beneficial because more Americans would realize the present danger of the Catholic Church in America. The Klansman had his previous impressions of the Church and the K.C. confirmed by the actions of those students. The Klan’s renderings of the events were palpable to some who might have already wanted to believe the worst about Catholics.

But *Our Sunday Visitor* did not take the matter likely and produced its own version of the events. For the *Visitor*, the Klan ignored pleas and requests to call off its parade. Klansmen, then, “assumed the places of regular traffic officers,” which led students to disrobe some members of the order. Most importantly, the claims of “flag desecration” by students concerned the weekly. The *Visitor* responded that desecration was “only an embellishment of fervid minds, which, in
their pipe dreams, take every rebuff to the Klan as ‘an outrage of the flag.’” Such was an unfounded allegation created by the Klan. Notre Dame students were patriotic and loyal, and they did not destroy flags. By Tucker’s accounts, those students even won the battle, showing Klansmen that Catholics were a force to be reckoned when their patriotism was on the line. “*We could go and raze Notre Dame University, but that is not what the Klan teaches.*”

Accounts of the events of May 17, 18, and 19, 1924 varied widely depending upon whether one preferred the Klan’s retellings of events or Notre Dame’s position on the riot. What was likely was that each retelling contained some truth and a good amount of exaggeration. The Klan’s audacity to hold a gathering and parade in such close proximity to the university incensed Notre Dame students, and Klansmen believed that they were physically, spiritually, and intellectually beleaguered. What the riot most clearly highlighted was the Klan’s understanding of its worldview in one particular incident. The Klan envisioned a world in which Protestantism and nationalism needed defense from foreign ideas, religious movements, and races. The riot gave credence to that way of viewing the world. Catholics, who loathed the Klan’s faith and nation, attacked Protestants in the streets of South Bend. As students ripped robes off the bodies of Klansmen, Protestant theology was also trampled. The riots were an all-out religious war happening on native soil. White women, children, and flags faced indignities. All the ideals that the Klan held dear seemed fragile in that moment. The order’s print culture had warned of various threats, and those were actualized in the eyes of Klansmen and Klanswomen in the days of the riot. If the Klan was attacked, the nation was actually in peril. The order understood its members as the only real citizens because of their religious affiliation, their race, their commitment to patriotism, and their protection of gender roles. The street battle signaled the failing dominance of white Protestant men. In the tumult of the street battles, all of the order’s principles appeared to be harmed. The students besmirched patriotism, disgraced white womanhood, and accosted the faithful in the street brawls. The Klan’s worldview, in which a dedicated white Protestant citizenry populated and ruled the nation, appeared tenuous at best.

The physical manifestations of the order’s slogans, robes, flags, and the bodies of white women, were molested. Vicious Catholic enemies tampered with the physicality of the Klan’s beliefs. Its anti-Catholicism, which appeared primarily in the printed word, gained justification because the students confirmed the order’s worst imaginings. The Notre Dame students became the foil of the Klan’s desires and fears in that historical moment. After the chaos passed, the Klan
again imagined the nation as members preferred to. Time and distance reaffirmed its worldview, and Klansmen and Klanswomen embraced their previous positioning. Members did not hate or fear those Catholics. They definitely did not accost Notre Dame students with weapons. They faced persecution because of their beliefs and their proclaimed Protestant identity. Instead of reacting with hate, they responded with tolerance and love. Members did not attack the university for vengeance but returned to the gracious principles of the order. The *Fiery Cross* enumerated the order’s position:

> Klansmen…are truly taught to obey the law, to love their fellowman regardless of what their fellowman may believe. The acts of the Klansmen showed naught but love. The tolerance displayed by misused Klansmen might well serve as a criterion for all Americans. Klansmen could have done that which the may quoted said they could have done [harm the university]. But they did not; did not in the face of the fact that as American citizens they had a perfect right to assemble as they did. Every law, moral and otherwise, had been broken in the attack against them, but, remembering their pledge to uphold the laws of America—which give those Roman Catholic students the right to worship as they please—they were not swayed by hatred; they were held steadfast to American principles and, in the face of demoniacal hate, exhibited naught but love.\(^{519}\)

Love, not hate, was the defining feature of the order. Yet in the visceral renderings of the events in May of 1924, the Klan appeared in its most intolerant form. Members’ anger at the Notre Dame students’ audacity to assault the order rang clear. Anti-Catholicism materialized through the eyewitness accounts of the riots as well as the “fake” Knights of Columbus oath. The order imagined the Church and her faithful at their worst, and those particular events confirmed such.

The Klan accounts of the assaults were not personal but national. The assaults were larger than torn robes and slapped babies because they were acts of violence against the nation, the faith, and the race. The Knights of the K.K.K. visualized themselves as quintessentially American. Thus, harm to the Knights was harm to the nation at large. Each Klansman was a symbol of the larger image of America. In the order’s imagining, America was a nation founded, fostered, and actively crafted in the hands of white Protestant men. The white-robed visages were symbols of that heritage. Destroyed robes signaled racial and religious intolerance as well as national peril. True, or 100%, Americanism could only be found in the hearts, minds, and bodies of white, native-born Protestants. The Klan’s envisioning of beloved nation was exclusive and stark, so that African Americans, Jews, and especially Catholics could not really be citizens but interlopers. Those peoples were hazards to body politic because of supposedly foreign ideas, religious movements, and the possibility of miscegenation. In foreign yet familiar hands, the
nation would become heterogeneous, loathsome, and corrupt. American values and liberties would be decimated, and Liberty, the white goddess, would be tainted irreparably. The riot was a small representation of the larger battle, and the Klan had to win to guarantee the sanctity not only of the Indiana town but the whole of the nation.

The second revival of the Klan positioned members as defenders of faith, nation, race, and womanhood to guarantee the homogenous complexion of Liberty. To study the worldview of the Klan illuminated the intermingling of race, gender, and faith in the creation of American nationalism. For much of the so-called mainstream in the 1920s and early 1930s, America was white, Protestant, and pure. Hyphenated Americans demonstrated with clarity why various peoples somehow did not fit the mold of the nation. Assimilation was not a laudable option but a menace. Those so-called Americans were outsiders in larger culture, and the order hoped that they would remain that way. To explore the Ku Klux Klan’s worldview provided a clear demarcation of Americanness in exclusionary terms. The order’s strenuous dedication to white supremacy, faith, and strict notions of womanhood and manhood allowed one to examine how they constructed national culture. In the seams and fissures, the order’s unflinching commitment to exclusion and dominance prevail as well as its pressing concern about the tenuous nature of white prowess.

