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THE KU KLUX KLAN AND FREEMASONRY IN 1920S AMERICA

FIGHTING FRATERNITIES

Miguel Hernandez

The Ku Klux Klan and Freemasonry in 1920s America

The Second Ku Klux Klan's success in the 1920s remains one of the order's most enduring mysteries. Emerging first as a brotherhood dedicated to paying tribute to the original Southern organization of the Reconstruction period, the Second Invisible Empire developed into a mass movement with millions of members that influenced politics and culture throughout the early 1920s. This study explores the nature of fraternities, especially the overlap between the Klan and Freemasonry. Drawing on many previously untouched archival resources, it presents a detailed and nuanced analysis of the development and later decline of the Klan and the complex nature of its relationship with the traditions of American fraternalism.

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Dedicado a mis padres, por todo su apoyo.

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Abbreviations

GAF	Great American Fraternity
JOUAM	Junior Order of United American Mechanics
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
MSA	Masonic Service Association
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NPC	National Patriotic Council
SPA	Southern Publicity Association
SRSJ	Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction
WKKK	Women of the Ku Klux Klan

Introduction

In 1921 William McAdoo, a former Congressman for New Jersey and a chief magistrate of New York City, was asked to publish his thoughts in the *New York World* on the emergence of a new yet familiar organization in American society: the Ku Klux Klan. Like many of his contemporaries, McAdoo believed this order's resurgence to be a result of the latent patriotism of the war years, and that its nativist message was entirely opposed to the country's history and values. "Let us hope," wrote McAdoo, "that it is only a sort of temporary insanity." He also relayed his opinion on what was attracting so many Americans to the ranks of this Second "Invisible Empire". McAdoo observed that:

> I cannot believe that the Klan numbers anything like the figures given. On the other hand, the largest sect in this country is that of the 'Joiners.' They will join anything that is mystic, secret and somewhat occult, especially if it gives them the right to wear badges and decorate themselves with insignia equal to a Major General's. When to all this is added a uniform, mask and visions of taking terrible oaths in sub-cellars and having something on the outside fellow of advantage to them or a chance to vent their malice or prejudice, you can see them standing in line a hundred deep with their money in their hands, anxious to join.[1]

Over the course of the 1920s many would provide similar explanations for the brief but impressive resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. The "joiners" McAdoo referred to were those millions of Americans who had enlisted in the country's many clubs and fraternities, and who now seemed to be first in line to become Klansmen. With its iconic ceremonies and plethora of bizarre titles – Exalted Cyclops, Grand Dragon or Imperial Wizard to name but a few – the Invisible Empire's fraternalism and rituals were at the heart of the order's appeal. Brotherhood, racial unity and aggressive patriotism were all wrapped up in sombre ceremonies and distinctive regalia, furnishing members with a sense of purpose and fraternal solidarity in the uncertainty of the dawning Jazz Age.

The Second Ku Klux Klan promised to provide members with a unique fraternal experience by offering Americans the opportunity to become Knights of the Invisible Empire. This was not a conventional fraternity. According to its

own founder, Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons, his new Klan was "the original genuine Ku Klux Klan organized in the year 1866, and active during the Reconstruction period", but "revived, reconstructed, remodeled, refined and expanded into a fraternal, patriotic, ritualistic society of national scope …".[2] Imperial Wizard Simmons hoped to form a new generation of Klansmen in his own time, men inspired by the legends of the Reconstruction order and willing to commit themselves to this fraternity as followers of the Invisible Empire.

By 1915, when Simmons first chartered his new fraternity, many Americans had come to admire and romanticize the original Ku Klux Klan of the Reconstruction era. Formed in 1866 during the chaos and confusion of the post-Civil War years, this group was first established as a fraternity in Pulaski, Tennessee by six former Confederate officers who were bored with life in the rural South. Although the order's main purpose was originally to entertain its members by organizing elaborate ceremonies and playing pranks on each other, the Ku Klux Klan quickly degenerated into a terrorist vigilante group intent on enforcing *antebellum* social norms.[3] Present throughout the former Confederacy, this organization initiated a sustained campaign of violence and intimidation, targeting newly emancipated slaves and anyone else who dared challenge their way of life. The former Confederate states had been forced to undergo several political and social reforms to re-join the Union, and many white Southerners refused to accept the rule of their former enemies. The name Ku Klux Klan quickly became a byword for several almost interchangeable organizations that sought to control the newly freed slaves and overturn the Northern institutions that enabled them to exercise their rights. Although warnings and whippings were the most common practices employed by Reconstruction Klansmen to achieve their goals, cases of rape, assault, arson and murder were also common.

For nearly six years, the First Invisible Empire fought to overturn the government's attempts to incorporate the freed slaves into society. This vigilante group was composed of men of all classes, and bound Southerners of different backgrounds together in the fight for white supremacy and regional autonomy. Federal judge Hugh Lennox Bond provided a concise summary of this organization's heinous activities and the unrepentant attitude of its members. In 1872 he was charged with prosecuting several Klansmen from South Carolina, and after having reviewed the facts of the case, he maintained that:

> Evidence of nightly raids by bands of disguised men, who broke into the houses of negroes and dragged them from their beds – parents and children – and, tying them to trees, unmercifully beat them, is exhibited in every case. Murder and rape are not [infrequent] accompaniments, the story of which is too indecent for public mention.…[4]

The Ku Klux Klan had largely disappeared by the time the federal government decided to intervene in the matter, but the order's memory lived on in folktales and accounts that were transmitted in Southern culture. Although historically the

Ku Klux Klan was a violent and dangerous group, subsequent generations of white Americans would remember the order rather fondly.

The country's public perception of the Reconstruction Klan underwent a radical transformation in the decades since its dissolution as part of the broader mythology of the "Lost Cause". The brutal vigilantes would be refashioned in the nation's consciousness into honourable patriots fighting for their homeland, brave white men who had rallied to defend the South and reclaim their sovereignty from foolhardy Northerners. Any acts of violence they committed were justified in the face of such intolerable oppression. This narrative emerged first among Southerners, but was later propagated in works of fiction that became popular throughout the rest of the country. Thomas Dixon, a preacher from North Carolina, was the first to capture and broadcast these myths to audiences outside of the South. His best-selling 1902 romance, *The Leopard's Spots*, presented Klansmen as noble knights who rode out in defence of white womanhood and against Northern outrages during Reconstruction. This novel was followed by two equally successful sequels: *The Clansman* (1905) and *The Traitor* (1907), both of which featured equally unambiguous plots and heroic Southern Klansmen.[5] Such accounts severely distorted the public's view of the organization. His work even influenced William Joseph Simmons, who would incorporate Dixon's ceremony of the fiery cross, a tradition that Reconstruction Klansmen never practised, into the rituals and customs of his own revived fraternity.

Dixon's novels helped to whitewash the Reconstruction Klan's legacy, but the Invisible Empire would receive its ultimate redemption less than a decade later on the silver screen with the release of *Birth of a Nation* (1915). D.W. Griffith's classic silent film transformed Dixon's novel *The Clansman* into an awe-inspiring visual experience that established the imagery and character of the "noble" Klansman in American culture as a national icon. The film is considered Hollywood's first blockbuster, reaching audiences across the country and disseminating fanciful narratives about the KKK and Reconstruction. Cinematically, this silent film was outstanding for its time, lasting three hours and employing impressive and complex action shots of battlefields and charging Klansmen. The plot of the film was an amalgamation of Dixon's novels and retold the story of the war and Reconstruction using the same stock protagonists and villains from the books. One Baltimore review of the film lauded it as a masterpiece, saying: "It reveals truth with no attempt to distort or exaggerate conditions that actually existed, mirrors incidents that actually happened …" and described the KKK as a "stately guard of honor of the Southern States, vivid as King Arthur's knights of England's song and story".[6] The striking power of the film as well as its claims of historical accuracy reinvigorated the audience's passion for the mythology of the Ku Klux Klan and Reconstruction.

It would be a mistake to assume that this motion picture was universally praised. There was considerable opposition to its display from groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), who attempted to have the film censored in various cities for clearly misrepresenting historical events. The organization's future director, Walter White, wrote in a

letter to the censors' board of Columbus, Ohio that: "By idealizing the Ku Klux Klan which is the spirit of lynching organized, and by painting the Negro as a vicious, lustful brute, the 'Birth of a Nation' had done irreparable harm." White's warning was remarkably prophetic. The film sparked a national debate concerning the truth about the KKK, and forced Americans to examine their own dark past. Though many continued to argue that the Reconstruction Klan was a vigilante force that terrorized the South, much of the nation came to see the organization as Griffiths and others had intended. As one 1925 writer concluded, "D.W. Griffith has made the Ku Klux as noble as Lee."[7] This rehabilitation would contribute to the resurgence of the order in the 1920s, wherein millions of Americans would become initiated as Klansmen of the Second Invisible Empire.

William Joseph Simmons established his new brotherhood in Atlanta in the same year the film was released. He planned to revive his own Klan as a fraternity that would pay tribute to the original organization. Like other Southerners, Simmons was raised listening to folktales about this order from a young age. His own father had been active in the movement, and Simmons claims to have learnt of the stories of the Ku Klux Klan from his family's African-American servants. He would later insist that he had always been interested in the group and that he received a vision as a young man that had inspired him. Simmons recounted how at the age of 20 he found a book recounting the exploits of the Reconstruction order and was transfixed by their noble deeds. Later that night, he apparently saw a group of Klansmen on horseback ride across his wall and that as "the picture faded out I got down on my knees and swore that I would found a fraternal organization which would be a memorial to the Ku-klux Klan". Simmons was prone to embellishment, so it seems far more likely that he was simply trying to exploit the country's interest in Klansmen and the mysteries of the Invisible Empire. There was plenty of money to be made in fraternalism during this period, and Simmons probably believed he could become wealthy with this new venture.[8]

William Joseph Simmons had been an eager member of various fraternities for much of his life, collecting degrees from several different organizations like the Freemasons or the Knights Templar. He was also quite experienced in the business of fraternalism. Simmons had moved to Atlanta before the First World War to take up work as a salesman for the Woodmen of the World, a mutual insurance fraternity where members could enjoy the benefits of both brotherhood and cheap life insurance. The job appears to have been rather lucrative for him, and he earned the honorary title of "Colonel" while working for this organization. Simmons' fascination with the alluring power of fraternalism and the myths of the First Ku Klux Klan eventually led him to found his own Invisible Empire as a fraternity in 1915. He organized a ceremony on Stone Mountain in Atlanta on Thanksgiving night that year to celebrate the emergence of his new order. He was careful to invite three veterans of the First Invisible Empire to attend and join his brotherhood, and to borrow extensively from the Reconstruction Klan's original ghostly jargon to award his own group a mantle of legitimacy. One of the organization's earliest pamphlets even declared all other Klans to be

fraudulent and that theirs was "the only legitimate successor of the 'original, genuine' Ku Klux Klan … of the Reconstruction Period".[9] Simmons was clearly trying to ensure that his organization was perceived as the only authentic revival of the movement, and that people would flock to his fraternity as they had to go and see the exploits of the Klan in the cinema.

Simmons believed that his new brotherhood would become a resounding success. The nation had displayed a remarkable interest in and attraction to the legends of the Reconstruction Klan in the early twentieth century and Americans continued to be fascinated by the mysteries of fraternalism. His organization – with its bizarre titles, enigmatic rituals and moral lessons on brotherhood and manhood – was designed to appeal to the nation's many "joiners". But the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan was not the overnight sensation that Imperial Wizard Simmons had expected it would be, and chapters of the order known as "klaverns" were only established in a handful of cities in Alabama and Georgia. The organization had been weakened by the betrayal of one of its chief officers, Jonathan Frost, who had absconded with $5,000 from the treasury and founded a rival order called the Columbian Union. The lack of growth was also due to Simmons' own reluctance to market his order to the masses. He had wanted to keep his brotherhood as a mysterious and exclusive organization, and added: "I was afraid somebody else would take my idea and prostitute it; make it commercial."[10] Although his organization mixed fraternalism with the legends of the Reconstruction Klan, a tempting combination for many Americans during this period, Simmons' brotherhood would have to undergo a number of changes in order to become the mass movement he had envisioned.

The advent of the First World War and the hyper-patriotism of the American home front would fundamentally transform this new fraternity. It was during these years that Simmons instituted a number of changes to his order that would revamp the organization from an ordinary fraternity into a politically active brotherhood that would police its neighbours and assist the nation with the war effort. Unlike the Woodmen of the World and most other fraternal orders, Simmons' new fraternity now had secret membership rolls, and initiates were discouraged from readily advertising their affiliation to outsiders. Simmons explained that he had wanted to set up a system of "Klan agents" that would "make their reports secretly concerning law violators, immorality, law evasion, non-Americanism, etc. …".[11] In the heated jingoistic atmosphere of American wartime society, this sort of activity had not only become acceptable, but had even become a vital demonstration of loyal citizenship. The young Klan relished the conformity of the war years, and became engrossed in the "100% Americanism" movement that was sweeping the country. His group now had a clear purpose and the moral authority to regulate the behaviour of others. Simmons' Invisible Empire was slowly evolving, expanding the scope of their obligations to the world beyond the klavern. It was also distinguishing itself from traditional fraternalism by becoming more militant and politically aggressive. The membership of the order, however, remained at a paltry 2,000 members by the time of Germany's surrender in 1918.

In 1925, one commentator would later describe the incredible growth of the movement after the war, noting that:

> Never in the annals of this country has any organization become so widespread nationally, and in having acquired such astonishing volume of membership in the communities of the nation in such a brief interval of time as has the order of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.
>
> This phenomenal expansion of the order and its wonderful membership growth constitute an event in our National life certain to be chronicled by the future historian.[12]

Researchers still struggle to explain how such a minor organization became the dominant fraternity of the early 1920s. The growth of the movement following the start of the "Roaring Twenties" is truly astounding. The Second Klan itself claimed it had around six million members, though most historians place the figure somewhere between two to four million. Sociologist Rory McVeigh has suggested that a number of structural social changes, especially the post-war economic slump, threatened the dominant political and economic position of America's white Protestant class, motivating them to join a reactionary movement like the KKK. Alternatively, historian Wyn Craig Wade has proposed that "available evidence suggests that most of these people were led into the Invisible Empire primarily by spiritual needs".[13] The historiography of the subject continues to debate what motivated so many Americans to join the Ku Klux Klan and there seems to be no simple explanation for the rise of this phenomenon.

Most historians point to the drastic changes in the political, social and cultural landscape of the post-war era as fundamental forces that contributed to the growing popularity of the Klan. The rise of Bolshevism in Europe, coupled with signs of radical agitation within their own country, troubled many Americans. The prospect of renewed immigration from the war-torn and impoverished nations of Europe was another concern. White Protestant Americans had grown increasingly worried about the lack of integration of European minorities into mainstream society, fearing the growing power of an un-American "immigrant bloc" in national life. The internal migration of African-Americans from the rural South to the cities and factories in the North had also made many who were not used to their presence quite anxious. Some Americans were also concerned with the perceived wave of lawlessness and immorality that afflicted the country, as well as the emergence of the "new woman". The dawn of the Jazz Age was proving to be a radical departure from the relative security of the preceding decade.[14]

However, the vital role that fraternalism played in the rise of the 1920s Invisible Empire has been largely overlooked by most historians. Americans had a variety of existing organizations to choose from to address their growing concerns about the threat of Catholicism or the rise of bootlegging, and yet millions of them chose to join the Ku Klux Klan, an organization that was intrinsically fraternal. The Second Klan was defined as a "high class secret, social, patriotic,

fraternal, benevolent association, having a perfected lodge system, with an exalted ritualistic form of work" according to one of Simmons' first pamphlets.[15] The Invisible Empire was not a purely political organization. Its members were initiated into the order in elaborate ceremonies and were taught to embrace their fellow Klansmen as brothers. New recruits were supposed to exemplify the very best of white manhood and fraternal values such as duty, honour and patriotism, aspiring to become like the Klansmen of the old South. Some of the order's most iconic customs, such as the lighting of the fiery cross or the organization's wearing of white robes and masks, are derived from their fraternal traditions. The order's fraternalism and rituals remained one of its most distinctive and engaging features, providing purpose and coherence for many American men and women throughout the 1920s. The culture of brotherhood and devotion to the nation instilled in the rituals of this movement was essential for the rise of the Invisible Empire.

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan managed to rise to power on a wave of patriotism and nativism that the white Protestant population experienced as a reaction to the historical developments of the period. The order's fraternal rituals imparted the Klan's values and taught initiates to embrace and defend their new brothers. But this new order still needed to reach the masses. It was not Simmons who realized this goal of creating a new and vigorous Invisible Empire, but the Southern Publicity Association (SPA), a marketing firm set up by two promoters, Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler. On 7 June 1920, as his organization struggled to keep its head above water, Simmons signed a contract that appointed Clarke as Imperial Kleagle, or head salesman of the order. This placed Clarke, and by extension his business partner Tyler, in charge of the duty of promoting the order and selling membership. It also entitled the pair to a hefty commission for their services, eight dollars out of each ten-dollar "klectoken", the Klan's joining fee.[16] The meteoric rise of the KKK was largely due to their shrewd management of the order's distribution. Clarke and Tyler devised an inventive pyramid scheme where they would hire various salesmen who would take a share of this new Propagation Department's fee for their work. They divided the nation into sales districts and appointed hundreds of salesmen known as "kleagles" to sell membership for them for a tempting four-dollar commission.

The system proved to be productive. Enthusiastic and ambitious salesmen quickly realized how easy it was to make a fortune selling membership in the order. America's renewed affection for the Reconstruction Klan, along with the various social shifts taking place in the post-war twenties, had laid the groundwork for the impressive rise of the new Invisible Empire. The effective management of the Klan's marketing and recruitment was also vital for the success of the movement. Even Clarke was surprised at their achievements a year into their contract. Writing to Simmons on 2 July 1921 he said:

> In the last three or four months we have added to our membership a little more than 48,000 members. In all my years of experience in organization

> work I have never seen anything to equal the clamor throughout the nation for the Klan. The headquarters of the domain chiefs are located in New York, Washington, Indianapolis, Denver, Dallas, Houston and Los Angeles. In all these cities our kleagles are working eighteen hours a day, and in most instances are three and four months behind their list of applicants.[17]

The order enticed Americans by deploying a diverse ideology that could appeal to a wide range of white citizens. Although the Invisible Empire's core tenets of white supremacy, Protestantism and 100 per cent Americanism were cornerstones of the movement, they campaigned on a number of issues. The Catholic threat was probably the organization's primary concern nationwide, as this religion was regarded with suspicion as a foreign movement that appeared determined to undermine American culture and take over the country. Many also found the Invisible Empire's promises to fight for law enforcement and public morality very appealing. Others joined the order because the Klan supported a strict reform of the country's immigration laws and advocated the introduction of Americanization measures, such as mandatory public school attendance and a more patriotic national curriculum. The Invisible Empire's commitment to halting the promotion of racial equality and their pledge to protect the nation from Jewish interests also proved to be popular selling points. In essence, the Invisible Empire rose to prominence with a varied platform that was rooted in popular religion and established conservative American culture and politics, wrapped in the trappings of ritualistic fraternalism.

The appearance of klaverns and Klansmen across the country did not go unnoticed. The peculiar fraternity was a favourite topic for journalists, whose broadcasts about the movement became increasingly common. The pieces that garnered the most attention were the alarming reports of vigilante attacks and race-baiting by Klansmen, as well as the news of corruption within the organization's leadership. For example, several newspapers released articles detailing the shocking case of Reverend Phillip S. Irwin, a white British minister from south Florida who worked primarily at the local African-American Episcopalian church. Irwin was abducted in July 1921 by a gang of suspected Klansmen near Miami for "preaching social equality to the negroes". They advised Irwin that "this was the south, this doctrine was not tolerated and any person who preached it is threatened with death". He was whipped, tarred-and-feathered and warned to leave the city immediately.[18] Unsettling news such as this made many Americans feel nervous. Nearly every other day politicians, editors and religious leaders released statements to the public condemning the Invisible Empire and demanding that action be taken to curb its growth.

In September 1921 the *New York World* published a month-long indictment of the Ku Klux Klan in their newspaper, using information from former members and victims from around the country. The exposé included damning revelations such as the shocking amount of graft taking place within the organization, the high-pressure sales tactics used by the organization's kleagles, and an appalling list of violent crimes carried out by Klansmen. The articles were

syndicated in several influential newspapers from across America, and the topic of the Klan and the dangers it posed quickly became everyday conversation. Pressure from the public forced Congress to hold an inquiry into the affairs of the order in November 1921, to ascertain whether the serious allegations made by the *World* and others were true. After several days of questioning though, the panel was unable to find sufficient evidence of pervasive corruption within the fraternity's leadership or of widespread violence committed by members of the Invisible Empire. These hearings somewhat absolved Simmons and his Klansmen from most of the accusations that had been made against them in recent months in the national press. Throughout the inquiry Simmons presented his Knights of the Ku Klux Klan simply as "a fraternal, patriotic, secret order for the purpose of memorializing the great heroes of our national history". The Imperial Wizard gave an exemplary performance before the committee, masterfully countering the evidence and denying the accusations made against his order. He managed to partially clean his order's name and provide it with nationwide publicity, all in one fell swoop. Although the *World*'s exposé damaged the order's image nationwide, the Ku Klux Klan was quick to try to control the narrative and demonstrated that they were able to effectively deal with their opponents.[19]

Years later Imperial Wizard Simmons would recall how during those hearings:

> I had those congressmen jumping in every direction because if they reported on the Klan they would have had to investigate and report every other lodge in America…. Things began to happen as soon as I got back to my little office in Atlanta. Calls began pouring in from lodge organizers and others all over America for the right to organize Klans.[20]

The result was that in some ways the Ku Klux Klan emerged from the political and media offensive in 1922 strengthened and reinvigorated. The order had been particularly strong in Southwestern states like Texas and Oklahoma, but after 1921 it became a truly national order, proving to be especially popular in Midwestern states like Indiana and Ohio. The Invisible Empire seemed to be growing by leaps and bounds.

This success naturally bred a lot of envy and unease. The Klan's militaristic structure had ensured that Simmons and his inner circle remained firmly in power, and that the majority of the profits ended up in the hands of the officials of the organization's headquarters – the Imperial Palace – in Atlanta. There were several attempts amongst the membership to oust the fraternity's leaders or to share power more evenly across different cities; a number of Klansmen even tried to break away and form a more democratic Invisible Empire. The bulk of the uproar was directed at Edward Young Clarke, who had temporarily been placed in charge of the order while Simmons was on holiday after May 1922, and who it was believed was defrauding the order and having an extramarital affair with his business partner Elizabeth Tyler.[21]

By the time of the first Imperial Klonvokation, the Ku Klux Klan's annual convention, in late November 1922 this bubbling ferment finally reached a climax when Simmons was deposed as the head of the fraternity. A democratic coup was arranged by several high-ranking officials who were tired with the inept and greedy Atlanta leadership. They were led by the Invisible Empire's national secretary, Imperial Kligrapp Hiram Wesley Evans, who convinced Simmons to dedicate himself exclusively to the spiritual and fraternal leadership of the organization as its "Emperor" and to relinquish the executive office of Imperial Wizard to him. This peaceful transition was short-lived. Clarke and Simmons soon realized that the second Imperial Wizard was trying to institute fundamental changes to their organization and they no longer held the executive authority to question him. Simmons began a national campaign to reclaim his mandate, asserting his rights as the father and founder of the movement. The matter was eventually settled out of court in 1923 with a generous compensation for the first Imperial Wizard, but not before the order had been irrevocably damaged by a very public internecine squabble that delighted their opponents.[22]

The second Imperial Wizard, Hiram Wesley Evans, was an Alabama-born dentist who had moved to Texas with his father when he was young. In Dallas he built up a lucrative practice and became a prominent local citizen. Like Simmons, the second Imperial Wizard had been a devoted member of the Freemasons and an enthusiastic fraternalist. In fact it was his good-standing among the members of this well-known fraternity that had precipitated his ascension to the office of Imperial Kligrapp. Evans was one of the earliest members and the Exalted Cyclops, or head, of the notorious Dallas klavern. He managed to quell an anti-Klan faction within the Masonic lodges of this city, a deed which the Atlanta leadership rewarded with his promotion and an impressive $2,500 bonus. Evans was different to the established officials of the Imperial Palace. He represented those fervent Klansmen who had narrowly missed out on being part of Simmons' clique because they did not join before the SPA takeover. Klan expert Stanley Frost described Evans in 1925 as "a man of strong common sense … a practical idealist … very largely a personification of the common people".[23] He seemed far more in touch with the needs of the new Ku Klux Klan's membership, and was intent on reforming the organization for their benefit, as well as his own and that of his closest allies.

The new Imperial Wizard was very aware of the negative public perception of his order's ill-famed Propagation Department, and his first step in reorganizing the sales force was to clean house. "The first thing I did was to cancel E.Y. Clarke's contract as organizer," Evans would later recall about the start of his mandate as Imperial Wizard, justifying his dismissal with allegations of corruption. Evans explained that, some weeks, the Imperial Kleagle "took in as much as $30,000. He made a gold mine …". He also fired Clarke's closest associates, the regional sales officers known as Grand Goblins.[24] Some of the other reforms included banning masked public parades and opening membership to women and to foreign-born white Protestants by founding the Women of the Ku Klux Klan and the American Krusaders respectively. In addition, the order formed the

Junior Ku Klux Klan and the Tri-K Club to prepare young boys and girls for future membership in this Invisible Empire.

Of these new ancillary groups, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) was the most important. The men's order had already depended on women to help develop their organization, as they performed valuable labour by assisting with the organization of public events and the promotion of the group through social channels. Furthermore, as fundamental symbols of the purity of white supremacy, womanhood was a critical aspect of the male Klan's ideology, while its protection was an intrinsic duty of any good Klansman. Yet women were not simply passive assistants or symbols to the male Klan. During 1922, many women had begun organizing or joining informal female Klan groups such as the Queens of the Golden Mask in Indiana or the Ladies of the Invisible Empire. After the coup against Simmons, Evans attempted to consolidate power and reform the movement to appeal to a broader segment of the population, forming the only officially recognized women's group, the WKKK, in June 1923 with headquarters in Little Rock, Arkansas and chapters across the country.[25]

The men's Klan saw a great opportunity to exploit the eagerness of conservative white Protestant American women, particularly since the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment had awarded them full suffrage. Just one month after the establishment of the WKKK, during a meeting of the order's leadership, Arkansas Grand Dragon James C. Comer asked his colleagues to welcome this valuable help to their struggle, arguing that:

> The power of the ballot now granted to women is a challenge to our real one hundred per cent American women to join the men of the nation in laying the axe of the ballot at the root of every American tree which does not bring forth American fruit.[26]

Of course, the leadership of the Klan also recognized that new members would also bring in further profits for the order. Despite this, the WKKK emerged not as an auxiliary to be exploited by their male counterparts, but as an independent group with its own priorities. In fact, as Linda Gordon has illustrated, the women who joined this sisterhood both upheld and challenged the gender norms of white Protestant America and the attitudes of their male counterparts.[27]

Evans' reforms in 1923 introduced much-needed adjustments to the Ku Klux Klan's overall structure, but they were primarily a facelift, intended to make the organization more media-friendly and accessible to the public. Evans' true intention was actually to move away from the fraternal origins of the organization and create a modern and aggressive political juggernaut. In this regard, the formation of such ancillary groups as the WKKK and the Krusaders was meant to reinforce the order's voting power and political strength. Simmons' Invisible Empire had played a part in elections in the past, but they had always been uncoordinated efforts to elect individual candidates without a real national policy. Under Evans, the Klan began to push for a national strategy that involved lobbying and pressuring politicians to support the interests of their members and the order's

leadership. One of the second Imperial Wizard's pet projects was immigration reform, and in 1923 he rallied Klansmen and Klanswomen to support the Johnson–Reed Act that would dramatically reduce the number of southern and eastern Europeans who were allowed into the country. One journalist explained that the Invisible Empire's emergence into politics was a "new phase in the life of the Klan" and that their new national political platform "puts the Klan frankly into the political field".[28] The new Ku Klux Klan that appeared under Evans' control seemed ready to take the country by storm in late 1924 with its platform of unabashed white supremacy, strict 100 per cent Americanism and aggressive Protestantism.

But just as suddenly as the Ku Klux Klan appeared, by 1925 it seemed to have disappeared. Historians are still debating why the order seems to have collapsed so abruptly. Stanley Coben argues that this decline was due to three factors: the "inability of the order to achieve its promises, the demoralization of its members because of scandals … and counterattacks by ethnic and religious groups … and [by] business elites which held political control of the nation's major cities."[29] Others maintain that there is no single answer to this question, and that we must focus on individual klaverns to understand why members stopped attending. The fact of the matter is that although the timeline and evolution of the organization and its leadership is relatively clear, the KKK has long been intrinsically misunderstood as a movement. For close to a century historians and others have been debating the most basic characteristics of the movement, trying to comprehend who was joining the Invisible Empire and what was motivating them.

The first wave of historians to investigate the Ku Klux Klan characterized the movement as an expression of small-town irrationality, a violent and reactionary manifestation of conservative America's inability to cope with the radical changes of the modern 1920s. These accounts were mostly informed by partisan newspaper reports and impressionistic assessments from contemporary observers during the Jazz Age, and routinely neglected to engage with the wealth of evidence from the Klan or the experiences and opinions of its members. Sociologist John Moffatt Mecklin was one of the leading exponents of this school of thought, and his 1924 study came to encapsulate academic attitudes towards the Second Invisible Empire during this period. He categorized the Klan as an essentially Southern and rural organization that initiated a campaign of violence and intimidation against African-Americans, Jews, Catholics and European immigrant groups. He believed that these fanatical Klansmen were driven by hysterical suspicions about these "un-American" minorities, and even described members, saying: "A child whipping its contumacious dolly is hardly more irrational." This interpretation was very influential and was echoed by respected historians of the 1950s and 1960s such as John Higham, Richard Hofstadter and William Leuchtenburg.[30]

At the same time there were a number of more specialized studies that also appeared in the 1950s and 1960s which overturned many of these arguably superficial assumptions. Charles Alexander's and Norman Weaver's regional

studies of the Invisible Empire began to emphasize the local nature of the movement; Kenneth Jackson's insightful analysis of the Klan in the city disputed the characterization of the Invisible Empire as a fundamentally rural movement.[31] These revisionist historians were challenging established interpretations of the Klan, arguing that the movement was also Northern, urban and even mainstream. This revisionist school of thought began to question many accepted theories about the movement, and increasingly engaged with Klansmen as rational people who were part of a popular, and even mainstream, political movement.

This trend was taken even further in the following decades by a group of historians who would become known as the "post-revisionists". This school of thought based its work on documents preserved from individual klaverns, arguing that local history would allow for a more accurate picture of the Invisible Empire to emerge. The work of Robert Goldberg, Leonard Moore, Shawn Lay, and Craig Fox have fundamentally challenged the dominant narrative, arguing that the Invisible Empire was not an aberration at all, that violence was rare in most regions, and that the Klan ultimately responded to the needs of individual communities.[32] Rather than simply trying to define the Klan based on their ideology and literature, the post-revisionists carried out exhaustive demographic surveys of groups of Klansmen and the communities they inhabited, and have demonstrated that the order recruited from all classes in society. Their work showed that the social composition of the Second Ku Klux Klan was practically a mirror of the communities they were built on. These post-revisionists have also argued that each individual klavern adapted to suit the needs of its community, which finally explained the colourful array of different causes the Klan stood for across the country. This influential approach to the study of the Invisible Empire has defined the field for the past 30 years, establishing the organization as a localized movement of reactionary reformers.