To take seriously the Klan’s claims of dominance and victimization presented a complex portrait of the order’s relationship to the larger culture, real and imagined. Much scholarship purported “status anxiety” as the reason for the Klan’s prominent rise in the 1920s, but the reality reflected anxiety and over-inflated confidence in one bated breath. Members lamented the changes in society in jeremiads ranging from the decline of religious culture to the public schools to new presentations of womanhood to miscegenation, but they also proclaimed that their dominance that would revive a troubled nation back to her original glory. Anxiety and desperation appear in the pages of the Night-Hawk, but so do novel samplings of history and resounding praises of Protestantism and white masculinity. The order’s positioning in the nation proved to be laced with ambiguity rather than forceful paeans of declension. The order configured members as victims, defenders, and winners in the course of American history. To examine the Klan, then, is to examine a group that proclaimed to be the “soul” of nation without much trepidation. Its vision of nation was not as fringe as it first appears. The focus on the
hatred, violence, and racism of the 1920s Klan occluded its resonance with American cultural currents.

By placing the Klan in the mainstream, historiographical tides must change. The order’s imaginings of faith and nation point to understudied currents in American religious history, including the distinct possibility that nationalism in that time period was based on Protestantism, masculinity, anti-Catholicism, and whiteness. What would that illuminate in familiar narratives that were previously hidden? If nationalism was based on religious and racial exclusion, that might explain the prevalence of white Protestant narratives of our history, which marginalized other religious and racial peoples. The Klan’s vision of history was not so different to older narratives of white Protestant triumphalism, which chart familiar historical actors as they marched across the American wilderness while downplaying fraught colonial encounter.

The Klan’s vision was not so different from its neighbors, but adding Klansmen and Klanswomen to our narratives implore a darker reading of religious nationalism. To use the Klan as an interpretative lens to American religious history changes the landscape. The Klan focused on the Puritans, Pilgrims, and other white Protestant pioneers, who were ordained by God to find America and create a white Protestant nation. In the creation story of the ideal nation, Catholics, Jews, African Americans, and Native Americans were noticeably absent because the Klan did not recognize those peoples as legitimately American. To approach the Klan’s rendering of history provided an analysis of colonial power and influence, that allows insight into a specific version of cultural colonialism from those who perpetuate and disseminate selective history to justify their ideals and their God-ordained place in the nation. Its narratives provided members with the historical assurance that the Klan, and by extension white Protestants, were to remain the real heirs of American culture and to maintain their favored position of dominance. What happens to narratives of American religious history if we take seriously the Klan’s understanding of such history and compare it to common tropes that appear in historiography?

The Klan’s telling of American religious history resonated with narratives of white Protestant endeavor and influence on our culture. Violence, intolerance, and the impact of white Protestant dominance would rise to the forefront as would the sometimes-selective grasp of historians, who minimized conflict in their narratives. What does it really mean that Jonathan Edwards, Lincoln, the Puritans, or the Pilgrims might have been “staunch Klansmen” if they had the chance? Relying upon the Klan’s historical practice gives insight into how selective
American religious history as a field tends to be as well as how amateur Klan historians were often even better at occluding the intolerance and violence in our nation’s past. The additional value of the study of the Klan is that this exploration gives historians insight into how the religiously intolerant imagine themselves.

The print culture of the order allowed for a window into the mind’s eye of editors, leaders, and average Klansmen and Klanswomen. More importantly, print illuminated how they envisioned their exclusion of others in the language of tolerance and love. Through the study of the second revival of the Klan, one can see the complexity of its vision as well as how members believed that they were doing what was best for the nation. In the order’s attempts to restore the white Protestant nation, they strove to protect their beloved nation, their faith, and their families from what appeared to be pressing threats. On their moral high horses, they judged what the nation and her people needed, and the order appointed its members as Knights to protect and defend exclusive values and principles. Protestantism proved foundational to defenses and presentations of nation. Where previous scholars have documented vituperative hate, those white Knights embraced the rhetoric of love to describe their Protestant heritage, Christian virtue, and motivation.

To see the Klan as they see themselves is an arduous task, but it also demonstrates the humanity of the members, no matter how reprehensible their actions and words. Faith in God and nation guided them, even if we would prefer not to see. Through the pages of the Night-Hawk, Klansmen and Klanswomen crafted their ideal nation, founded on faith and whiteness. The Night-Hawk identified friend and foe, crafted ideal behaviors, lamented persecution and changing gender norms, uplifted paragons of masculinity and femininity, presented theologies, and warned of careless actions. On each page, members read the values and principles of their Klan, and at least, attempted to embody those words. Through reading and practice, the Night-Hawk and its editors presented the Klan’s envisage of the ideal world populated by white, native-born, Protestant Americans and sought to make that vision a viable reality. From white robes to fiery crosses and American flags to expositions on motherhood and Christian Knighthood to configurations of whiteness, the order’s Protestantism proved foundational in each material and spiritual articulation of its world. The nation they inhabited was a religious one, and the threats to faith, nation, and race were one and the same. Christian patriots populated and led the Invisible Empire, and it could not be separated from the Empire Invisible in their hearts and minds.
Figure 1, Klan rally in Muncie, Indiana, 1922, Courtesy of Ball State University Archives, Muncie, Indiana
Figure 2, Klan formation, Courtesy of Ball State University Archives, Muncie, Indiana.
Figure 3, *The Imperial Night-Hawk* cover, 1923-1924, courtesy of Ball State University Archives, Muncie, Indiana.
Figure 4, 1920s Klan robe. Courtesy of the Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.
Figure 5, 1920s Klan hood. Courtesy of the Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.
Figure 6. Detail of the 1920s Klan robe. Courtesy of the Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.
Figure 7, “The Starry Flag and the Fiery Cross Shall Not Fail.” Courtesy of University of Georgia Hargrett Library, Athens, Georgia.
Figure 8, “The ‘Man On The Fence’ Becomes Uncomfortable,”
*The Dawn*, 1: 50 (October 13, 1923), 11.
Figure 9, Women of the K.K.K., Muncie, Indiana, Courtesy of Ball State University Archives, Muncie, Indiana
Figure 10, Women of the K.K.K., New Castle, Indiana, 1923. Courtesy of Ball State University Archives, Muncie, Indiana
Figure 11, “Under the Fiery Cross,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:40 (January 2, 1924), 8.
Figure 12, “St. Patrick’s Day in Atlanta, Georgia,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:51 (March 19, 1924), 8.
Figure 13, Initiation, Anderson, Indiana, 1922. Courtesy of Ball State Archives, Muncie, Indiana.
Figure 14, William Foohey in Klan robe, 1924, Courtesy of the University of Notre Dame Archives, Notre Dame, Indiana
Figure 15, Newspaper Clipping, 1924, Courtesy of the University of Notre Dame Archives, Notre Dame, Indiana
NOTES

1 “Clendenin, W. Va., Klan Growing,” The Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:44 (January 30, 1924), 6.
4 For an account and analysis of the Leo Frank trial, see Nancy MacLean, “The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism,” Journal of American History 78 (December 1991): 917-48. Wyn Craig Wade argues that the death of Mary Phagan and the organization of the Knights of Mary Phagan directly related to the birth of the Klan, see Wade, Fiery Cross, 144-145.
7 Kathleen Blee, Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s, (Berkley: University of California, 1991), 17.
8 Interestingly, the Klan would admit that the organization was for white supremacy as well as American freedoms and Protestant Christianity. See Exalted Cyclops of Monroe Klan Number 4, Louisiana, “Klan a Patriotic, Benevolent, Fraternal Organization of Christian Americans,” The Imperial Nighthawk, 2:2, (April 9, 1924), 2.
9 Quarles, The Ku Klux Klan, 58.
10 Wade, Fiery Cross, 253.
12 I mark the end of the second revival of the Klan at 1930 because membership had plummeted into the thousands. For some scholars the decline begins in 1925 when Indiana Klan leader, D.C. Stephenson was found guilty of the rape and second-degree murder of Madge Oberholtzer. The Klan played a fascinating role in the 1928 Democratic convention, in which members helped defeat the nomination of Al Smith. The Kourier Magazine continued to print Klan positions, opinions, and news until 1936.
13 The historical lineage of the Klan is much more complicated after the 1920s. In the 1930s and 1940s, various Klans took a stand against “dreaded” Communism to protect America. By the
1950s, there were a variety of different Klan organizations still attempting to defend the American way of life. In the 1960s, multiple Klans emerged to counter the Civil Rights movement. These Klans were characterized by violence and racial hatred. Klansmen were ready to defend America again by taking a stand against the Civil Rights Movement. In his *Invisible Empire*, Michael Newton noted that the 1960s marked a turning point for the Klan because the organization was no longer mainstream and would become increasingly more marginalized. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Klan emerged again under the skillful hands of David Duke, who “spun” the Klan’s racist message into a racist message: the Klan loved their white race rather than hated other races. This Klan accepted Catholics and established an explicit link between the Klan and Neo-Nazis. In recent years, it is hard to distinguish between the Klan and other hate groups because of the blending of their racialized ideologies and the popularity of Christian Identity, a racial faith which literally draws the world between good and evil, white and black. See Michael Newton, *Invisible Empire* Michael Newton, *The Invisible Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Florida*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997).


17 See Wyn Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, c1987). For Wade, this incarnation of the Klan would not have been as popular without attaching itself to fundamentalism. However, Wade has an ulterior motive in which he seeks to link the violent Klan to the Christian Coalition in the 1980s to show the violence of both movements and their danger to American society. However, this historical link seems tenuous at best.

18 In a review of Newton’s work, religious historian Glenn Zuber argues that Newton’s attention to the Klan’s violence is key, but he proposes to label the Klan as terrorists to bring their violence to the forefront. See Glenn Zuber, Review of *Invisible Empire*, *Journal of Southern Religion*, 5 (2002), located at http://jsr.fsu.edu/2002/Reviews/Zuber.htm.

Moore, *Citizen Klansman: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Of course, one might ask why Klansmen and women decide to present their white supremacy blatantly in regalia, newspapers, and political actions when other American citizens did not? Though it laudable to focus on Klan members as ordinary citizens, Lay and Moore to seem to take this approach too far.


21 Many accounts of the contemporary hate movement also center upon racism. James Ridgeway and Nick Ryan usually identified racism as the central facet of these organizations without reference to how racism came to predominate these groups. In their work, Betty A. Dobratz and Stephanie Shanks-Meile purported that race was the essential concern for the white separatist movement. This attachment to race can be understood in three ways as racialist (love of one’s race), racist (defense of one’s race), and supremacist (race hatred). Dobratz and Shanks-Meile propose that this racism is economic: some whites feel that they disadvantaged economically because of their skin color. This analysis, unfortunately, accepts race as a naturalized category rather than approaching race as a discourse. See journalistic accounts, James Ridgeway, *Blood in the Face: The Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, Nazi Skinheads and the Rise of New White Culture*, (Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1995) and Nick Ryan, *Into a World of Hate: A Journey Among the Extreme Right*, (Routledge, 2004). For more on white separatist movement, see Betty A. Dobratz and Stephanie Shanks-Meile “*White Power, White Pride!: The White Separatist Movement in the United States*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).


24 Several scholars have understood hate movements, and the Klan in particular, as proponents of so-called false religion. In her *The New White Nationalism*, Carol Swain argued that these movements employed a false religion, which could not be affiliated with Christianity, and her solution for all hate groups was to introduce them to evangelical Christianity. In his *One Aryan Nation Under God* (2001), Jerome Walters also noted that “real” Christianity could be the solution to Christian Identity’s “twisting of scriptures.” Moreover, religious historian, Philip Jenkins, noted, in a review essay on new scholarship on hate groups: “It seems grossly unfair to stress the ‘Christianity’ of any hare-brained rightist militant who asserts he is fighting in the name of God or Jesus.” These accounts of hate groups, especially Jenkin’s assertion, demonstrates the utter lack of attention paid to how religion functions for these groups. Scholars like Swain, Walters, Hamm, and Jenkins assumed that the religious expressions of hate groups, including the Klan, were not legitimate because they were not representative of “true” Christianity. This desire to set up boundaries between true and false religion does nothing to
further the scholarly enterprise, and more importantly, this distinction is supposed to mark the
religion of the hate movement as somehow not religion. Robert Orsi suggested that religion at
best is ambiguous, and it can be employed in ways that are beneficial and detrimental, and thus,
arguments about good and bad religion miss the fluidity of religion as a system. See Carol
Swain, *The New White Nationalism In America: Its Challenge to Integration*, (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2002); Jerome Walters, *One Aryan Nation Under God: Exposing
the New Racial Extremists*, (Pilgrim Press, 2000); Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The
University Press, 2005), 187; Philip Jenkins, “The Other Terrorists,” *Books and Culture*,
November/December 2003, 8.
27 Martin Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America*, Two Centuries of
28 Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, xv.
30 This is a bit contentious because lived religion is often applied to the religion of non-elites to
show us what we are missing from the “official” story. However, lived religion should also be
applied to elite sources as well because the insights of how Klan leaders hoped to practice
religion and enforce it on members shows their ideal vision of how the world was supposed to be
and their dedication to this preservation. See David Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America Toward
31 The *Imperial Night-Hawk* was a weekly published in Atlanta, Georgia.
of this figure is hard to determine, but the specificity of the number and modest number makes the
circulation seem more plausible.
34 “Dawn Circulation Climbs to 50,000 as Fight for Americanism Stirs Nation Wide Interest,”
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 125. Scarry writes that it is possible for “the
incontestable reality of the physical body to now become an attribute of an issue that at that
moment has no independent reality of its own.” Scarry, of course, is talking about in the realm of
torture. However, bodies become issues or beliefs in both her unmaking and making sections of
her text. The alteration of bodies, circumcision, flagellation, or dress, presents ideals and beliefs.
Thus, we can examine how bodies “exhibit” beliefs to understand how those beliefs impact the
believer. Moreover, Scarry presents that culture also has weight upon bodies that disappear in
death. Our cultures mold us from facial expressions to accents to what is acceptable to believe.
This happens through comportment as well as words.
36 See James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, (Boston:
37 See David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early


41 “Klansmen Should Support Newspapers Which Battle For Klan Principles,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:6, (May 9, 1923), 7.