The post-revisionist interpretation has become the standard narrative of the Ku Klux Klan, and while it may have drastically improved our understanding of the movement, it still presents some issues. The focus on local history has made the historiography overly concerned with the role of the KKK in a handful of communities. This artificial restriction of the scope of historical inquiry limits our analysis of the Invisible Empire. The Klansmen of the 1920s interacted with each other in this national movement, and historians should take the opportunity to re-examine this fraternity not as a collection of isolated pockets of followers, but as a great mass movement of shared interests. Furthermore, the role of the Invisible Empire's leadership and the national network of officers needs to be emphasized. Although they exercised little influence over individual klaverns, the order's leadership at the national and regional level helped to bolster the growth of the movement and defended it from external attacks. The marketing and recruitment of the fraternity were directed by the Klan's managers and leaders and are a critical aspect of the success of the overall movement. Most accounts of the KKK also neglect to examine how people outside of the order viewed and responded to their expansion and do not always evaluate how the fraternity's growth affected others. This study hopes to address these problems

by offering a different interpretation of the Second Ku Klux Klan that centres on exploring how the Invisible Empire grew across America and how the nation's citizens reacted to this development.

The interest in the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan has surged since the 1980s, and the historiography of the subject has remained vibrant and energetic. This is because although historians and analysts have gained a clearer understanding of this organization, there are still facets of this mass movement that remain unexplored. The presence of the Invisible Empire affected practically everything in the communities where it established itself, from church attendance to shop sales, making it a vital subject for anyone trying to understand the social and political history of the "Roaring Twenties". The Klan has been studied as a political and nativist organization, as an anti-Catholic movement, as a Prohibition lobbying group and as a vigilante unit. But even the less obvious features of the Invisible Empire have been covered by researchers. The Second Klan has been studied as a business venture, as an electoral movement, as a retail combination to fight competitors, as a religious revival and as a Progressive and socialist organization. Recently, Thomas Pegram has researched the complex relationship between the Second Klan and trades unions, demonstrating that contrary to popular perceptions, the order did not always oppose such groups and often formed alliances with the white working classes. In addition, Felix Harcourt's book explores the pervasiveness of the Klan in American culture, and how the popularity of the movement led to the proliferation of Klan-themed music, radio stations, and even sports teams. Amid the bitter contemporary debates about the emergence of the so-called alt-right and the "America First" doctrine of President Donald Trump, new books such as Linda Gordon's *The Second Coming of the Ku Klux Klan* seek to explore and examine the precursors to such phenomena and to highlight how mainstream the Invisible Empire truly was. Gordon's work effectively captures how truly American the Ku Klux Klan was and reminds us that racism and violence are not aberrant themes in the nation's history.[33] The historiography of the movement has undoubtedly been spurred by the re-emergence of the American far-right in popular culture, mainstream media and political rhetoric in the last few years as readers seek to understand the origins of groups like the Klan that once again march down the nation's streets.

Yet there is one feature of this fascinating organization that has mostly been overlooked: its fraternalism and its relationship with other fraternities. Most studies of the movement briefly discuss the order's peculiar ceremonies but have generally neglected the central role that this aspect of the organization played in its development.[34] Shawn Lay has even called for a new study of the Ku Klux Klan centred entirely on this very topic, remarking that: "Beyond its political and social activism, other aspects of the second Klan merit extensive examination. The Klan's role as a fraternal group needs additional investigation, particularly in light of the new and provocative scholarship on secret men's societies."[35] In the past, attempts to investigate the Invisible Empire's fraternalism and its relation with other fraternities have been hindered by the inherent difficulties of trying to examine this secret and sometimes criminal organization.

The clandestine nature of the Second Klan's activities, as well as the unsavoury reputation it earned in subsequent years, has made finding material relating to the order rather complicated. The Klan was not only a secretive organization during its active years; members also frequently destroyed any written materials left when the hundreds of klaverns across the country were closed. Furthermore, although oral interviews have previously been deployed effectively by researchers to try to recover some information, the historical window where such techniques could be used has unfortunately closed.[36] Because of these issues, there are significant obstacles to overcome when making certain conclusions regarding the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

This inherent complication has not deterred researchers. In fact, the organization's secrecy has aroused curiosity and many determined historians have offered their own perspective on the mysterious Invisible Empire. This study will continue this trend and contribute to the historiography by carrying out a comprehensive analysis of the Ku Klux Klan's role as a fraternity. This account will question the significance of this brotherhood's fraternal traditions and evaluate how the Klan managed to become both an aggressive political movement and a spiritual fraternal organization. But, more importantly, this research will examine the Ku Klux Klan in the context of the period, placing it alongside the other fraternities and secret societies of the time and exploring the relationship between the orders. It is not enough to investigate the Invisible Empire in isolation, because, as one Klan critic explained in 1924:

> One factor in [the Klan's] growth, however, is often overlooked, and that is the saturation of the United States with innumerable organizations, associations, societies, sects, fraternities and whatnots, which, in their use of ritual, their artificial loyalties, their exclusive and arbitrary homogeneity, are not so alien as might at first thought to be supposed.[37]

William Joseph Simmons founded his order based on the various different fraternities he belonged to and his own brotherhood was shaped by these experiences. These influences would prove fundamental to its success. The Invisible Empire managed to selectively incorporate the most popular features of America's beloved brotherhoods and soon became one of the nation's largest fraternal orders. It led one Klansman to proudly declare:

> I think more of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan than any other secret fraternity in which I have any membership. I am a Shriner, a thirty-second degree Scottish Rite Mason, an Elk, Odd Fellow, and a Knight of Pythias, but I love the Klan better than any of them.[38]

Because of this it is entirely necessary to discuss the Klan's fraternalism in the general context of American secret societies.

The Ku Klux Klan attempted to associate with and recruit members from almost all of the country's prominent fraternities, but seemed particularly

obsessed with Freemasonry and its appendant orders. The Invisible Empire's dogged determination to enlist and relate to Freemasonry has repeatedly been noted by historians of both fraternities ever since the 1920s, yet none of these have fully investigated the matter.[39] Although the Odd Fellows were the country's largest fraternity in terms of numbers during the 1920s, the Freemasons remained the most exclusive and desirable brotherhood in America. Freemasonry was everything the Ku Klux Klan aspired to be, and Klan salesmen actively pursued members of this fraternity for recruitment into their own organization. One former officer of the Invisible Empire's Propagation Department would later recall that:

> The Klan makes a tremendous appeal to Masons when it pretends to take the fine principles and splendid ideals of the Masonic fraternity and to translate them into service. The Klan everywhere declares that Masonry is passive in its faith, but that the Klan puts its creed to work.[40]

The Invisible Empire went to great lengths to make it appear as if the two orders were connected, and repeatedly advertised this claim across the country. Much to the dismay of several members of that fraternity, many Freemasons did in fact become Klansmen. These intrusive campaigns would be loudly denounced by Freemasonry's leaders and the two organizations would come to share a turbulent relationship. By examining the relation between these two fraternities we can identify how the Ku Klux Klan marketed itself to the American public and became the most important political and social organization of the early Jazz Age.

Freemasonry, also known as the "Craft" or the "Blue Lodge", is one of the world's most well known fraternities. The group's origins lie in the medieval masonry guilds of Britain and France, wherein members would be taught the secret geometrical and architectural techniques of this trade within the lodge. At some point after the English Civil War, some lodges began to allow non-professional stonemasons to join them, and the club became quite fashionable among gentlemen and freethinkers of the time. The three degrees of the Masonic lodge taught lessons of virtue based on the symbols of that trade, and many men came to admire the ideas of self-improvement, equality and enlightenment that the ceremonies advocated. The first modern lodges were officially founded in Scotland at the turn of the seventeenth century, when William Schaw reordered the organization; he established formal rules for their governance and formed various new chapters. This was followed by the union of four London lodges in 1717 that would form the Grand Lodge of England. This Grand Lodge established the rituals and regulations that many continue to follow in contemporary Freemasonry.[41] The order spread throughout Europe and soon found its way to Colonial America, where it also proved popular among the British settlers. Although their contribution has sometimes been exaggerated in the past, Freemasonry would play an influential role during the American Revolution. Celebrated figures of this period such as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and

Paul Revere were all initiates of the Masonic lodge. Not only were a notable proportion of the intellectual and military leadership of the nascent American nation members of the "Craft", but the fraternity also helped shape the future of the nation by promoting ideas of democracy, liberalism and individualism among ordinary male citizens.[42]

As the country grew and Americans settled new territories following independence, they took Freemasonry with them. Bodies known as Grand Lodges were set up in each state, each working independently in their respective jurisdictions, and headed by a Grand Master who was elected at the annual state convention. The fraternity also expanded with the creation of appendant bodies such as the York and Scottish Rites. These popular orders offered additional degrees to those who had already completed the initial three and awarded impressive titles such as "Master of the Royal Secret" or "Knight Templar". Freemasonry also suffered some setbacks during this period. In 1826 in western New York, a man named William Morgan disappeared after threatening to publish the secrets of the Masonic ritual. It was believed by many that he had been murdered by over-zealous Freemasons. The public outcry that followed the events of the "Morgan Affair" created an anti-Masonic sentiment that enveloped the young country during the 1830s and nearly destroyed the fraternity.

In the decades following their persecution, the Masonic fraternity managed to reclaim its position as an American institution, and membership in the order once again became an exclusive and desirable commodity. Historian Mark Tabbert has highlighted the order's growth in numbers and estimation, explaining that by 1900 at least 5 per cent of the adult male population of the country were Freemasons and that: "After the church and the school, the Masonic lodge was often the most important institution established in a new town." Following the Civil War, membership in this fraternity became almost indispensable for the aspiring middle classes because of the recognition that being accepted by the Craft awarded. Sociologist Max Weber famously commented that membership in exclusive brotherhoods functioned as a way of demonstrating social standing, observing that "the badge in the buttonhole meant 'I am a gentleman patented after investigation and probation and guaranteed by my membership' ".[43] Because Freemasonry had such stringent entry requirements and elevated fees, membership in the order became a valuable demonstration of respectability when meeting strangers. Belonging to the Craft almost became a prerequisite for politicians and businessmen in the period between 1890 and 1930 as the Masonic ring or lapel pin proved that the wearer was a dependable and upstanding man.

It was precisely this desirability and the order's historical reputation as an honourable and progressive men's order that fuelled the Ku Klux Klan's drive to appear as a Masonic affiliate. By tying themselves to Freemasonry, they were imbuing their own organization with the Craft's respectability as well as their prestigious heritage as the shapers and defenders of American liberalism and democracy. Nevertheless, the historiography of the subject has not given this relationship sufficient attention or credit.[44] Unfortunately, the bulk of the material written on the relationship between the two fraternities has originated

from the minds of conspiracy theorists. One bizarre website accused Freemasonry and the Klan of being linked with the mysterious New World Order, and stated: "Whether it be the Mormon Church, the Jehovah's Witnesses, Wicca Witchcraft, Scientology or the Ku Klux Klan – we find demonic Freemasonry as the common denominator." Other, more seemingly professional treatises have presented different though equally outlandish theories about the connection between the Klan and the Craft.[45] Freemasonry has been the object of many suspected international conspiracies, so it is no surprise that many opponents of the order are keen to emphasize its close ties with the notorious Ku Klux Klan. The truth of the matter is that the two fraternities shared a much more complex relationship of both occasional cooperation and conflict.

Though this subject is vital to understanding the growth of the Ku Klux Klan, it has proven complicated for historians to adequately investigate the fraternity's association with Freemasonry. This is partly due to the reticence of many Grand Lodges to allow researchers access to their material. As historian David Stevenson noted in 1988:

> Some Masons regard their history as virtually the property of their members … and are unhappy at outsiders working in the field – a response obviously conditioned by the periodic publication of lurid attacks on the Craft, for such 'exposures' lead to fear that any outsider taking an interest in Freemasonry might really be seeking material for a scandalous instant best-seller.[46]

In recent years historians have started to recognize the valuable contributions made by the Craft to various political, social, intellectual and artistic developments of the past three centuries, and the field has become far more accepted by mainstream academics. Furthermore, Freemasonry has become an increasingly public order that does not shy away from the outside world and even welcomes historians. Although some members are still cautious with research inquiries, this general shift has made the task of analysing the exact nature of the links between the Invisible Empire and the Freemasons finally possible.

For decades historians have been debating why Americans joined the Second Ku Klux Klan, offering different explanations for the meteoric rise of William Joseph Simmons' little Southern brotherhood. This book will offer an entirely new perspective on an almost exhausted subject by focusing on a neglected feature of this organization: its fraternalism. In the past, fraternalism has been a theme of various academic studies regarding the KKK, but has never been the focus. This piece of work aims to assess its role within the movement and evaluate just how vital the Invisible Empire's fraternal functions were. To do so, it is essential to see how the Ku Klux Klan interacted and recruited members from fraternities like the Freemasons, and how Masonic members and leaders reacted to this invasion.

This study will begin by evaluating the Ku Klux Klan's role as a fraternity, debating whether it qualifies as one and asking what significance this function played in the movement's rise. The first chapter will assess the Invisible Empire

by comparing it with various other fraternities, teasing out the subtle differences that make this hooded brotherhood unique. The second chapter will focus on Freemasonry itself and will try to answer why it was that members of this fraternity were joining the new Ku Klux Klan. It will discuss a number of Masonic organizations that tried to fulfil the same role as the Klan, before concluding that the Invisible Empire offered a more flexible and innovative form of fraternalism that addressed the needs of its members, particularly the growing demand to act more aggressively in political matters. We will then move on and explore the Ku Klux Klan's remarkable marketing strategies, investigating how the order's determined efforts to appear as both a sensible fraternity and an order closely related to the Craft helped to boost this organization's reputation in the eyes of the public. The fourth chapter will concentrate on the Invisible Empire's kleagles, and assess how they employed the latest modern sales techniques to infiltrate Masonic lodges and sell the Klan to America and to Freemasonry. Chapter 5 will try to tackle the complex task of estimating just how successful the Ku Klux Klan was at recruiting Freemasons. By investigating the relationship between the two organizations in various individual locales, this chapter hopes to make an informed estimate for the proportion of Freemasons who became Klansmen. The sixth chapter will turn its attention to two cities in particular – Dallas and Anaheim – which will offer an in-depth view of the Klan's effect in local communities. The next chapter will contrast the responses of differing Masonic Grand Masters to the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, and will examine why individual Freemasons' reactions to the order varied so much. Finally, the last chapter of this book will examine how and why the Invisible Empire appeared to collapse so suddenly by the middle of the 1920s.

The subtitle of this book – *Fighting Fraternities* – highlights how Klansmen viewed their order, but also how they related to the Freemasons. The Invisible Empire saw itself as a militant and politically aggressive brotherhood for true white men, a fraternity that practised its ideals and fought to defend American values. The term "fighting fraternity" may seem like a contradiction, but this unconventional approach is precisely what made the Klan unique and so attractive to many. This radical departure shook the fraternal world, and dragged other organizations into conflict with the Invisible Empire. The Freemasons soon found themselves fighting as well, fighting against Klansmen in their order and sometimes fighting alongside the Invisible Empire against their common enemies. The members of the Craft even fought among themselves over the matter of how to deal with the KKK. This case illustrates some of the basic tensions of the early 1920s. As America began to change ever more dramatically – modern technology, radical new social fashions, demographic shifts, political and economic upheavals – the underlying tensions of these developments began to express themselves in conflicts across the country. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan, this new fighting fraternity, is just one illustration of the wave of unease that swept the country as Americans tried to adjust to their new environment.

The Invisible Empire's new form of fraternalism caught the attention of many Americans during the 1920s. The Ku Klux Klan offered members the

opportunity to feel patriotic, to fulfil their duty as good Americans, to celebrate their white masculinity, to defend their heritage and future from institutions and people they considered to be alien, and even to acquire respectability and climb the social ladder. At the same time though, this organization's ritualism and fraternalism provided a unifying experience that helped to bond thousands of strangers and convert them into brothers and knights of the Invisible Empire. This organization's fraternal customs and its connection with other similar secret societies helped to establish their status in American society and to attract new followers to their remarkable mass movement.