[57] Witcher, *The Unveiling of the Ku Klux Klan*, 34.
[64] H.W. Evans, “The Klan Spiritual,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 2:30, (October 22, 1924), 3. This speech was originally given at the Second Imperial Klonvokation, Kansas City, Missouri, September 23 to 26, 1924. It is unclear as to when the speech was exactly given.
[67] It should be noted that the term “Protestantism” used in this text is not meant to suggest a monolithic Protestantism. I am attempting to describe the Klan’s own version of Protestantism that countered other forms of Protestantism during the 1920s rather than Protestantism writ large.
[70] “Jesus the Protestant,” 4.
[73] “Protestantism,” 3.
[74] “Protestantism,” 2.
[76] “Jesus the Protestant,” 5.


Dolan argued that this process of imagination was a way for nativists to express their forbidden desires of violence, sexual perversion, and possibly sadism, in that nativist literature presented these desires to combat them. See Dolan, The American Catholic Experience, 221.


Massa, Anti-Catholicism in America, 33-34.

H.W. Evans, “The Klan Spiritual,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 2:30 (October 22, 1924), 2.


“Constructive Christianity,” The Imperial Night-Hawk, 2:31, (October 29, 1924), 3.

“Knowing the Catholic Method,” The Kourier Magazine, 1:3, (February 1925), 9.

Dolan writes, “While this opposition was fundamental to the processes of making meaning and creating conceptual order, it was so subtle and shifting that it had to be reasserted or recreated constantly. Indeed, the difference between the two categories existed largely in such reassertion” (23). Reassertion of their differences from both Protestants and Catholics presented a method to claim separate identities. See Frances E. Dolan, Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999, 2005).


According to Jenny Franchot, “[A]nti-Catholicism operated as an imaginative category of discourse though which antebellum American writers of popular and elite fictional and historical texts indirectly voiced the tensions and limitations of mainstream Protestant culture” (xvii). Franchot’s model for the nineteenth century can easily be applied to the attempts of the Klan to define themselves in opposition to Roman Catholicism. The Klan employed anti-Catholicism to craft a Protestant image for their order. Franchot further suggested that antebellum anti-Catholicism helped craft a Protestant national identity, which is useful in thinking about how the Klan saw Catholics both as threat to faith and nation. See Jenny Franchot, Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1994).

W.C. Wright, “A Klansman’s Criterion of Character,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:45, (February 6, 1924), 2

Wright, “A Klansman’s Criterion,” 2.

Wright, “A Klansman’s Criterion,” 2.
Wright, “A Klansman’s Criterion,” 2.

96 Klankraft is basically the practice of Klan ideals in one’s life.


98 Wright, “A Klansman’s Criterion,” 2.

99 Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:7, (May 16, 1923), 4.

100 “Altoona, Pa., Klans Help Santa,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:41, (January 9, 1924), 6.

101 “Sordid Story of Girls’ Shame Causes Klan At Shreveport to Pan Protestant Refuge,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:6, (May 9, 1923), 2.

102 “Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles and Outlines Klan Activities,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:43, (January 23, 1924), 2.

103 Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation Held in Kansas City, Missouri (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924), 166.

104 For Lisbon Klan’s donations, “Klan Komment,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:39, (December 26, 1923), 5. For other Klans’ charity during Christmas, see also “Wichita, Kansas, Klan No. 6 Delivers Hundreds of Christmas Baskets,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:43, (January 23, 1924), 8;

“Little Rock Klan Plays Santa Klaus Breaking All Records of the City,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:41, (January 9, 1924), 3; “Bozeman, Mont., Klan Hears Grand Dragon,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:46, (February 14, 1924), 5. For Klan hospitals, “Dallas Klan Dedicates $85,000 Home For The Benefit of Orphan Babies,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:27 (October 3, 1923), 5, and “New Klan Hospital Will Be Memorial to Martyr Who Gave Life For The Cause,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:18, (August 1, 1923), 6. For martyr’s education fund, “Klansmen Asked To Aid Widow And Babies of Man Who Died For The Cause,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:24, (September 12, 1923), 2-3. For Klan’s service for “Negro Church,” “Klan Helps to Build Church for Negroes,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:30, (October 24, 1923), 5.

For Klan giving, see “Should Scrutinize Charity Allotments,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:6, (May 9, 1923), 4.

105 “Klansmen, Stop and Take Stock: Build For The Year 1924,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:20, (January 2, 1924), 5.

106 “Klannish Co-operation,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:41, (January 9, 1924), 4.


108 Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation, (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1924), 45.


110 W.C. Wright, “The Twelfth Chapter of Romans As A Klansman’s Law of Life,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:49 (March 5, 1924), 2.

111 Wade, Fiery Cross, 33-34. Wyn Wade described the Reconstruction uniform in detail. Elaine Parsons has written that the Reconstruction robes need to be understood as spectacle. She looks at the theatrical roots of this Klan and the symbolic import of the robes. For more on the Reconstruction robes, see Elaine Frantz Parsons, “Midnight Rangers: Costume and Performance in the Reconstruction-Era Ku Klux Klan,” The Journal of American History, 92:3, 811-836.


113 Simmons, The Klan Unmasked, 88.

114 Simmons, The Klan Unmasked, 91.
115 See “New Robe Plant Speeds Up Production As Thousands Request Regalia,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:24, (September 12, 1923), 8, and “Regalia Factory and Printing Plant Will Save Much Money for Klans of Nation,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:16 (July 18, 1923), 5.

116 To be eligible for membership, “one must have been born in the United States, of white parentage, be over 18 years of age and of the Protestant Christian faith.” “Louisiana Klansman Outlines The Aims, Purposes and Principles of His Order,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:9, (May 30, 1923), 6.

117 “Louisiana Klansman,” 33.

118 Exalted Cyclops of Texas, “The Seven Symbols of the Klan,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:39, (December 26, 1923), 7. Emphasis original. Empire Invisible is a play off Invisible Empire, their term of Klandom. Empire Invisible refers to the celestial realm.


120 “Who Are These In White Robes?”, 19. The passage from Revelation is 7:13-15 as quoted in the Kourier:

   And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, ‘What are these which are arrayed in white robes and whence came they?’ And I said unto him, ‘Sir, thou knowest.’ And he said unto me: ‘These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them (18-19).


122 Scarry, The Body in Pain, 125.


124 “Mis-use Of Regalia Is Reported,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:39, (December 26, 1923), 5.


126 “Elwood, Ind., Klan Aids Revival,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:46, (February 14, 1924), 5.

127 “Klansmen of Louisiana Stand Firm Before Catholic Boycott,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:3, (April 1, 1923), 5.


129 “Go to Church Sunday,” The Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:3, (April 1, 1923), 5.

130 Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:5, (May 2, 1923), 6.


133 Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:29, (October 17, 1923), 6.


135 Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:27, (October 3, 1923), 4.

136 “The ‘Man On the Fence’,” 11.


139 Wright, “The Twelfth Chapter of Romans,” 2-3.
For Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, the flag is an important emblem of nationalism, and they argue that patriotism could be considered a religious system on its own. They argue that the solider carries a flag, which show his willingness to die, much like Jesus carried the cross to demonstrate the same willingness (770). What is striking about their analysis is how they use Christian symbology to show the “religious” nature of patriotism. What I would like to argue is that American patriotism is actually indebted to Christianity in its development not just as a similar example. The Klan’s reliance upon cross and flag as patriotic exemplifies this. See Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, “Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Revisiting Civil Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 64:4, (Winter 1996), 767-780.

W.C. Wright, *The Religious and Patriotic Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan*, (Waco, TX: W.C. Wright, 1926), 33.


W.C. Wright, *The Religious and Patriotic Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan*, (Waco, TX: W.C. Wright, 1926), 33.

Wright, “Constructive Christainity,” 3.

Miller, “A Note on the Relationship,” 357-360.


“Elwood, Ind., Klan Aids Revival,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:46, (February 14, 1924), 5.


W.C. Wright, *The Religious and Patriotic Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan*, (Waco, TX: W.C. Wright, 1926), 33.

“Texas Klansman Outlines Principles Upon Which the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is Founded,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:2, (April 4, 1923), 5.


“The Symbol of the Fiery Cross,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:45, (February 6, 1924), 8.


Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 33.


“Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles…” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:43, (January 23, 1924), 2.

H.W. Evans, “The Klan of Tomorrow,” in *The Proceeding of the Second Imperial Klonovokation Held in Kansas City, Missouri* (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924), 141.

“Texas Klansman Outlines Principles Upon Which the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is Founded,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:2, (April 4, 1923), 5.


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“Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles…” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:43, (January 23, 1924), 2.

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“Texas Klansman Outlines Principles Upon Which the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is Founded,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:2, (April 4, 1923), 5.


“The Symbol of the Fiery Cross,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:45, (February 6, 1924), 8.


Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 33.


“Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles…” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:43, (January 23, 1924), 2.

H.W. Evans, “The Klan of Tomorrow,” in *The Proceeding of the Second Imperial Klonovokation Held in Kansas City, Missouri* (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924), 141.

“Texas Klansman Outlines Principles Upon Which the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is Founded,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:2, (April 4, 1923), 5.


“The Symbol of the Fiery Cross,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:45, (February 6, 1924), 8.


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“Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles…” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:43, (January 23, 1924), 2.

H.W. Evans, “The Klan of Tomorrow,” in *The Proceeding of the Second Imperial Klonovokation Held in Kansas City, Missouri* (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924), 141.

“Texas Klansman Outlines Principles Upon Which the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is Founded,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:2, (April 4, 1923), 5.


“The Symbol of the Fiery Cross,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:45, (February 6, 1924), 8.


Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 33.


“Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles…” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:43, (January 23, 1924), 2.

H.W. Evans, “The Klan of Tomorrow,” in *The Proceeding of the Second Imperial Klonovokation Held in Kansas City, Missouri* (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924), 141.

“Texas Klansman Outlines Principles Upon Which the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is Founded,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:2, (April 4, 1923), 5.


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“Texas Klansman Outlines Principles Upon Which the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is Founded,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:2, (April 4, 1923), 5.


“The Symbol of the Fiery Cross,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:45, (February 6, 1924), 8.


Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 33.


“Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles…” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:43, (January 23, 1924), 2.

H.W. Evans, “The Klan of Tomorrow,” in *The Proceeding of the Second Imperial Klonovokation Held in Kansas City, Missouri* (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924), 141.

“Texas Klansman Outlines Principles Upon Which the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is Founded,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:2, (April 4, 1923), 5.


“The Symbol of the Fiery Cross,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:45, (February 6, 1924), 8.


Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 33.


“Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles…” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:43, (January 23, 1924), 2.

H.W. Evans, “The Klan of Tomorrow,” in *The Proceeding of the Second Imperial Klonovokation Held in Kansas City, Missouri* (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924), 141.
“The Meaning of 100% Americanism,” 3.

“Grapes and Wild Grapes,” *Kourier Magazine*, 1:4 (March 1925), 28-29. Interesting, Anthony Marx also reflected on the importance of the Saint Bartholomeuw’s Massacre in 1572, which was a significant event in the French religious wars. Marx, however, argues that Bartholomeuw should be the patron saint of nationalism because he was martyred, and this reflects the violence and intolerance in the formation of nationalism. I am not sure the author was alluding to a similar understanding of nationalism but rather suggesting that religious wars might occur in America. See Marx, *Faith in Nation*, 204-206.


“Has the State the Right to Educate Her Children?”, *Kourier Magazine*, 2:7 (June 1926), 25-26.

“American Citizens Must Awake to Needs of Public School,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:6, (May 9, 1923), 5.


Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 77. While Orsi is pointing out in particular how Catholics envisioned their children as bearers of the faith, I believe that his understanding of children also highlights the importance of children for the Klan to pass on not only Protestantism but also patriotism in their version of America. Orsi continued, “Children signal the vulnerability and contingency of a particular religious world and religion itself….This is why discussions of children’s lives are fraught with such great fear, sometimes sorrow, and sometimes ferocity among adults.” Children become the objects by which religion (and I would argue nationalism) is made real for adults, and thus, perceived threats to children are manifested as threats to a fragile worldview.

“Program Concerning Public School Problem Outlined by Imperial Wizard,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:46, (February 14, 1924), 3.

“Seeking Aid for Public Schools,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 2:14 (July 2, 1924), 2.

“Seeking Aid for Public Schools,” 2-3.

Tracy Fessenden writes about the so-called “Bible wars” in the mid-nineteenth century and the defense of the Bible in public schools. For Fessenden, Catholic objections to the “Protestant character of public schooling” allowed for “Protestant detractors…to show that Catholicism was the enemy of the gospel and that the destruction of the popery was therefore a sacred duty of all, implicitly Protestant, Americans” (68). What is interesting is that the Klan appeals for protection of the Bible in public schools mimics this early historical incident. See Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

“Patriotism,” 15.