Notes

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3 Though, as Elaine Frantz Parsons has noted, this account of the group's origins as a fraternity was disseminated by its founders and there are reasons to question this narrative. See Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015), p. 32.
4 *Testimony Taken By The Joint Select Committee To Inquire Into The Condition of Affairs In the Late Insurrectionary States: South Carolina Volume 3* (Washington D.C., 1872), p. 1983.
5 See James Vincent Lowery, "Reconstructing the Reign of Terror: Popular Memories of the Ku Klux Klan, 1877–1921" (University of Mississippi, 2008) for a full examination of the changing perceptions of the Reconstruction Klan in subsequent decades.
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10 "Why the Ku Klux Klan Has Been Revived", *Atlanta Constitution*, 8 October 1921.
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14 A few studies that illustrate these changes include David J. Goldberg, *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s* (Baltimore, MA, 1999); Niall A. Palmer, *The Twenties in America: Politics and History* (Edinburgh, 2006).

15 William Joseph Simmons, *Imperial Proclamation of the Imperial Wizard*, (Atlanta, GA, 1917).
16 A copy of this contract was published in House of Representatives, Committee on Rules, *Hearings on the Ku Klux Klan Before the Committee on Rules* (Washington D.C., 1921), p. 32.
17 "Ku Klux Klan Brewing Racial and Religious Hate", *Evening Public Ledger*, 12 September 1921.
18 "The Ku Klux Klan", *Cleveland Gazette*, 23 July 1921; "Tar and Feather English Arch-Deacon Who Favors Inter-Racial Marriages", *Kalamazoo Gazette*, 18 July 1921.
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20 Shepherd, "Ku Klux Koin", p. 38.
21 "Deposed Goblins Say Klan Is Broken", *New York Times*, 3 December 1921; "Ku Klux Klan Rebels Form Nation-Wide Society", *Denver Post*, 7 October 1922. For further information on corruption within the Klan's leadership, see Charles Alexander, "Kleagles and Cash: The Ku Klux Klan as a Business Organization, 1915–1930", *The Business History Review* 39, no. 3 (Autumn 1965).
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1 Klanishness

Brotherhood in the Invisible Empire

Throughout the 1920s, millions of Americans from across the country would have shared in the bizarre experience that was the Ku Klux Klan's initiation ceremony. The ritual took place within a klavern, which much like other fraternal lodges resembled an ornate boardroom. The room was dutifully arranged according to the ritual, and was decorated with symbols such as a Bible, a sword, and an American flag. Upon entering the klavern, the new inductees of the fraternity were greeted by a dark room filled with Klansmen standing in a square around a central altar. The candidates would then perform as part of a sombre ceremony, with various Klan officers reciting lofty catechisms on brotherhood and warning them of the dangers of revealing the secrets of the order. Half-way through their rites, one of the klavern's officers would stop the new applicants and proclaim:

> God give us men! The Invisible Empire demands strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands. Men whom the lust of office does not kill; Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy; Men who possess opinions and a will. Men who have honor; men who will not lie.…

Throughout this "naturalization ceremony" these recruits would be repeatedly questioned and tested as to their character, manliness and intentions. The Klan's "Exalted Cyclops" would threaten them with retribution for revealing the fraternity's secrets as they completed the ceremony. After swearing their oath, the "aliens" from the outside world were consecrated as Klansmen, faithful citizens of this Second Invisible Empire, and were awarded the klavern's secrets and passwords.[1]

The Ku Klux Klan's prayers, ceremonies and fraternal admonitions were a vital part of daily life in the Invisible Empire. These recruits vowed to uphold the laws of the fraternity and the duties of a Klansman, and to remain loyal to the organization and their brothers until death. The fraternity's practices were designed create a strong sense of camaraderie and devotion among Klansmen, helping to bond a klavern together and provide a sense of familial union. The order's traditions were an intrinsic part of the fraternity's appeal, and they continue to be practised by present-day successors of the 1920s Klan. The Invisible

Empire's iconic ceremonies and fraternal traditions are also its most recognizable features, setting them apart from other similar organizations with comparable beliefs.

Many of those undertaking the Klan's initiation degree during the 1920s would have experienced practically identical forms of public participatory theatre if they belonged to any of the other popular fraternities of the day. From the Knights of Pythias to the Knights of Columbus, dozens of different brotherhoods met in lodges throughout the nation, reproducing similar initiation degrees and performing them weekly. Membership in a fraternity during the 1920s was not only common, but even expected among certain sectors of the American population as a marker of respectability.

Klansmen spent a considerable amount of their time in the klavern acting out these degrees and practising the "benevolence" and "brotherly love" they had sworn to uphold. Critics and supporters of the order often remarked on the centrality of the Invisible Empire's fraternalism and ritual. Despite this, the role of fraternalism within the Second Klan has received relatively little attention from scholars. In order to address this dearth, this chapter will begin by analysing the rise of fraternalism in post-Civil War America. This will allow us to understand the burgeoning craze for ritualism and brotherhood that influenced the Klan's founder, William Joseph Simmons, and the development of the organization itself. This will be followed by an assessment of the Klan's role as a fraternity, where we will discuss what sort of brotherhood the Invisible Empire was. We will then evaluate why this organization managed to become so successful in an age when fraternalism was starting to show signs of decline. Ultimately, this chapter will help us understand two overarching questions: Was the Ku Klux Klan a fraternity? And how important was this status to its success?

The golden age of fraternity and the Roaring Twenties

Although Americans had been fascinated with fraternities and their mysteries since the Colonial Era, it was only really after the Civil War that they became a phenomenon that concerned all classes. The emergence of this craze requires careful analysis, since the 1920s Ku Klux Klan and its popularity might appear as a natural result of the nation's continued interest in fraternities. Writing in 1896 in the prestigious *North American Review*, W.S. Harwood estimated that at the time, the membership in secret fraternal orders was roughly around 5,400,000. Because some people held multiple memberships in various fraternities, he estimated that, broadly speaking, every fifth or eighth man in America was a fraternalist. Harwood even declared that "so numerous, so powerful, have these orders become, that these closing years of the century might well be called the Golden Age of fraternity". A more thorough assessment of the phenomenon was completed a few years later by Albert Stevens, but he arrived at a very similar conclusion. "Notwithstanding the century's extraordinary developments in agriculture, commerce, manufactures, in the arts, in the dissemination of intelligence, in the machinery of finance and good government," wrote Stevens in his

introduction, "interest in the older and better types of secret societies has grown with even greater rapidity."[2] This widespread interest made itself apparent in all aspects of late nineteenth century American life. Lodges became a common feature of even the smallest towns in the country, and fraternal dues and regalia became a regular expense for many American families.

Harwood's label, the Golden Age of Fraternity, is now used by historians not only to describe the state of fraternalism at the turn of the century, but during the whole period of expansion of these orders, roughly from the end of the Civil War and into the post-World War I era. This period saw the appearance, growth and decline of a countless number of fraternities, from well-known brotherhoods like the Freemasons or the Odd Fellows, to the once popular but now almost forgotten Knights of the Maccabees. As sociologist Jason Kaufman explains, this intensely competitive fraternal market means the era was not one of peaceful or "golden" stability or growth, but one where the remarkable public interest in fraternities caused chaotic and often aggressive competition between different brotherhoods.[3] The true extent of this Golden Age of Fraternity remains somewhat of a mystery for historians. This is due to the fact that an untold number of fraternities cropped up without lasting long enough to make an enduring impact on the historical record.

Historians and sociologists are still at odds about what caused so many Americans to spend their evenings in their local lodge during this Golden Age, and there are several views on the matter. Mary Ann Clawson argues that fraternities united men of different social classes and inducted them into the doctrines of equality and social mobility, which helped to efface notions of class and class consciousness at the turn of the century by emphasizing race, ethnicity, and masculinity as the primary markers of identity in a progressively diverse American society. Mark C. Carnes, through his analysis of the rituals of various orders, has proposed that the substantial time and money devoted to acting out complex initiations and ceremonies within the lodges suggests that ritualism was the key factor in the success of these orders. Carnes identified several recurring themes in these symbolic rituals and has argued that fraternities attracted members because the ceremonies fulfilled a psychosocial male need, by which men came to understand their masculinity in an increasingly feminized Victorian American culture. David T. Beito however, dismisses these ideas and emphasizes the functional role that fraternities played in American communities as a form of social security. Having emerged in a time when the government did not offer health insurance and where other security nets were unavailable, Beito believes that the mutual benefits insurance and welfare provided by most fraternities was the primary appeal of these brotherhoods.[4]

Though identity, ritualism and insurance were undeniably decisive components of the fraternal boom, it could be argued that the essential feature of this phenomenon was the sheer number and variety of fraternities. If Americans primarily joined fraternities to enjoy the insurance benefits or to partake in the spectacle of ritualism, why did they feel the need to form such a colourful array of brotherhoods? Why did they all not join a smaller number of orders that fulfilled these roles?

The fact is that Americans formed a countless number of fraternities that suited every single class at the time. The daughters of Freemasons could join the Order of Rainbow for Girls, whereas Irish Catholic men could become members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians; the Prince Hall Shriners was reserved for wealthier African-American men, while their wives joined the Daughters of Isis. Fraternalism concerned all classes, as fraternal enthusiast and former Klansman Henry P. Fry explained to his readers in 1922:

> If the psychologist, looking over the diversified and conflicting interests and classes of American people, attempted to find a common state of mind, he would probably discover one thing that applies to all American men, without regard to 'race, color, or previous condition of servitude.' He would learn that there is a common American trait possessed by the white man and the negro, the Jew and the Gentile, the Catholic and the Protestant, the native and the foreign-born – in fact by every conceivable group of the males of the United States.
>
> They are all 'joiners'!
>
> One has to search far and wide for an American who does not 'belong' to some sort of an organization, and who would not, under proper circumstances, join another.[5]

Although this obsession with fraternalism transcended class, race and gender, the parameters of most organizations were intrinsically defined by these classifications.

Contrary to their message of universal brotherhood, most fraternities of the "Golden Age" had a strict code of requirements that ensured the homogeneity of their membership. In the case of the Ku Klux Klan these membership requirements were unequivocal, but other organizations like Freemasonry had an unofficial list of criteria that excluded African-Americans, Catholics, and others from applying for membership. This exclusivity within the Freemasons and other organizations derived not from any explicitly exclusionary policy, but from the selection process at the local lodge level. Applicants who did not meet the approval of the members could be blackballed, ensuring the general homogeneity of the brotherhood. These policies resulted in a highly stratified fraternal ecosystem, where in practice each citizen could only belong to a particular niche of brotherhoods. Building on Clawson's work, Kaufman argues that it is this self-segregation between different races and social classes, as well as the two sexes, which is the true motive for the rise of fraternalism in nineteenth-century American society.[6] The lodge was meant to be a place of camaraderie and harmony, and many members simply preferred to avoid political issues of racial, religious and class conflict by excluding people who belonged to radically different worlds. Homogeneity within the fraternal lodge helped guarantee the stability of the organization and to develop friendship among like-minded members from broadly similar backgrounds.

Ultimately, the esoteric ritualism, the mutual benefits insurance, and particularly the ethnic and class camaraderie that was provided by various fraternities, all contributed to the immense popularity and power gained by these brotherhoods in the period 1865–1917. The Golden Age established the local lodge as an essential feature of most American communities and membership in such brotherhoods, especially the most exclusive ones, became a valuable commodity and a marker of social stature.

America's passion for fraternalism did not culminate with the First World War, and the lodge continued to hold its noteworthy place in society. Statistics from a number of different fraternities suggest that these organizations remained popular with American men and women after 1918. Estimates from the Masonic Grand Lodges of Texas and New York seem to indicate a relatively stable and healthy growth for Freemasonry throughout the period, with a sharp surge during the first half of the 1920s (see Figure 1.1). Data also shows that among some of the other major fraternities – the Odd Fellows, Elks, and the Knights of Columbus – all experienced growth throughout the 1920s, with only the Knights of Pythias and the Loyal Order of Moose showing signs of slight decline.[8] The estimates made by one dictionary of fraternal organizations from 1924 gives us a snapshot of the relative strength of the nation's orders (see Figure 1.2). The Order of Owls had only been founded in 1904 and already had over 600,000 initiates just two decades later. Similarly, the Fraternal Order of Orioles was created in 1910 and by 1923 had 143,000 enlisted members.

Many of these organizations seemed to have realized there was significant revival in interest in fraternalism since the end of the war and welcomed the initiation of new candidates. Grand Master John W. Birney, head of the Odd Fellows in Illinois, encouraged his brethren to take advantage of this national mood. "Many orders of a similar kind are 'wide awake' and are seeking and

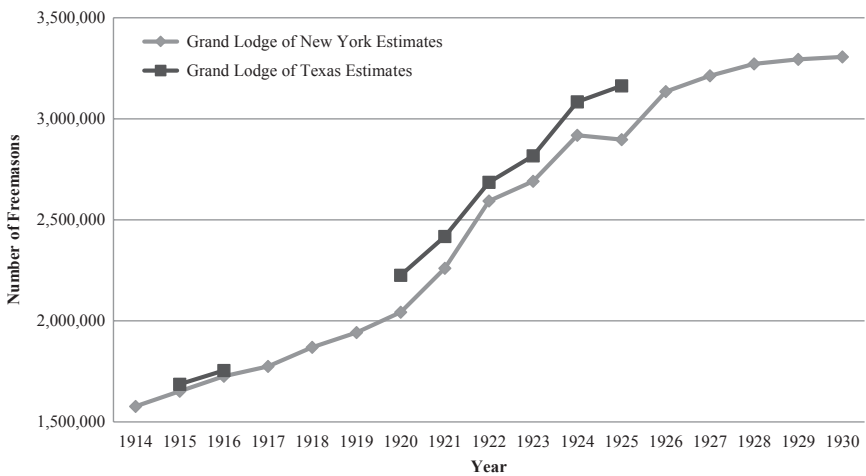

Figure 1.1 Estimates for National Masonic Membership, 1914–1930.[7]

Fraternity	**Total Membership**
Odd Fellows	3,418,883
Freemasons	2,850,910
Modern Woodmen of America	1,074,118
Knights of Pythias	908,454
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks	826,825
Order of Owls	643,748
Independent Order of Good Templars	600,000
Loyal Order of Moose	558,057
Woodmen of the World	542,000
Improved Order of Red Men	515,311
Fraternal Order of Eagles	500,000
Junior Order of United American Mechanics	300,000
Knights of the Maccabees	275,580
Fraternal Order of Orioles	143,000

Figure 1.2 Estimates for Fraternal Membership in Several Orders in the 1920s.[10]

getting many good men and women to join their ranks," affirmed Birney in 1920, "Odd Fellowship should not trail other organizations…. This is a day of organizations, money is plentiful, and the harvest is ripe for the gleaning. The present year promises to exceed all others in membership gains." Two years later, his successor reported that the past year had seen "a splendid increase in our total membership". This Grand Master also encouraged lodges to try to increase their membership by 10 per cent, arguing that: "The need has perhaps never been greater for the good services …".[9] The Roaring Twenties roared not only for the Freemasons but for many fraternities and sororities.

Even President Warren G. Harding partook in the "joiner" craze that had re-emerged after the Great War, becoming a member of several fraternities like the Hoo Hoos, Elks, Red Men, Odd Fellows, the Freemasons and their various ancillary orders. One commentator even joked in 1924 about the prevalence and popularity of fraternities, saying:

> We are a nation of joiners. If you are not a Moose, a Stag, an Elk, an Eagle, an Owl, an Oriole, or some specimen in the great national menagerie; a Yeoman,

> a Good Templar, a Mason, a Workman, a Forester, a Woodman, a Gleaner, a Mechanic, a Druid … a B'nai B'rith, a Red Man, or a Veiled Prophet of the Enchanted Realm – you are, if one may say so, an *Odd Fellow*.[11]

Simmons' Knights of the Ku Klux Klan was just one of the many new fraternities that emerged during this period, seeking to profit from this "nation of joiners". On the surface, it would seem that the rise of the Second Invisible Empire during the 1920s was a natural result of America's enduring love of fraternalism.