“Reading the Bible in Our Schools,” 31.

“Program Concerning Public School Problem,” 2. Emphasis original.


“Parochial Schools Versus The American Public Schools,” *Kourier Magazine*, 2:8 (July 1926), 16.

“Parochial Schools Versus The American Public Schools,” 18-20.


Simmons, *Official Message of Imperial Wizard*, 12.


“The ‘Man On the Fence’ Becomes Uncomfortable,” *Dawn*, 1:50 (October 13, 1923), 11. According to the April 7, 1923 issue of the *Dawn*, the circulation had grown to 50,000. The editor(s) noted that “[s]uch growth is unprecedented in the class publication field.” See “Dawn Circulation Climbs to 50,000 as Fight for Americanism Stirs Nation Wide Interest,” 1:24 (April 7, 1923), 6.

“Louisiana Klansman Outlines,” 7.

“The ‘Man On the Fence’,“ 11.

“What is Tolerance?”, *The Kourier Magazine*, 1:2 (January 1925), 32.


Interestingly, the Knights of Columbus used the example of Christian knighthood in the Knights of Columbus to proclaim their place in “an unbroken lineage of valiant Christian knights” (461). For analysis of the Knights of Columbus and their rendering of Knighthood, see Amy Koehlinger, “‘Let Us Live For Those Who Love Us’: Faith, Family, and the Contours of Manhood Among the Knights of Columbus in Late Nineteenth-Century Connecticut,” *Journal of Social History*, 38:2 (Winter 2004), 455-468.


Julia Grant noted that the concern over boyhood and how to raise boys was primarily a concern over “feminization.” By the 1920s, a masculine upbringing for boys became the norm, and there was parents were more afraid that effeminate sons would become delinquents while “regular” or “real” boys would become men. These real boys would be boys, who were adventurous and possibly got into trouble. See Julia Grant, “A ‘Real Boy’ Not a Sissy: Gender, Childhood, and Masculinity, 1890-1940,” *Journal of Social History*, 37:4 (Summer 2004), 829-851.


“Responsibility of Klankraft to the American Boy,” 89.


*Kloran*, 10.

Kloran, 14.


*Klansman’s Manual*, (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Incorporated, 1924), 60. K.K.K. Ephemera Collection, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries.
Awards and Interpretation of By Laws And Constitution of the Klan,” The 
Imperial Night-Hawk, 2:23 (September 3, 1924), 2-3.
246 Evans, “Our Crusading Army,” 5.
247 “Principles and Purposes of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” Papers Read at the Meeting of 
Grand Dragons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, At Their First Annual Meeting held at Asheville, 
251 W.C. Wright, “A Klansman’s Criterion of Character,” The Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:45 
(February 6, 1924), 2.
252 Janet Moore Lindeman, in her work on white evangelical men in Revolutionary Virginia, that 
these men had to adopt new performances of “male behavior” to differentiate from competing 
forms of masculinity. The Klan has to reformulates, but also maintains, masculinity for their 
members. See Janet Moore Lindman, “Acting the Manly Christian: White Evangelical 
Masculinity in Revolutionary Virginia,” The William and Mary Quarterly, 57:2 (April 2000), 
393-416.
1023.
256 For examples of Klan condemnations by The Christian Century, see Alva W. Taylor, “The 
Klux Klan, II” The Christian Century, 39:33 (August 17, 1922), 1021-3; Richard A. 
21, 1922), 1165; “Condemnation of the Ku Klux Movement,” The Christian Century, 39:40 
(October 5, 1922), 1213; “Churches and the Ku Klux Klan,” The Christian Century, 40:3 
(January 18, 1923), 69; “Ku Klux Klan and Theological Conservatism,” The Christian Century, 
40:19 (May 10, 1923), 579-80; Frederick A. Dunning, “Ku Klux Fulfills the Scripture,” The 
Christian Century, 41:38, (September 18, 1924), 1205-7.
257 In the mid-nineteenth century, there were attempts to masculinize Christianity, and by the 
early twentieth century, movements, like the Men and Religion Forward Movement (1911-2), 
sought to bring more men into the churches. What motivated these men was a concern over the 
effeminacy of the church and their understanding of the masculinity of Christ. Similar to the Men
and Religion Forward Movement (1911-1912) and remasculinization attempts of Bruce Barton, the Klan sought to banish the feminine image of Jesus and present the rugged carpenter that Jesus “really” was. Some both the Klan and The Christian Century represent this desire for the masculine Christ to provide model for men and boys alike. Stephen Prothero analyzes these attempts to remasculinize Jesus and shows how Jesus became the battleground for competing religious ideologies. See Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2003), especially 87-123.


261 “Jesus as Efficiency Expert,” *The Christian Century*, 42:27 (July 2, 1925), 851. This editorial is a critique of Bruce Barton’s *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925). For more on the many faces of Jesus in American culture in particular, see Prothero, *American Jesus*, 3-16. Prothero notes that Klansmen molded Jesus into their own rendering, but he does not explore what the Klan’s Jesus “looked like.”

262 “Jesus as Efficiency Expert,” 851.


266 “Preface,” 1.


269 “Here’s a Typical Example of How Some Newspapers Will Falsify About the Klan,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:6 (May 9, 1923), 6.

270 “Klan Speaker Stoned and Shot At,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:40 (January 2, 1924), 7.

271 “Maine Minister Declares That Klan is Greatest American Secret Order,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:10, (June 6, 1923), 6.

272 “New Klan Hospital Will Be Memorial to Martyr Who Gave Life For the Cause,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:18 (August 1, 1923), 6.

273 “Texas Klan To Erect Memorial Hospital in Memory of Dead Klansman,” *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 2:22 (August 27, 1924), 8. The plans for the memorial hospital occurred a year after Roberts’ death.
There was reported Klan growth after the martyrs. “Growth of Klans in South is Steady,” Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:24 (September 12, 1923), 3. Pennsylvania was included in the South.


“Klanswomen Adopt a Creed At Meeting Of National Officers,” The Imperial Night-Hawk, 2:7 (May 14, 1924), 7. Emphasis Original.


Dixon, The Clansman, 284.


George Alfred Brown, Harold the Klansman, (Kansas City, MS: The Western Baptist Publishing Company, 1923).

Brown, Harold the Klansman, 7.

Brown, Harold the Klansman, 157.


W. C. Wright, Religious and Patriotic Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan (Waco, TX: W.C. Wright, 1926), 7.

W. C. Wright, Religious and Patriotic Ideals, 11.


C.B., “For Our Women,” The Kluxer, 1:18 (November 24, 1923), 28, Archives and Special Collections, Ball State University Archives, Muncie, Indiana.


“A Tribute and Challenge to American Women,” 90.


“A Tribute and Challenge to American Women,” 93.


Official Document, Number 40, emphasis original.

Official Document, Number 40.


“Was He a Slacker—? And Mother Came Also”, The Kluxer, 1:14 (October 27, 1923), 25.

W. J. Simmons, The Practice of Klannishness, (Atlanta, GA: W.J. Simmons, 1918), 5.


“Eminent Jurist Outlines the Duty of Citizens Toward the Courts,” The Imperial Night-Hawk, 1: 5 (May 2, 1923), 8.

“Klanswomen Adopt a Creed At Meeting Of National Officers,” 7.

“Klanswomen Adopt a Creed At Meeting Of National Officers,” 7.

“Klanswomen Adopt a Creed At Meeting Of National Officers,” 7.


The Truth About the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (Little Rock, AR: Parke-Harper Publishing Co.; date), 2, George R. Dale Collection, 1922-1979, box 1, folder 1, Archives and Special Collections, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

The Truth About the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 4.


Blee, Women of the Klan, 52. For more information on the conflicts between the K.K.K. and the W.K.K.K, see 57-67.

Robbie Gill, “American Woman,” in Inspirational Addresses Delivered At the Second Imperial Klanvocation, (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Incorporated 1924), 51, K.K.K. Ephemera Collection, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA.

Robbie Gill, “American Women,” in Inspirational Addresses Delivered at the Second Imperial Klanvocation Held in Kansas City, Missouri (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924), 51, Manuscripts Collection, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, Georgia.


Blee, Women of the Klan, 53.


“Address Delivered by Mrs. Robbie Gill Comer,” 16.
“Address Delivered by Mrs. Robbie Gill Comer,” 17.

“Address Delivered by Mrs. Robbie Gill Comer,” 20.

“Address Delivered by Mrs. Robbie Gill Comer,” 21.

“The Klan Celebrates Mother’s Day,” 677.

Proceedings of the Fourth Imperial Klonvokation Held in Chicago, Illinois, July 17, 18 and 19, 1928, (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1928), 102, Archives and Special Collections, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

Proceedings of the Fourth Imperial Klonvokation, 104.

Proceedings of the Fourth Imperial Klonvokation, 105.

Proceedings of the Fourth Imperial Klonvokation, 108.

Proceedings of the Fourth Imperial Klonvokation, 110.

L.J. King, Secret Confession To a Roman Catholic Priest, (Toledo, Ohio: L.J. King, 1925), 48, Anti-Catholic Printed Material Collection, box 7, folder 6, University of Notre Dame Archives, Notre Dame, Indiana.

Blee, Women of the Klan, 86, 92.

Blee, Women of the Klan, 90.

Helen Jackson, Convent Cruelties or My Life in a Convent, (Toledo, Ohio: Helen Jackson, 1919, seventh ed. 1924), 12, Anti-Catholic Printed Material Collection, box 7, folder 5, University of Notre Dame Archives, Notre Dame, Indiana.

Jackson, Convent Cruelties, 28.

Jackson, Convent Cruelties, 29-30.

Jackson, Convent Cruelties, 34-35.

Jackson, Convent Cruelties, 39.

Jackson, Convent Cruelties, 47.

Jackson, Convent Cruelties, 78.

Jackson, Convent Cruelties, 80.

Jackson, Convent Cruelties, 82.

Blee, Women of the Klan, 89.

King, Secret Confession To a Roman Catholic Priest, 8.

King, Secret Confession To a Roman Catholic Priest, 9.

King, Secret Confession To a Roman Catholic Priest, 15.


King, Secret Confession To a Roman Catholic Priest, 28.

King, Secret Confession To a Roman Catholic Priest, 29.

King, Secret Confession To a Roman Catholic Priest, 101.


Fessenden, “The Convent, the Brothel,” 466-469.
Record of Anti-Catholic Agitators (n.d.), 8-9, Anti-Catholic Printed Material Collection, box 6, folder 7, University of Notre Dame Archives, Notre Dame Indiana. For more on Helen Jackson’s misconduct, see A Pseudo “Ex-Nun” Thwarted (St. Louis: Central Bureau, 1921), 7-12, Anti-Catholic Printed Material Collection, box 5, folder 6, University of Notre Dame Archives, Notre Dame Indiana


Evans, “Preserving the American Home,” 10.

Evans, “Preserving the American Home,” 10.


Proceedings of the Fourth Imperial Klonvokation, 108.

“When Is a Marriage Not A Marriage?” The Christian Century, 14:49 (December 9, 1926), 1510.

“When Is a Marriage Not A Marriage?”, 1511.

Official Document, Office of the Grand Dragon, Realm of Georgia, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1:3 (December 1926), 4, Manuscripts Collection, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, Georgia.


“Address of Imperial Official,” The Kourier Magazine, 1:1 (December 1924), 25.

H.W. Evans, “The Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Toward the Roman Hierarchy”, (n.d.), (n. p.), Ku Klux Klan Collection, Wayne County, M0407, box 1, file 6, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. The revised creed was printed on the back cover of the pamphlet.


Simmons, Official Message, 8.

“The Klansmen’s Creed,” The Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:5, (May 2, 1923), 7.

The Imperial Night-Hawk proclaimed any Protestant minister interested in the Klan would receive their publication for free. Protestant ministers were also encouraged to send their names and addresses if they wanted to join. “Notice to Protestant Clergymen,” The Imperial Night-Hawk, 1:10, (June 6, 1923), 6.


Evans, “The Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Toward the Roman Hierarchy,” (n. p.).


Evans, “The Klan of Tomorrow,” 146.


Grand Dragon of the Realm of South Carolina, “Poorly Restricted Immigration is One of the Greatest Perils Confronting America,” _The Imperial Night-Hawk_, 1:22 (August 29, 1923), 2.

Grand Dragon of the Realm of South Carolina, “Poorly Restricted Immigration,” 3.


Evans, “Imperial Wizard Outlines Attitude”, 6.

H.W. Evans, “Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles and Outlines Klan Activities,” _The Imperial Nighthawk_, 1:43 (January 23, 1924), 2.

“Much Pressure Being Used to Delay Passage of the Immigration Bill,” _The Imperial Night-Hawk_, 1:48 (February 27, 1924), 6.

“Johnson Selective Immigration Law Signed By President,” _The Imperial Night-Hawk_, 2:11 (June 11, 1924), 2.


“Address of Imperial Official,” _The Kourier Magazine_, 1:1 (December 1924), 25.

Interestingly, the Klan would admit that the organization was for white supremacy as well as American freedoms and Protestant Christianity. See Exalted Cyclops of Monroe Klan Number 4, Louisiana, “Klan a Patriotic, Benevolent, Fraternal Organization of Christian Americans,” _The Imperial Nighthawk_, 2:2, (April 9, 1924), 2.

Evans, “The Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Toward the Roman Catholic Hierarchy,” 2.


“Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles,” 3.

W. C. Wright, _Religious and Patriotic Ideals_, 44.

“Dr. Evans, Imperial Wizard, Defines Klan Principles”, 3.


Simmons, _Official Message_, 10, 11.


W. C. Wright, _The Religious and Patriotic Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan_, (Waco, TX: W.C. Wright, 1926).

“Christianity and Racialism: Reply to Dr. Glenn Frank,” 32.

George Alfred Brown, *Harold the Klansman*, (Kansas City, Missouri: Western Baptist Publishing Company, 1923), 19

Brown, *Harold the Klansman*, 194.


Wright, *Religious and Patriotic Ideals*, 44

Wright, *Religious and Patriotic Ideals*, 43.

Wright, *Religious and Patriotic Ideals*, 44.


Evans, “The Klan of Tomorrow,” 146.


Brown, *Harold the Klansman*, 194.

Evans, “The Klan of Tomorrow,” 146.

Evans, “The Klan of Tomorrow,” 147.

“Wizard Tells About Assaults on Klan,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:24 (September 12, 1923), 4.

“The Purpose of This Publication,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:1 (March 28, 1923), 4.


See “Ohio Klansmen in Act of ‘Riotous Conduct’ Which Caused Them to Be Jailed,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:16 (July 18, 1923), 8. A Klansman’s funeral was alleged to be broken up by the Roman Catholic Chief of Police in Springfield, Ohio. See “Jewish Rabbi Would Change Battle Hymn,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:11 (June 13, 1923), 8. Rabbi did not want Jewish children to be forced to sing “Onward Christian Soldiers” or “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” at public schools because the songs were against their religious beliefs. See also “Was This Tolerance,” *The Dawn*, 1:25 (April 14, 1923), 5. The Klan accused its enemies of ransacking a building in which Klan members lived. This event confirmed their beliefs of being persecuted.

“Wizard Tells About Assaults on Klan,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:24 (September 12, 1923), 4.


“Was This Tolerance?” *The Dawn*, 1:25 (April 14, 1923), 5.

Carol Mason notes that white people often claim that they are victimized despite the absence of “alienation, exploitation, or oppression” in their histories. See Carol Mason, “Miscegenation and Purity: Reproducing the Souls of White Folk,” *Hypatia*, 22:2 (Spring 2007), 106. Robyn Wiegman also noted that post-Civil War in America, whites refigured their place in American society as the loss of the dominant position and took on an injured status. See Robyn Wiegman, “Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity,” *boundary*, 26:3 (Autumn 1999), 117.
Goldberg, “Unmasking the Ku Klux Klan.”
“Photography seeks to record with the highest degree of realism the individuality of a subject, but that this sense of an individual is exactly what cannot be photographed” (71-2). Photography becomes an outlet to see myself seeing myself (236). Thus, when the Klan takes photographs, what is being represented? The traces of individuals are absent, which leads me to think that the Klan’s photographs are taken to show the solidarity of community.
Chris Ruiz-Velasco relies on the works of Thomas Dixon to present a rendering of whiteness. For Ruiz-Velasco, the Klan robes in Dixon’s work provide “white racial unity” (155). He writes, “The elision of personal difference also marks the elision of personal culpability, and the anonymity of the white robe furthers marks the unity of whiteness. This unity of whiteness configures into a hyper-whiteness, one that disallows any gradations and insists on the symbolic white purity and homogeneity of the robe” (156). Moreover, Dixon connects whiteness inherently to goodness. See Chris Ruiz-Velasco, “Order Out of Chaos: Whiteness, White Supremacy, and Thomas Dixon, Jr.,” *College Literature*, 34:4 (Fall 2007), 155-156.
See Exalted Cyclops of Texas, “The Seven Symbols of the Klan,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:39 (December 26, 1923), 7.
“Regalia Factory and Printing Plant Will Save Much Money For Klans of Nation,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:16 (July 18, 1923), 5.
“Official Document, Office of the Grand Dragon, Realm of Georgia, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” 2:3 (March 1927), 4, Ku Klux Klan, Athens Klan #5 (Athens, Ga.) records, box 2, folder 8, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA.
466 *The Truth About the Notre Dame Riot on Saturday May 17th 1924*, (Indianapolis, IN: The Fiery Cross Publishing Co., 1924), 9, Special Collections, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.
470 Jefferson, *Roman Catholicism and the Ku Klux Klan*, 147.
474 For more on Protestant attraction and repulsion to Catholics, see Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome*.
477 “Texas Klansman Outlines Principles Upon Which the Knights of Ku Klux Klan is Founded,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:2 (April 4, 1923), 7.
479 Evans, “The Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Toward the Roman Catholic Hierarchy,” 2.
480 Evans, “The Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Toward the Roman Catholic Hierarchy,” 7.
481 Evans, “The Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Toward the Roman Catholic Hierarchy,” 2.
482 “Catholic-Controlled New York Assembly Passes Bill Seeking to Destroy the Klan,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1:7 (May 16, 1923), 5.
483 “Attempt to Discredit Ku Klux Klan Proves to Be Boomerang,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 2:17 (July 23, 1924), 3.
485 *Knights of the Klan Versus Knights of Columbus*, (Oklahoma City: Reno Publishing Co., n.d), n.p., Special Collections, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, Georgia.
486 *Knights of the Klan Versus Knights of Columbus*, n.p.
490 “Indiana Protestants Outraged By Infuriated College Students,” *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 2:10 (June 4, 1924), 2.
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Ku Klux Klan, Local Officers, Indiana Records, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46202.


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Ku Klux Klan and Notre Dame Material (UKKK), University of Notre Dame Archives (UNDA), Notre Dame, IN 46556.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kelly J. Baker was born in Marianna, FL in 1980. She received an AA from Chipola College, her BA from Florida State University in American and Florida Studies, and her MA from Florida State University in Religion, specifically American Religious History. Her PhD will be in the same field. She currently resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico with her spouse, Chris, and their two dogs, Hannah and Zan, and cat, Belle. She currently teaches at the University of New Mexico. She’s the recipient of the 2007-2008 Research and Creativity Award from Florida State University as well as several research grants. She wrote “A Visionary People: Religion and the Visual Arts” for Charles Lippy’s edited volume, Faith in America (2006) as well as “Painting the Gospel: Henry Ossawa Tanner’s The Annunciation and Christ and Nicodemus,” in Between the Texts and the Canvas (2007). She has contributed articles to at least eight encyclopedias, ranging in subject matter from Religion and Violence to American Material Culture. She serves on the steering committee of the Arts, Literature, and Religion section for the American Academy of Religion as well as the Religion and American Culture Caucus for the American Studies Association. In addition to these commitments, Kelly is also an editor of the Religion in American History blog, which received the Cliopatria Award for Best New Blog for 2007.