Yet these recruitment trends disguise the real state of the nation's interest in such ritualistic orders. Many fraternalists were worried that even though fraternities continued to attract applicants, these new members no longer cared for brotherhood and that the institution was rotting from within. For many fraternities then, the 1920s were not "Golden" at all, but a time of disruption and alteration. Arkansas Governor Thomas Chipman McRae, in his capacity as an officer of the Masonic Grand Lodge of Arkansas, alluded to this problem in 1922:

> One of the most gratifying observations which we have been able to make in recent years has disclosed a great revival of Masonry. This is measured by the great intake of new members of the Blue Lodges, and the wonderful increase in numbers of those taking the higher degrees in Masonry. This brings me to an important thought: Is this rapid increase in numbers bringing with it a corresponding zeal for true Masonry? There is some evidence that this new membership is concerned rather too much with the superficial. At least, this is being asserted by many observers.[12]

Governor McRae's concerns reflected a general feeling among Freemasons, as well as other orders, that the institution was becoming less fraternal in this uncertain post-war era. An unprecedented membership intake was disguising worrying trends in American fraternalism. One of the major fears within Freemasonry was that members were simply racing through the initial three degrees of this order, known as the Blue Lodge, to be eligible to join one of the prestigious "higher degrees" like the Scottish and York Rites. Freemasons were troubled about the fact that most new members were not taking the fraternity seriously and were simply "collecting" degrees and fraternal lapel pins to enjoy the admiration that came with being able to call yourself a "32nd degree Mason". Many other fraternalists also seemed concerned with this issue within their own brotherhoods. "This hurry of buttons does not make men real Masons" decried Kentucky Grand Master Fred W. Hardwick in 1922.[13] The lack of true commitment to the esoteric mysteries of the ritual and the finer points of fraternalism would continue to be a problem throughout the 1920s, and it was not necessarily restricted to the Freemasons either.

This rapid influx of members caused another serious problem within the ranks of the nation's fraternities: the overcrowding of lodges. By the 1920s, this problem had become so acute that there were some Masonic lodges with over

1,000 members, and several Grand Masters felt the need to discuss the matter and address the issue. One Texas Freemason, Stephen M. Bradley, lamented that: "In lodges with such large and cumbersome membership the members are not brethren in the truly Masonic sense; they are only casual acquaintances, and the bond of fraternity and brotherhood is lacking." The next year he commented on the problem once more, again decrying the severe case of "elephantiasis" that afflicted some lodges and accusing them of being simply degree mills where brothers could not even recognize one another.[14]

Although the membership of fraternities was steadily increasing in the early 1920s, this growth masked what seems to be a gradual decline in America's commitment to fraternalism and ritualism. Then, instead of being an extension of the Golden Age of Fraternity, perhaps we can more adequately describe the 1920s as the "Gilded Age of Fraternity". In other words, the apparently healthy growth of membership disguised conflict within lodges and among members.[15] Throughout the 1920s, American men and women seemed to be enlisting in multiple organizations simply for the sake of belonging. Increasingly, membership in clubs and fraternities was used as a symbolic assessment of their social standing; the lodge button soon became a way of establishing themselves within the social hierarchy of 1920s America. One writer explained this phenomenon, describing these new "joiners" as:

> men and sometimes women who simply have to join at least three societies, lodges, luncheon clubs or the like in order to feel supremely happy. What the associations in question aim at is, generally speaking, not the prime factor which induces those people to 'join up' with the Elks, Lions, golf clubs, Odd Fellows and so forth. They nurse the rather fatuous belief that the mere fact of joining elevates them above the common herd, that it puts the hallmark of distinction upon them.[16]

American's shallow commitment to fraternalism during this "Gilded Age" would become apparent in the economic downturn of the 1930s, when most could no longer afford to belong to a fraternity simply to keep up appearances and the membership in these groups dropped precipitously.

It is difficult to assess why America changed its attitudes towards fraternities during the 1920s, possibly because historians and sociologists have still not agreed on what caused the rise of fraternalism in the first place. One of the factors suggested by historians was the change in priorities and tastes of the American public in this post-war era, which came to prefer less rigid organizations like luncheon clubs over fraternities.[17] And yet, there was another voluntary organization aside from the luncheon clubs that was also prospering in the Roaring Twenties. The Ku Klux Klan achieved a powerful following during the era, even though America's love affair with fraternities was seemingly over. Why, during this "Gilded Age of Fraternity", when so many of America's voluntary organizations were disposing of their ritual and updating themselves to modern tastes, did the Invisible Empire emerge and succeed as a fraternity? Was

there something special about the Klan's fraternalism that set it aside from other organizations? To understand where the KKK's growth fits into the broader patterns of decline of other major orders, it is first necessary to analyse this order's role as a fraternity, their emphasis on ritualism and brotherhood, and how these factors changed throughout the Klan's turbulent existence.

The Ku Klux Klan's role as a fraternity

Most historians and sociologists who study the phenomenon of fraternalism are reluctant to suggest a definition of what constitutes a "fraternity" due to the difficulties and constraints presented by such a classification. A broad definition would erroneously include organizations like trades unions or veterans' organizations, which, although not fraternities, instituted fraternal practices like mutual aid. On the other hand, a restrictive definition might exclude some fraternities that might not have common features like regalia or secrecy. Because of these difficulties in describing a "fraternity", an analysis of the Invisible Empire's role as a brotherhood cannot hinge entirely on theoretical definitions. Any evaluation of the Klan should also be based on what Klansmen themselves believed their organization to be, and how the Invisible Empire compared to other well-known fraternities of the era.

Jeffrey Tyssens and Bob James are two of the historians who have ventured to define what constitutes a "fraternity", and their definitions are similar in several respects.[18] The following criteria are drawn from the work of these two historians and general observations of the function and structure of fraternities. Some of the essential elements of practically any fraternity include: an initiation ceremony that awards membership and in which recruits must undertake a sworn oath of allegiance; a series of ascending ritualistic degrees which invest members with intimate information about the order and a more profound connection to their brethren; a wisdom narrative or founding myth, a story or character which the members can draw moral lessons from or emulate; a symbolic sense of family or brotherhood, wherein members are tied together spiritually and sometimes financially through mutualism; restricted membership, guarded by certain criteria and the approval of the lodge, which clearly demarcates outsiders; secrecy regarding affairs of the fraternity. Generally speaking then, a fraternity is an organization that performs rituals, promotes fraternalism and practises secrecy and exclusivity in their affairs. This is by no means a definite list, but it serves as a useful measure to examine the Ku Klux Klan and to determine if it was radically different from other fraternities of this post-war decade.

Ritualism is the first characteristic of a fraternity, and is perhaps its most distinctive feature. Ritualism refers not only to the actual ceremonies and oaths performed by members, but to the fundamental concept of progression within the fraternity. Rituals in fraternities represent a theatrical reproduction of the initiate's journey from a lowly applicant to a fully realized brother. They embody the outsider's advancement, their symbolic death and rebirth as a selfless member of the fraternity and their newly found commitment to their brethren and the order's

moral vision. Each new degree invests the initiates with increased responsibility and reveals more of the esoteric secrets and knowledge of the fraternity. Of course, to execute such a complex succession of rituals, fraternities have highly organized hierarchies, with officers undertaking different roles to ensure the ceremonies are performed correctly and the candidates are adequately instructed.

The ceremonies and structure that William Joseph Simmons envisioned for his Invisible Empire were inspired by his experiences in the Woodmen of the World and the various other orders he belonged to before he founded the Klan. Simmons was an avid "joiner", and famously declared to his audience at the 1921 Congressional Hearings on the KKK:

> I am a member of a number of fraternal orders – the Masons, Royal Arch Masons, the Great Order of Templars and then I have these affiliations that I have gone into, 12 or 15 in number, in my lifetime, [in which I] seemingly have passed the committees and have been active in the work. In fact, I have been a fraternalist ever since I was in the academy school way back yonder.…[19]

Simmons' life-long involvement in various brotherhoods and his commitment to fraternalism influenced the foundations of the Klan, and its rituals are strongly reminiscent of those of other popular orders.

Simmons did, however, try to emphasize how different his own organization was to these other fraternities. In an effort to seem superior and more esoteric than other brotherhoods, he declared in an early Klan pamphlet that their ritual was:

> vastly different from anything in the whole universe of fraternal ritualism. It is altogether original, weird, mystical and of a high class, leading up through four degrees…. He who explores the dismal depths of the mystic cave and from thence attains the lofty heights of superior knighthood may sit among the gods in the Empire Invisible.[20]

To accompany his weird and mystical ceremonies, Simmons also created a hierarchy and structure based on the alliteration "kl". For instance, the order's ritualistic work was referred to as "klankraft", while a gathering of Klansmen was called a "klonklave". The Klan's ritual and titles certainly appear extraordinary, but they should not be regarded as the root of the organization's success. Other fraternities had comparably mysterious degrees and names, such as the Concatenated Order of Hoo Hoo, which based their unconventional brotherhood's nomenclature and ritual on Lewis Carroll's 1874 nonsense poem, *The Hunting of the Snark.* In this peculiar brotherhood, an initiate could become a Jabberwock or a Bojum if he proved himself to his brethren.

Simmons originally envisioned his ritual as a series of four separate degrees, from K-Uno to K-Quad. As described earlier, the Klan's initiation ceremony was intended to be a theatrical representation of the pledge's journey of enlightenment and fraternal recognition. Yet, as Carnes has noted, the rituals practised by

fraternities of this period also represented the male initiate's transition from boyhood to manhood. Often, these rites would begin by portraying candidates as immature or unmasculine, and after overcoming various trials that tested their manliness, the initiates would be reborn as more complete men. The second degree of the Knights of Pythias for example, advised of the importance of prudence as a manly virtue and promised candidates: "Especially to young men should this order be a defence against every evil, and keep them perfect in their manhood." The Pythian ceremony, as well as the Klan's, ensured that the initiates were ready and willing to join the fraternity, and started them on their journey to full recognition and, as the first degree of the Knights emphasized, "a higher and better standard of manhood".[21] In the Klan's ceremony, initiates would traverse from the "alien" world outside the lodge, facing trials and tests, before being "naturalized" as citizens of the fraternity. However, the explicitly gendered language employed in the ritual suggests that this was also intended to test and perfect their masculinity. Initiates in the Ku Klux Klan, according to the ritual, would be welcomed for making the "manly decision to forsake the world of selfishness and fraternal alienation and emigrate to the delectable bounds of the Invisible Empire …" but expelled if they turned out to be a "cowardly weakling or a treacherous scalawag".[22] As part of their ritual they would abandon their former lives and be reborn as noble Klansmen.

Imperial Wizard Simmons never managed to complete the rest of his ritual, but each degree was meant to be a mark of "Klannish achievement and Kloranic advancement". The ritual of the Klan was supposed to "unfold … its philosophies and … [reveal] … its spiritual mysteries" with each step leading the initiate closer to the goal of becoming the perfect "Klansman". Simmons himself wrote that his order imparted several degrees and that "each of the orders marks an advance in devotion to our common country and in those fraternal relations and responsibilities which bind us to our fellow men".[23] This progression is considered one of the hallmarks of fraternal ritualism and is often visually represented as a set of steps or a ladder that lead candidates to become fully-realized brethren. Through this process, a novice would be tried and taught a number of moral lessons about manliness that would develop his personality and assist him in becoming a recognized member of that organization and a true American man.

In terms of structure, the Invisible Empire's ritualism and hierarchy resembles that of other American fraternities of the early twentieth century and performed a similar function. The content of these rituals however, with its emphasis on patriotism, duty and white masculinity, was distinctive for the era. While nativist and anti-Catholic fraternities like the Junior Order of United American Mechanics had existed since before the Civil War, the Klan's explicit devotion to white supremacy and its veneration for its Reconstruction predecessor set this order apart.

Most American fraternities of the time based their rituals and the entire organization on what Tyssens terms "the wisdom narrative", also referred to sometimes as the brotherhood's foundation myth. This was often a story or allegory

that exemplified the values the fraternity was trying to inculcate. This wisdom narrative was usually one of historical or cultural importance that would award the organization a sense of gravitas, while still instilling lessons about the importance of brotherhood, manliness and honour. For example, in 1894, David W. Gerard founded the Supreme Tribe of Ben Hur, a fraternity based on the popular 1880 novel, *Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ.* The Supreme Tribe of Ben Hur imparted parables illustrated through the life and trials of the titular character, culminating in his redemption from a life of revenge as a follower of Christ. The ritual of the Court Degree even re-enacted Ben Hur's enslavement aboard a Roman galley ship, wherein initiates played the part of slaves and witnessed Ben Hur's suffering.[24] Other fraternities had different wisdom narratives; the Freemasons illustrated their system of morality through characters such as Hiram Abiff, the chief architect of Solomon's Temple, who was murdered when he refused to divulge the secrets of his trade to outsiders.

In much the same way, Simmons based his organization and its rituals on the myths that abounded in early twentieth century America regarding the Reconstruction Ku Klux Klan. Simmons' order was not originally intended to be a terrorist organization like its predecessor, but a fraternity that espoused the supposed spirit of chivalry and duty of the legendary Reconstruction Klan. Simmons claims it was his father, a former Alabama Klansman during the 1860s, who first told him the tales of the heroic Klan as a child.[25] Instead of viewing the Reconstruction Klan as a terrorist unit that was violently enforcing *antebellum* social norms, Simmons, and most white Southerners, grew up listening to mythical accounts of a valiant KKK. Klansmen, in their eyes, were brave white men who defended the honour of Confederate widows and orphans when the unconstitutional decrees of the North imposed "Negro rule" upon a prostrate and defeated South. This foundation myth is unique in some respects among America's fraternities since it idealized white manhood and warned of the horrors of miscegenation.

Simmons adopted these myths of noble Klansmen as the wisdom narrative and theme of his order. The purpose of this organization was not to revive the First Klan, but to pay tribute to it and use it to inspire members to be valiant, honourable and chivalric, like the Klansmen of legend. Yet, Simmons' order also idolized the Reconstruction Klan's commitment and defence of white supremacy. The entire lecture of the first K-Uno degree was dedicated to paying tribute to the heroism of the original Klan, and described the dangers posed by the emancipated slaves saying:

> The chastity of the mother, wife, sister and daughter was imperilled and their sacred persons were placed in jeopardy to the licentious longing of lust-crazed beasts in human form … the very blood of the Caucasian race was seriously threatened with an everlasting contamination.

In response, the lecture continued, Klansmen, "with a grim smile of sacred duty resting upon their manly countenances, imperiled by an instinct of the race, they

leaped into the saddle".[26] Each fraternity had their own wisdom narrative that was meant to inculcate values of mutualism and selflessness. The Knights of Pythias for example, based their ceremonies on the legendary friendship of Damon and Pythias that was meant to always remind initiates of the value of generosity and altruism. Yet, at its core and unlike other rival fraternities, the foundation myth of the Second Klan was not only intended to inculcate manly values such as bravery, but to promote an ideal of white manhood that defended the sanctity of white supremacy and racial purity. Through the succession of degrees, Simmons' Klansmen were supposed to learn about the deeds of the Reconstruction Klan to use these lessons as a criterion for their own behaviour.

The wisdom narrative of a fraternity was revered because of the honourable deeds of the characters. There is a common theme running through the wisdom narratives of most fraternities, and that is the selfless behaviour of the characters. Fraternities repeatedly encouraged their members to emulate the unselfishness and brotherly love exemplified by these characters or stories. For instance, the Woodmen of the World was founded in 1890 by Joseph Cullen Root. He based his organization on romantic folk tales about the noble pioneers who conquered the American West, and who cleared the woods away to shelter and provide for their families and dependants. In much the same way, Root hoped that his organization, through a system of mutual beneficiary insurance, would inspire members to shelter and provide for each other. The first degree of the Woodmen of the World lectured its newcomers as they sat in a prop forest clearing, saying:

> Woodcraft is symbolized by a forest where great trees with mighty boughs interlock, forming a swinging couch wherein bleep the chirping birds and their trusting young. The storm may roar, the earth may rock, but the limbs above and the roots below are united and thus combine a strength that one single tree could not possess. When a strong man fails to protect the unfortunate, he exposes a most serious defect in his character, through which he will finally be vanquished. This lesson you must learn as you proceed.[27]

Fraternities may have come in many different guises, but the message of brotherhood and benevolence was common to them all. This is the second main characteristic of a fraternity: the practice of fraternalism. The message imparted by the Woodmen of the World may have been presented in a distinct arboreal theme and highlighted the ideal of the patriarchal provider, but it contains messages of mutual aid and fraternal interdependence that would have been familiar to members of other orders. Simmons himself also incorporated this message of altruism as one of the cornerstones of his own fraternity. This underlying theme of brotherhood is a fundamental aspect of any fraternity, a basic value that ties members together and extends the bonds of family to strangers. The Second Ku Klux Klan is no exception, as it expounded this common fraternal theme, or "Klanishness", as it was referred to, throughout its ritual and teachings.

The Klan's commitment to fraternalism seems evident if we observe their mission statement, or Ku Klux Kreed. This decree makes various grandiose

statements regarding the Invisible Empire, such as their devotion to their country, or their avowal of the distinction between races and their support towards white supremacy. The Kreed concluded, reading:

> We appreciate the value of practical, fraternal relationship among men of kindred thought, purpose and ideals and the infinite benefits accruing therefrom; we shall faithfully devote ourselves to the practice of an honorable clannishness that the life of each may be constant blessing to others.[28]

There is no doubt that Simmons intended to create a sense of brotherhood within his Klan, akin to that which he had experienced in other fraternities, and he instilled this fraternalism into the organization's ritual, symbolism, and dogma.

In its earliest days, Simmons' Klan seems to have had no other purpose than promoting a sense of brotherly camaraderie and benevolence that was typified by the myths of the First Invisible Empire. The back cover of one of the Klan's earliest pamphlets "The Practice of Klanishness" points to this notion and reads:

> The Spirit of the Ku Klux Klan still lives and should live [as] a priceless heritage to be sacredly treasured by all those who love their country, regardless of section, and are proud of its sacred traditions. That this spirit may live always to warm the hearts of manly men, unify them by the spirit of holy Klanishness to assuage the billowing tide of fraternal alienation that surges in human breasts and inspire them to achieve the highest and noblest in the defense of our country, or homes, each other and humanity, is the paramount ideal of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.[29]

Simmons designed his organization not only to pay homage to the original Klan, but also to keep alive their supposed spirit of fraternalism and benevolence. This practice would have resonated with any seasoned fraternalist and was a pervasive theme in most orders.

These were not empty words either; Klanishness was meant to be practised every day. Like many other fraternities, the Klan developed a system of mutual beneficiary insurance to solidify the familial bond among members and to ensure that no member was ever in need. Most academic studies agree that, while not essential, these forms of mutual insurance were a common feature of fraternities. Although the scheme did not last long, in the Invisible Empire's first weeks of existence, 42 new recruits signed up for $53,000 worth of Klan life insurance whereby members became financially responsible for each other's welfare. In early 1924, Zeke E. Marvin, a high-ranking Texas Klansman, attempted to revive the Klan's insurance scheme. Marvin explained that after reading *The International Jew*, Henry Ford's infamous anti-Semitic thesis, he felt the need to create a life insurance company that could compete with the "Jewish controlled companies" that supposedly dominated the market. To this end, the Imperial leadership founded the Empire Mutual Life Insurance Company in Kansas City, Missouri. The company began advertising insurance policies in Texas and

Missouri and claimed that in four months had sold close to $3,000,000 worth of stock. The scheme struggled to maintain itself due to the eventual decline of the Invisible Empire after 1925, but it was popular for a time.[30]

There was also an informal form of mutual assistance within the order, whereby Klansmen were expected to give charity to members in need. This duty of care to their brethren was supposed to help bind the klavern together and was a responsibility that was extended to all members of the order. Simmons' concept of "Klanishness" was not based exclusively on aiding those brothers who were sick or unemployed, but in assisting fellow Klansmen in all aspects of life. For instance, brothers were expected to exemplify "Vocational Klanishness" whereby they were supposed to be:

> trading, dealing with and patronizing Klansmen in preference to all others. Employing Klansmen in preference to others whenever possible. Boosting each other's business interest or professional ability; honorably doing any and all things that will assist a Klansman to earn an honest dollar.[31]

Klanishness served to cement the bonds of fraternity by asking members not only to promise to be selfless, but to actually commit themselves financially to each other. Many communities across America where the fraternity had gained a substantial following instituted "Trade With a Klansman" programmes that encouraged supporters to only do business with other likeminded Klansmen. Some klaverns even issued placards to be placed in windows that would help people identify shops run by Klansmen. Klanishness helped to extend a Klansman's duties outside of the lodge, to come to the aid of sick brethren or a failing business. This was intended to create a cohesive unit of Klansmen, a true brotherhood wherein each man could depend on the other.

However, since the Second Klan's membership was limited to white Protestant Americans, and later their families, the order's doctrine of Klanishness was inherently restrictive. In fact, as part of their devotion to the fraternal ideology of the group, Klansmen were supposed to practise "Racial Klanishness". This tenet was relatively simple, and Klansmen were instructed to "Keep Caucasian blood, society, politics and civilization PURE!".[32] Though other fraternities focused first on providing for their own membership, the Klan's notion of brotherhood extended beyond the bounds of their organization to protect the race and nation. The Invisible Empire's explicit devotion to the defence of white supremacy was unique in the American fraternal world, encouraging members to emulate the actions of the Reconstruction order to safeguard their people.

The third broad characteristic of any fraternity is secrecy and exclusivity, a requirement recognized by most studies of fraternalism. Whereas trades unions and veterans' groups practised fraternalism and often employed some sort of ritual to initiate new members, secrecy and exclusivity set fraternities aside from these other organizations. Although in our own time the rituals and mysteries of fraternities like the Freemasons or the Odd Fellows are easily accessible through the Internet, during the 1920s these were closely guarded secrets. This was not

simply because it might ruin the fun of the rituals, but also because the members themselves felt they were the appointed guardians of an esoteric knowledge that could only be imparted to a chosen few. Outsiders needed to prove themselves as worthy before learning the secrets of a fraternity. Secrecy and exclusivity were intimately intertwined concepts within these orders. There were also practical implications; secrecy ensured that no one could steal your rituals or replicate your fraternity. This secrecy was practically universal to all fraternities. For example, the Improved Order of Red Men – a peculiar fraternity loosely based on a pseudo-Iroquois culture and rituals which ironically excluded Native Americans from their ranks – included a pledge to secrecy in their oath. The initiates of the Red Men were instructed that:

> no paleface [non-member] may approach the presence of our Sachem [president], until he shall have pledged himself to lock in the inmost recess of his bosom, all he may hear and see in the council chamber; which is to be kept secret from all persons not members of the Improved Order of Red Men.[33]

In this sense, the KKK was identical to the Red Men, and practically all other fraternities in America. Only after swearing their oath, would the initiates of the Invisible Empire be given the passwords that would allow them to get past the many officers tasked with guarding against intruders. The Exalted Cyclops of the klavern dutifully warned them before giving them the password:

> The insignia or mark of a klansman is Honor. All secrets and secret information of the Invisible Empire is committed to you on your honor. A klansman values honor more than life itself. Be true to Honor, then to all the world you will be true.[34]

Fraternal secrecy was not merely a preventive measure against intellectual theft; it was also another way of clearly demarcating membership. Though most fraternities expounded a doctrine of universal brotherhood, they all still had some sort of criteria as to who could join their organization. Fraternities made clear distinctions as to who could join their organization and learn the secrets of the lodge. Members were usually only admitted on the basis of a large majority or even a consensus as an indication of this exclusivity. Gender is perhaps the most important criterion for acceptance into a fraternity, but being the right race was certainly just as crucial to join an American lodge in the 1920s.

To join the Freemasons you were only required to be an adult male who believed in some sort of deity. This, in essence, only officially excluded women, children and atheists. However, due to the prevailing notions on race and religion, certain other classes of people were understood to be ineligible. Freemasonry, as well as other fraternities, had a policy of only accepting members that had been approved by the rest of the lodge, effectively excluding entire sectors of the population that they deemed "undesirable". Black Freemasons had been forced to develop an entirely separate and unsanctioned fraternity known as

Prince Hall Freemasonry because of their inability to gain membership in the regular group. In fact, although race was very rarely an explicit criterion for membership, by excluding non-white applicants many fraternal lodges made whiteness a key feature of these brotherhoods. As Clawson explains: "As a cultural institution that maintained and idealized solidarity among white men, [fraternities] offered gender and race as the most logical and legitimate categories for the organization of collective identity."[35] Simmons' KKK, though, was more direct and made its membership requirements crystal clear. Other fraternities such as the B'nai B'rith or the Knights of Columbus also had significant criteria based on religion, but the 1920s Klan was exceptional in its severity. Though the Klan would later create ancillary orders for women, children, and non-American Protestants, before 1923 to become a member of the Second Klan initiates had to be patriotic white Protestant American men.

The exclusivity and secrecy that was prevalent in fraternities like the KKK served to strengthen the ties of brotherhood by clearly defining who was a member and who was not, who was allowed to possess the secrets of the lodge and who was deemed unfit. By only allowing certain men to learn the secrets of their ritual, the Second Klan glorified white Protestant American manhood and asserted that only they were worthy to defend the race and country. Indeed, as Kathleen Blee has argued: "Since the Klan claimed to admit only men whose masculinity was unquestionable, the very act of joining the Klan conferred manhood."[36] This exclusivity also provided an important sense of excitement to their affairs, a factor that was crucial for the Klan's success in small-town and rural America. Secrecy and exclusivity were two intertwined features of fraternalism and played a vital function in providing cohesion for these organizations.

So, as we can see, the Klan that Simmons initially envisioned had all the principal features of a fraternity. The KKK's ritual, its message and customs, were all shaped by Simmons' experiences in other established fraternities early in his life. His Klan can be regarded as just another product of the Golden Age of Fraternity. Accordingly, Simmons, when answering the question "What is [the Klan]?" in a 1917 pamphlet, responded saying: "It is a *standard fraternal order* enforcing fraternal conduct.…"[37] Furthermore, the KKK's original charter, registered in Fulton County, Georgia in 1916, asked for the rights awarded to other standard fraternities, saying:

> The petitioners desire that the [Klan] shall have the power to confer an initiative degree ritualism, fraternal and secret obligations, words, grip, signs and ceremonies under which there shall be united only white male persons of sound health, good morals and high character; and further desire such rights powers and privileges as are now extended to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Free and Accepted Order of Masons, Knights of Pythias, et al., under and by virtue of the laws of the state of Georgia.[38]

When compared to other fraternities though, the order's commitment to and idealization of white American manhood were unique in some senses. While

other fraternities often expected their applicants to be white men, none focused so heavily on ideas of race and religion.

Yet this is not enough to explain the Klan's success as a fraternity at a time when other more established orders were struggling to keep their members committed to their group and ideals. In fact, when it came to attracting members, the KKK was at a severe disadvantage, since they did not have the prestige and heritage that other established fraternities boasted of. This early Klan struggled to find recruits, and Simmons would later declare: "There were times, during those five early years, before the public knew of the Klan when I walked the streets with my shoes worn through because I had no money."[39] By 1919, the Invisible Empire was composed of only a few thousand Klansmen, and had only formed klaverns in Alabama and Georgia. Simmons' pre-1920 Klan was never particularly successful and would have probably never achieved the massive following that it did had it remained an ordinary brotherhood. Simmons had designed his fraternity for people much like himself, men who had a long-standing interest in fraternity. Yet, by 1915 the nation's interest in fraternalism was changing, as were their tastes and aspirations.

The Ku Klux Klan, fraternalism and militancy

Its success as a fraternity derives perhaps from the changes it underwent that transformed it into a different organization. The Invisible Empire succeeded as a fraternity because it offered something new during American fraternalism's "Gilded Age". America's entry into World War I in 1917 and the accompanying atmosphere of hyper-patriotism inspired Simmons and his Klansmen to become more militant and active in daily affairs. Foregoing its fraternal origins, the Klan became entirely covert. The order discarded its lodge pins, the staple public symbols of all fraternities of the time, and became a secret organization involved in politics and law enforcement. The Klan went from a simple fraternity to become another of the vigilante groups that sprouted in wartime America and that snooped around looking for signs of disloyalty or slacking. In late May 1918, for instance, the Klan paraded in full regalia through Montgomery, Alabama warning all wartime slackers and handing out threatening cards that read: "The eye of scrutiny is upon you. Be respectful to the flag of your country and loyal to the government. Aid by every means at your command the suppression of disloyalty by either speech or action."[40] This wartime Klan was moving away from its fraternal origins and was starting to more closely resemble its Reconstruction predecessor as a militant group.

The Klan's transformation continued after the war, as the organization's leadership came to be shared with publicists Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler. The organization they marketed was more of a revival of the Klan than a fraternity that simply honoured or paid tribute to white supremacy and the Reconstruction organization. The post-1920 Klan was sold as a "cure-all" organization that promised to solve the problems that afflicted white Protestant Americans. This meant that the fraternity evolved into a multi-faceted

organization which manifested itself differently in each locale. In some areas this meant that the fraternity had become a vigilante organization, guarding the community from perceived wrongdoings. In other places it might become a primarily political organization that was dedicated to forcing social change. But in some other areas, the Klan remained a fraternal organization that simply promoted ethnic and religious solidarity among members. The Invisible Empire evolved into a militant fraternity, but also into a religious movement, a political party, an unsanctioned police force, a business, a social club, a criminal empire, and a commercial cooperative for white Protestant Americans.

The Klan's management, particularly after the palace coup of November 1922 that ousted Imperial Wizard Simmons and installed Hiram Wesley Evans as the head of the brotherhood, increasingly encouraged individual Klans to move away from their fraternal roots and continue evolving. In a 1924 pamphlet, entitled *Klan Building*, the Invisible Empire's leadership instructed its devotees that:

> Our organization is not what is commonly termed a lodge, nor a speculative organization, but an intensively operated mass movement, nationwide in its scope. It is the national force for good – a crusade, the purpose of which is to underwrite America, present and future [and] the success of American, Anglo-Saxon ideals and institutions.

Evans was a politically ambitious leader, and he was keen for his movement to be regarded as more than just a fraternity. The Invisible Empire's new leadership made a similar statement in another pamphlet published the same year, which said: "The Knights of the KKK is not a lodge. It is not so much a fraternal organization as it is a movement devised and ordained for the purpose of meeting present needs in a larger way."[41] And yet, even though the Imperial Wizard Evans and his cronies hoped to create a political powerhouse that would change America and were eagerly encouraging their brotherhood to move beyond the limitations of a fraternity, Klansmen kept acting out the rituals, dressing in the regalia, using the exotic nomenclature, and practising the tenets of Klanishness they had promised to uphold. The Klan was trying to become something more than another esoteric brotherhood disconnected from the outside world, but it remained an organization that still kept its feet firmly planted in the traditions and customs of American fraternalism.

Perhaps this is the origin of the Klan's success. The Invisible Empire's militantly active fraternalism that promised to solve America's problems while expounding the familiar themes of brotherhood and selflessness, certainly set it aside from other fraternities of the day. The KKK was a fraternity that not only tried to make its own members better people, but looked beyond the confines of the lodge room and tried to change society. Writing in the order's official magazine, *The Kourier*, one loyal Klansman wrote that his organization was a "nation builder", and that the movement was a "rededication of citizenship upon broad lines of intelligence, democracy and progress". What is particularly interesting, is that this writer declared that the KKK was "operative

Masonry, Odd Fellowship and K.P.-ism, operative education, Protestantism and Americanism".[42] The Klan, in essence, felt they were implementing the vision of American fraternities like the Freemasons, the Odd Fellows, or the Knights of Pythias, by aggressively fighting in defence of the nation and its democracy from supposed "alien" threats that undermined the country. The Second Klan advertised itself as an active defender of Protestant America and white manhood, criticizing the more passive and even "feminine" fraternities of the nineteenth century that prevented men from fulfilling their duties to their communities.

There is evidence to suggest that the Klan's success among the different American fraternities stems directly from this "operative" or "militant" fraternalism. Discontent with the non-partisan attitude of their fraternities, Freemasons and others turned to the Invisible Empire to address their concerns. Sam S. Sargent, a Freemason from Illinois, was very worried about the menace of Catholicism and the threat it posed to Protestant America, and wrote to a fraternal newspaper to express his concerns. He wrote demanding to know who would defend 100 per cent Americanism and asked:

> Why depend on others to do it? We believe there is one such organization [the KKK] in the field and it is hustling to be the first to go under the wire; and if there are those who would hold Masonry in check as a thing to be used in our back yard, then I say may the 100 per cent Americans flock into the ranks and fight the battle out in the name of the Ku Klux Klan, where Jesuit intrigue cannot reach and whose ranks are filled by as brave spirits as ever looked an enemy in the face.[43]

Sargent, like many other Freemasons, was tired with the non-interventionist attitude of his fraternity. Historian Lynn Dumenil, in her own study of American Freemasonry, observed that in the aftermath of World War I "a vocal segment of Masons demanded that Masonry ease its restrictions against involvement in the external world and lend its institutional power to combat the foes of Americanism".[44] This discontent with the state of American fraternalism found a natural expression in the aggressive and interventionist fraternalism of the Ku Klux Klan.

It is difficult to say whether this post-1920 Klan can be considered a fraternity, since most of its impulses were now directed outside the established boundaries of fraternalism. Although other fraternities of the decade had been involved in political campaigns, this was never done with official approval and was still a controversial topic since politics and religion were taboo topics within such organizations. The Klan was certainly pushing the limits of what could be considered a fraternity, and this is perhaps why historians have neglected to label the KKK as such or investigate the organization from this angle. Yet, we must not forget that, although after the 1920s the Invisible Empire had changed – barely resembling the small brotherhood Simmons had originally founded – ultimately, the fraternity's structure and framework remained the same. Each

Klansman had to go through his initiation ritual; all klaverns had to be arranged according to the instructions outlined in the Klan's ritual book and follow protocol. The whole organization was still based on the model established by Simmons. Fraternal rituals provided a unifying experience for Klansmen, allowing disparate klaverns to feel part of a much bigger organization. Klan ceremonies and fraternalism added a vital sense of cohesion that integrated outsiders into the wider membership of the Invisible Empire. Exclusivity and secrecy also helped to heighten the experience, making members feel they belonged to part of something special and larger than themselves.

Unfortunately for historians, Klansmen did not fill out surveys indicating what had attracted them to this organization. Nonetheless, they all made a conscious decision to join the KKK, a militant fraternity that practised ritualism, fraternalism and secrecy. Rather than join one of the many political movements that focused primarily on enacting social change, they chose to become "naturalized citizens" of this Second Invisible Empire. This in itself suggests that the members valued the order's fraternal customs and the role they played within the organization. Ritualism, fraternalism and secrecy still exercised vital functions within the Ku Klux Klan. They were familiar conventions for American males, and still appealed to them somewhat. "Lodges multiply by thousands, new ones every day. Redmen, Woodmen, Klansmen, Icemen; Elks, Moose, Eagles, Beagles, Bears" wrote Charles Merz, associate editor of the *New Republic* in 1923 in this magazine. Merz singled out insurance benefits as one of the many reasons for this expansion, but he ultimately concluded that Americans sought refuge in the lodge because they relished the sense of community and belonging it provided. "What are lodges, anyway…" he asked readers, "but homesick tribesmen hunting their lost clans?"[45] The KKK, in its capacity as a fraternity, was able to draw in white American Protestant men and women enamoured with these traditions, fulfilling their desires and needs in the uncertain modernizing world of the Jazz Age.

Consequently, the KKK is surely a fraternity, but its success represents an evolution in fraternalism. As American tastes changed during the "Gilded Age of Fraternalism", the Klan's popularity demonstrates that the public were starting to turn their back on traditional orders like the Freemasons, and were looking for organizations that were more involved in the outside world. Organizations like the Freemasons or the Odd Fellows continued to attract members, but most of these new recruits did not appear committed to these organizations or dedicated to their principles. On the other hand, the KKK became America's most popular brotherhood by both replicating the values and customs of established fraternities while encouraging Klansmen to defend these values and their race in the outside world. The Klan must be considered a fraternity, but its success derives in part from its ability to adapt to the tastes of the American public and the modern world of the 1920s. Its particular blend of aggressive 100 per cent Americanism, white supremacy and traditional fraternalism would become quite popular among the nation's Freemasons, particularly among this organization's militant wing.

Notes

1 See Ku Klux Klan, *Kloran: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan – K-Uno* (Atlanta, GA, 1916).
2 W.S. Harwood, "Secret Societies in America", *The North American Review* 164, no. 486 (May 1897), pp. 619, 623; Albert C. Stevens, *Cyclopaedia of Fraternities* (New York, 1899), pp. xv–xvi.
3 Jason Kaufman, *For the Common Good? American Civic Life and the Golden Age of Fraternity* (New York, 2002), pp. 8–9; It should be noted that the exact duration of the "Golden Age" varied greatly according to regions. For more information regarding fraternities of the period see Alan Axelrod, *The International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Fraternal Orders* (New York, 1997).
4 Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, NJ, 1989); Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, CT, 1989); David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890–1967* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000).
5 Henry P. Fry, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan* (Boston, MA, 1922), p. 1.
6 Kaufman, *Common Good?*, p. 8.
7 Figures compiled from the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas, 1914–1930 and the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York, 1914–1930, available at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry.
8 Mark A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building American Communities* (New York, 2005), p. 175.
9 Grand Lodge of Illinois, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge Independent Order of Odd Fellows of the State of Illinois 1920* (Springfield, IL, 1920), p. 42; Grand Lodge of Illinois, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge Independent Order of Odd Fellows of the State of Illinois 1922* (Springfield, IL, 1922), pp. 14, 26.
10 Arthur Preuss, *A Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies* (St. Louis, MO and London, 1924).
11 Devere Allen, "Substitutes for Brotherhood", in E. Haldeman-Julius (ed.), *KKK: The Kreed of Klansmen* (Girard, KS, 1924), p. 17.
12 Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville, KY, 1922), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, pp. 4–5.
13 Ibid., pp. 15–16.
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2 Freemasonry's fighting brother

Militancy, fraternalism and the Ku Klux Klan

In April 1923, V.E. Clark, a Freemason from North Liberty, Indiana wrote a letter to *The Fellowship Forum* to praise their editorial policy towards the Ku Klux Klan. The *Forum* was a weekly publication dedicated to reporting news of interest to America's Protestant fraternities and was one of the few "Masonic" newspapers that openly approved of the controversial Invisible Empire. Clark wrote to the editor saying:

> Keep the good work up and it may be those 'let well enough alone Masons' will realize it's up to them to keep the 'little red schoolhouse' safe for Protestant American children. We have plenty of spaghetti-backs in this country now, let alone the 'Dago' over in Italy telling us 'how and when.' We will have no trouble if the two great organizations – Masons and Ku Klux Klan – have the support of the Protestant people in keeping America American.[1]

The *Forum* received many such letters from concerned readers. Clark's letter illustrates some of the anxieties held by Freemasons during the turbulent 1920s and points to some of the elements that made the Second Ku Klux Klan so popular. Clark expressed his hope that his more complacent Masonic brethren would realize the danger that their children's future and education were in, and that they fulfil their duties as fathers and protectors of the nation. He complained about the disproportionate control exercised over their lives by immigrants and this alien institution, the Catholic Church. Yet, he also seemed optimistic about a bright future for the nation, so long as the public supported the fraternities defending white America's interests and its Protestant values.

This letter and others like it pose a number of intriguing questions. Why was it that so many Freemasons admired this Second Invisible Empire? And why were they tempted to join the Ku Klux Klan? Some of these men were so committed to the Klan and its mission they even disobeyed direct edicts from Masonic authorities forbidding membership in this new rival order. Studies of this infamous hooded brotherhood have suggested several factors that attracted Americans as a whole to the organization, but have neglected to discuss why it was that Freemasons joined the Klan. Freemasons constituted a significant and notable segment of the Invisible Empire's membership and its leadership, and

their allegiance would prove fundamental to the order's growth and influence. These men made an active decision to forego their own fraternity and join a new movement to enact changes in their community and country. Yet so far, historians have not examined why these Freemasons were attracted to this new fraternity.

This chapter aims to discuss this issue and will examine why many Freemasons lost faith in their own fraternity and saw the Ku Klux Klan as the only organization that was willing to stand for their ideals. Since the nation's entry into the First World War, Freemasons had engaged in a lively debate about the structure and purpose of their order. Within Freemasonry, a new movement emerged that tried to make the brotherhood more politically assertive and influential in national affairs. Although they attempted to pass measures and create organizations that would make Freemasonry more militant, they were unable to get the fraternity to break away from its traditions. The Ku Klux Klan emerged as an attractive alternative, an organization that was free from such restrictions and a fraternity which would be able to fulfil their ambitions. Ultimately, this chapter will try to discern why it was that V.E. Clark of North Liberty, and many other militant Freemasons like him, praised the Ku Klux Klan and would eventually don the hoods of the order as full members.

The origins of the militant Masonic movement

Freemasonry's ritual and doctrine offers its initiates moral lessons on harmony, progress and enlightenment. Yet, although united by one ritual and a set of values, the different jurisdictions and members of this fraternity have been free to interpret the teachings and spirit of the order. Consequently, across the world and throughout history, Freemasonry has manifested itself in a variety of forms. In America during the 1920s, Freemasonry was not always the apolitical and universal fraternity its ideals conveyed. For one, the order's makeup was quite homogeneous when compared to the general male population. Relatively expensive fees kept many of the lower classes away from the lodge, while racial notions excluded others. American Freemasonry's membership was also largely Protestant. This was mostly due to the demographic makeup of the nation itself, but it can also be attributed to this fraternity's turbulent history with the Catholic Church. While this was not a result of official policy, American Freemasonry during this period became largely middle class, white, Protestant and politically conservative as a result of some of their recruitment practices.

Furthermore, American Freemasonry struggled to remain apolitical during the upheavals of the early 1920s. One of Freemasonry's hallmarks across the world was its commitment to create a space where men of different opinions could come together as brothers and celebrate fraternalism and friendship. To protect this harmony, Freemasons were instructed to avoid divisive topics such as politics or religion. Such matters could alienate brothers or destroy the tranquillity of the lodge, and so individual chapters or Freemasons were forbidden from supporting a particular party, cause or faith explicitly as members of the Craft. This

prohibition also protected the organization from the repeated accusations from outsiders of being a cabalistic or clandestine fraternity that secretly controlled politics and society. This practice was supposed to prevent a repetition of cases such as the anti-Masonic hysteria that had gripped the young American republic in the 1830s and nearly destroyed the fraternity. Thus, this neutrality was practically sacrosanct and was carefully guarded by Freemasonry's officers.

Nonetheless, this did not mean that political matters were never considered. Because patriotism and duty were an intrinsic part of Freemasonry's teachings, many American members believed it was their Masonic responsibility to preserve the nation and its traditional democratic institutions from anyone who jeopardized them. Historians like Glenn Zuber have argued that the dualistic struggle – between light and darkness, enlightenment and ignorance – presented in Masonic ritual and teachings, moved members to stand strongly against any "dark" forces or institutions that threatened the nation and its "enlightened" ways.[2] Certain members believed that this responsibility extended beyond the lodge. During the 1920s, these more militant Freemasons argued that it was their manly duty to fight against national threats such as the Bolshevik menace, corrupt politics or even the power of the Roman Catholic Church, which many at the time believed aimed to sabotage America's democratic system of government.

The contending pillars of neutrality and duty to one's nation gave rise to an inherent and unresolved conflict within fraternities like the Freemasons, between those who sought to use the power of the fraternity for "good" and those who believed that such actions would split brothers apart. Freemasons were torn by these contradictory duties and wondered which responsibility took precedence. Were Freemasons obliged to defend their nation, even if such actions could come between brothers? Numerous American Freemasons during the 1920s began to push for a radical transformation of their fraternity into a more militant and united brotherhood, arguing that on such vital matters such as the protection of the public school system or immigration reform, the Craft was obliged to take action. Militant Freemasons claimed that the brethren of the lodge were united in their desire to lend support to crucial legislation that would preserve national values and insisted that the fraternity do so.

In addition, Freemasonry was subject to changes occurring more broadly among American men in regard to their understanding of their own masculinity and gender relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. E. Anthony Rotundo describes this shift as the emergence of a "passionate manhood", a growing appreciation for men's impulses as natural and even beneficial for American men in contrast to the more restrained ideals of masculinity from earlier in the century. As he explains:

> The most dramatic change was in the positive value put on male passions. In the closing years of the century, ambition and combativeness became virtues for men; competitiveness and aggression were exalted as ends in themselves. Toughness was now admired while tenderness was a cause for scorn.

Furthermore, the discourse of manhood was intimately tied to notions of power and race, and as women, African-Americans and even immigrant communities began to challenge the political dominance of white middle-class men in late nineteenth century America, their conception of manhood was reformulated to exclude others and to retain power. These changes were reflected in a variety of different contexts, from the growing popularity of athletics clubs and fitness as an integral part of American masculinity to the upsurge in membership in fraternities that restricted membership and celebrated white manhood.[3]

Yet, as Gail Bederman highlights, manhood is not simply a fixed identity or a list of particular attributes, but a "continual and dynamic process", a discourse that is contradictory, contested, and in flux. As such, despite the popularity of this "passionate manhood", rival conceptions of what constituted manly behaviour and values persisted and competed throughout the period. These conversations regarding proper manly behaviour were reflected within fraternities like the Freemasons, where some members advocated a more active and passionate defence of the group's interests, criticizing more passive brethren for being content with simply practising rituals that inculcated nineteenth-century values like restraint or compassion. Increasingly, militant Freemasons employed gendered terms such as "cowardly" to question the masculinity of their critics and opponents, and thus to question their ability to lead and exercise power within the fraternity. As one Masonic official explained, urging reform within the fraternity:

> We owe it to these strong young men who are seeking Light to make Freemasonry more than a degree-mill and to help them understand that only if we carry the principles of our Order into all the activities of life, governmental, commercial, social and religious, can we save the civilization which our fathers bequeathed to us.[4]

Consequently, the struggle to reform Freemasonry into a more militant order was not simply a political rallying cry, but a reflection of an emerging discourse of manhood that emphasized direct action and even aggression as positive traits.

This push for militancy reached its climax at the end of the First World War and during the period that followed, when eager Freemasons demanded radical changes to their fraternity. The 1920s were a difficult time for these orders. Most major brotherhoods maintained a heady expansion until close to the end of the decade, but recruitment figures disguised problems hiding under the surface. As discussed in the previous chapter, major fraternities had to deal with the declining commitment to the lodge and its traditions. But this was not the only challenge these organizations had to contend with in this "Gilded Age of Fraternalism". During this period, fraternities were faced with increasing internal pressure to evolve into less-detached organizations that would employ their immense power and resources outside of the lodge, become active in politics and do their part to contribute to white America's preservation and progress. One Texan Masonic leader lamented this development, stating in 1925 that:

> I have been forced to defend the purposes of this Grand Lodge on many occasions when I would be confronted with the question, 'Do you not believe that it is time for the Masonic Fraternity to actively engage in politics?' I regret to say that, in my opinion, there is a growing tendency on the part of some members of our Fraternity to have Masonic lodges participate actively in politics.…[5]

The influence of the First World War in this development is crucial; as the entire nation mobilized for war, the Craft responded to the clarion call and did their best to demonstrate their patriotism and commitment to the effort. Many prominent Freemasons stated their steadfast loyalty to the nation and its war effort, and encouraged the fraternity to become more involved. A few months after America's entry into the war, Wisconsin Grand Master Cyrus S. Stockwell gave one such typical speech where he asked members to leave their political and partisan differences aside in favour of defending national interests and civilization. He declared:

> Into this seething, boiling maelstrom our own country has been forced, and we are now a part of that titanic struggle. It is now too late for discussing the causes which drew us into the war. The time has come for action, not criticism. Our country needs the support of every citizen, and we, as members of this great Fraternity, should not fail to come to its assistance with all our resources, moral, financial and physical. Let us forget that we are partisans of any party. In fact, forget that we have a political creed, and remember only this, that the allegiance which we owe to our country is second only to that which we owe to our God, and that the eyes of the world are upon us.
>
> Brethren, this is not taking Masonry into politics nor bring politics into Masonry; but we, as Americans, whether our ancestors came over in the Mayflower or whether we came through Castle Garden yesterday, should have this thought ever uppermost in our minds; WE ARE AMERICAN CITIZENS.[6]

Stockwell pleaded for conformity in this time of adversity. He was not merely stating the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin's unwavering support for the war; he was also trying to allay fears that their support was a partisan decision or that it might provoke members who had opposed America's entry into the war. The peril of armed conflict energized Freemasonry to take on a more direct role in national affairs, and, while assisting the military effort was not an overtly political act, it was certainly a break from Masonic conventions. During the war Freemasons from all 49 separate jurisdictions were united by their determination to fulfil Masonic teachings of patriotism and to assist their country in the battle against the reportedly barbaric and imperialist German enemy. For one of the first times in the organization's history in America, Grand Lodges from across the country coordinated their actions and engaged with the world beyond the lodge, with a clear goal and an unyielding desire to accomplish their duties as patriotic American men.

Freemasonry's attempts to contribute to the humanitarian effort directly on the ground were abruptly halted by the U.S. government, who were reluctant to deal with the complications that would inevitably arise from working and co-ordinating with 49 separate Grand Lodges. Other national organizations, like the Salvation Army or the Young Men's Christian Association, had been granted permission to deliver assistance directly and provided valuable relief to soldiers on the frontlines in Europe. The Knights of Columbus, who had been allowed to form such a voluntary mission, boasted in one 1918 pamphlet that their relief workers had been affectionately dubbed the "Knights of Cooperation" by America's soldiers. They also proudly touted that:

> With more than two hundred buildings constructed in this country, ten in England and about sixty in France, and with over a thousand workers in the field, the Knights of Columbus can be credited with contributing to the morale of the forces to a very considerable extent.[7]

Freemasonry, however, had no national body that could represent their interests and organize their efforts. Individual Freemasons participated in the war and contributed to the humanitarian effort through charities like the Young Men's Christian Association, but all hopes of an exclusively Masonic overseas charity were dashed. This inability to contribute to the humanitarian relief programme as a single institution, as other fraternities like the Knights of Columbus had done, infuriated Freemasons and made them feel helpless. Many simply could not comprehend why their brotherhood had been forbidden from acting in Europe when permission had been granted to others.

Suspicions arose among Freemasons as to the origins of this prohibition, and some pointed the finger at what they considered to be the organization's natural enemy: the Roman Catholic Church and its fraternal arm, the Knights of Columbus. Before the 1919 Pennsylvania Grand Lodge, Thomas F. Pennman recounted how initially approval had been granted by the government for a Masonic mission to join the American Expeditionary Force, but that that permission had been subsequently withdrawn. Pennman and others believed this had occurred precisely because it was a Masonic project, while other brothers believed that "certain insidious but potent influences at Washington, inimical to the Masonic institution, plotted to balk the efforts of the Overseas Commission…". Another Masonic leader from Minnesota made similar comments that same year, declaring that:

> Disunion within our ranks was the reason for the poor showing made in the welfare activities of the war, for which other organizations claim so much credit. It was purely our own fault that another organization, hostile to us, thwarted our desire to serve.…[8]

The formal language used by Freemasons during Grand Lodges, as well as the traditional non-partisanship of the fraternity, prevented members from explicitly

stating who this "enemy" of Freemasonry was. *The Fellowship Forum*, the intensely militant Masonic paper, was less discreet. They openly accused the Knights of Columbus and individual Catholics, such as President Woodrow Wilson's secretary Joseph Patrick Tumulty, of blocking Masonic aid.[9]

During the period following the war, Freemasons continued to try to demonstrate their loyalty to the nation and pushed the boundaries of their customary non-interventionism. As the weight of post-war reconstruction, military demobilisation, and the threat of communism loomed over the American public's mind, Freemasonry became more militant and involved in national affairs. In 1919, Grand Master William Carson Black of Kentucky spoke before a group of Freemasons advising them of their new responsibilities to the nation:

> Today we are living in an era of unrest that is afire with the spirit of conquest at the sacrifice of human submission and human blood, while wheels of greed and graft travel through clouds of thunderous Bolshevism in tongues of destructive lightning, tearing into darkness of an apparently helpless people in many kingdoms of the earth. The sunshine of a new day, however, is fast dawning upon an anxious and waiting people, and a new hallelujah will peel forth from the breast of settled, prosperous and Christian nations.
>
> Masonry will be given a chance for an acid test of its strength, durability and equilibrium in the affairs of men, community uplift and an aid to Christian fellowship…. This new obligation is thrown right at the door of our being.

Freemasonry as a whole seemed to be espousing a more militant position during the post-war period. The nation's security and stability took precedence over the brotherhood's cherished neutrality in the minds of the membership. One Masonic leader from Oregon even argued that in the face of the dangers of radicalism, Freemasonry was obliged to act. This was not, according to this Freemason, a "question of partisan politics, but a question of right and wrong, of patriotism and treason. There are times when neutrality is disgraceful, when indifference is a mark of turpitude".[10] Some began to regard the organization's strict non-partisanship as an outdated hindrance that unnecessarily shackled members and prevented them from adequately fulfilling their duties as loyal American men and Freemasons.

Furthermore, there was a growing feeling among the leadership and membership of the brotherhood that the division of the fraternity into 49 entirely separate Grand Lodges was weakening the influence their order could have on the national stage. The failure of the efforts to establish a Masonic charity during the First World War was not only blamed on nefarious Catholic influences in Washington, but also on the lack of some sort of a national Masonic organ that could speak on behalf of all members in times of crisis. "We had the numbers, we had the power … but we did not have the unity in which there is strength" affirmed one Masonic leader in reference to the failures of the war.[11] Many Freemasons

were also hoping that the fraternity as a whole would lend its support to the Towner–Stirling Bill, a new piece of legislation which would create a federal education department. This reform was considered essential by many, as it would ensure that the next generation was inculcated with the necessary American values to guide the nation. Others also felt it would help fight against the power of America's enemies, by forcing private and parochial schools to follow a national curriculum that would emphasize patriotism and democratic principles.

By the turn of the decade, a clear and surging demand for radical change within the brotherhood was evident among the organization's membership, spurred by broader changes in discourses of American manhood, the excitement of the war and the disheartening disappointments it brought, as well as the turbulent global and domestic events that occurred between 1918 and 1920. Freemasons wanted their organization to become more united at a national level as well as more engaged with political and social affairs, particularly those that posed a serious threat to the nation and its institutions. The following years would be defined by dissension within the fraternity between factions who disagreed over the Craft's direction and their new responsibilities.

We can see this demand for political action and national coordination expressed clearly in the creation of the Masonic Service Association (MSA). The MSA was formed in November 1918 and was designed as a sort of a Masonic confederation, a national body that could represent the mutual interests of all the separate Grand Lodges. The MSA's initial convention was set up by Iowa Grand Master George L. Schoonover and was attended by delegates from 22 separate Grand Lodges. This national body was set up to remedy the failures and frustrations of the First World War, which had highlighted disunity in the brotherhood. Its expressed goal was "first, the relief of need in time of crisis or calamity; second, education, or the quest and spread of Truth, in the spirit of Brotherly Love".[12]

This body was formed too late to actually assist with the war effort, choosing instead to pursue a programme of Masonic education with a heavy focus on Americanization and patriotism. Historian Lynn Dumenil has proposed that while the MSA directed its education programme towards combating the potentially devastating influence of Bolshevism and other radical ideologies, the confederation's Americanization campaign was also aimed at challenging the power of Catholicism and other nonconformist minorities in society. The MSA's literature and activities illustrate the organization's intentions as a militant Masonic body. One publication from the group maintained that: "There never was a time in the history of the world when it was so important for Masonry to go to work as right now" and "What Masonry teaches in the lodge room she advocates in the world at large."[13] The MSA embarked on a series of Americanization programmes, lectures, speeches and films, and a broad education campaign for a more cohesive society based on established American values.

At first, interest in the MSA was quite enthusiastic and by January 1923, 34 out of the 49 American Grand Lodges had joined. Grand Master William S. Farmer of New York was particularly eager and urged his brethren to support

the MSA. Farmer's argument was especially urgent since he feared that if Freemasonry did not welcome this change, they would be replaced by another more modern institution that was better suited to these times. He wrote:

> if Freemasonry offers no more useful or attractive purpose in life to its members, new or old; if all, or the major part, of the Lodge's life and time is to be devoted to the incessant grind of the degree mill, it is beyond doubt only a question of time when the institution will perish from sheer inanition, and some other [livelier] and more useful agency for human welfare will replace it.

Farmer also encouraged members to support the MSA by explaining that this body had indicated that part of their national programme included such points as the protection of the free public schools and the speedy enactment of legislation forbidding elementary education in any language other than English, as well as a "strong and aggressive program of Americanization".[14] In addition, such militant Freemasons argued that this new body would help the order provide a more fulfilling experience for young American men with new conceptions of proper manly behaviour that rejected restraint and passivity.

These policies implemented the nationalistic ideology of those militant Freemasons who wished for a more cohesive American society and who felt threatened by the power of supposedly foreign and alien groups. Radicals, Catholics, immigrants and others who refused to conform, integrate and accept existing American practices were all targets for these militant Freemasons. Many Freemasons believed that only a national and politically aggressive body like the MSA could tackle this perceived multicultural nightmare. A subcommittee of the 1921 Grand Lodge of Missouri, dedicated to reporting on the progress of the MSA, expressed this almost apocalyptic vision clearly, announcing that: "Between the ecclesiastical despotism on the one hand which seek to enslave, and the Bolshevik tendencies which try to undermine and destroy all sense of moral responsibility, the English-speaking Freemasonry of [today] is the chief hope of civilization."[15]

Support for the MSA was by no means unanimous, and much of the debate between Freemasons about its suitability related not to the organization's current and stated structure and objectives, but to the direction the organization could take. Several Freemasons questioned whether the organization went against the established Masonic tradition of non-intervention. Supporters of the MSA, such as Grand Master Robert Robinson of New York, retorted that they were merely applying Masonic principles to civic life in the same way the revered Founding Fathers had. Other Freemasons distrusted the MSA as they believed it could degenerate into a national Grand Lodge and infringe upon the rights of the established Masonic state jurisdictions. One Masonic writer described this reluctance of some Grand Lodges to join the MSA, saying: "A few have refused to approve it, and deny both its necessity and its efficiency, affecting to believe that it is a 'smoke screen' concealing the lurking hideous form of a General Grand Lodge."[16]

Support for the MSA began to wane by the mid-1920s, when several Grand Lodges withdrew from the organization due to costs and lack of enthusiasm. One Grand Master wrote in 1925 that after six years, the MSA was "floundering" and "struggling to find a reason for its existence".[17] This decline in enthusiasm for the MSA was partly due to the internal contest to define the purpose of the organization as well as the extent of its authority. On the one hand, many of its supporters among these new militant Freemasons saw it as an opportunity for the Craft to have its interests represented beyond the lodge at a national level, but on the other, more moderate Freemasons feared such a development would divide and damage their order. This struggle and debate highlight the existence of these two loosely defined factions within the fraternity, the moderates and the militants. Due to the disagreement over its purpose, in the end the MSA was unable to gain continued support from either side and the project lost its initial momentum.

The Fellowship Forum and militant Protestant fraternalism

Freemasonry's increasingly vocal militant faction soon became a concern for the fraternity's leaders. One Masonic Grand Master from Maine even believed that the unprecedented membership gains in the post-war period were actually due to the rise of this militant wing and the growing "conviction that membership in our Order constitutes a perpetual protest against the pernicious activities of other institutions in relation to our political, civic and educational affairs".[18] The Masonic Service Association floundered, but the demands for unity and action it addressed remained. Many of these militant Freemasons began to make calls for new bodies that would allow them to move their fraternity forward and face the challenges of a new era. Some even eventually joined unsanctioned Masonic groups and other Protestant fraternal organizations that fulfilled their ambitions.

Yet, because this militant faction was so often at odds with the establishment within the organization, it is difficult to find much evidence of their drive to reform the fraternity in official Masonic literature and channels. The deliberations and campaigns of this militant faction of the fraternity mostly found expression in the pages of *The Fellowship Forum*. This publication was founded in June 1921 and at first resembled a standard fraternal newspaper, reporting on the activities of various brotherhoods and reprinting advice and musings from fraternal thinkers and leaders. The *Forum* very quickly developed into a virulently militant fraternal weekly that championed anti-Catholic Americanization measures, strict laws against Bolsheviks and immigration reform. Their aggressive political policies upset many within the traditional Masonic establishment; one Massachusetts Freemason even declared that the paper was "as welcome among Masons as a skunk at a garden party". Its supporters had very different opinions about the *Forum*, with one militant Freemason describing it as "a real paper for Protestants, Americans, Masons, and Klansmen, but a poor paper for the Pope, Bolsheviks, reds, and such people as are against our great America".[19]

The *Forum* regularly claimed to have over 500,000 readers from across the country.[20] Of course, it is important that we remain sceptical of these claims.

Nonetheless, their figures of half a million subscribers are not entirely out of the question, considering that the newspaper was quite unique and was edited by one of the most prominent Freemasons in the country and a well-known Masonic journalist. Furthermore, the widespread popularity of the *Forum* is starkly demonstrated by its impressive run. While other anti-Catholic, nativist or Klan publications faded into obscurity after the heyday of the early 1920s, the *Forum* remained in publication until 1938.

The Fellowship Forum quickly became the most popular publication for militant fraternalists and Freemasons, and this newspaper often printed the appeals and thoughts of these men. Their readers often expressed dissatisfaction and dismay at the lax attitude of their fraternities towards vital national questions and against the country's enemies. The very first issue of the *Forum* from June 1921 included a letter from a Washington D.C. Freemason asking his brethren to organize into a more militant and united body, and outlined how:

> Without a certain amount of organized effort nothing worthwhile can be accomplished in this world, therefore it is necessary to organize. The Roman Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus are probably the most thoroughly organized institutions on earth, and look, if you please, at the trouble they give us.[21]

Such letters were included weekly in issues of the *Forum*, and reveal a considerable demand for a new type of Freemasonry. This newspaper was edited and run by George Fleming Moore and James S. Vance, two high-ranking and influential Freemasons who can be considered to have been the unofficial leaders of the militant Masonic movement. Moore himself repeatedly wrote articles and editorials arguing against the undue restraints set upon the fraternity and challenging his readers and followers to become politically active as Freemasons. One such editorial urged Freemasons and other Protestant fraternalists to support the Immigration Act of 1924, a new bill that would further restrict migration from southern and eastern Europe. "Every Mick, Dago, Pole, and Slav that would Europeanize America instead of becoming Americanized themselves [is] fighting the 1890 census provision" explained Moore to his readers, imploring them to fulfil their manly duty and defend democracy from unworthy invaders. He then rounded off his argument writing:

> These same un-Americans who would make Latin and Polish the official language in the United States are fighting Masonry, Pythianism, the Odd Fellows, the Klan, and every other Protestant fraternity ideal. They are backing the Catholic church in its attempt to kill the 1890 clause of the Johnson bill.[22]

The Fellowship Forum was the principal organ of the militant Masonic movement, but these attitudes were sometimes expressed by other Freemasons

in more mainstream media. For instance, in 1923 *The Illinois Freemason* lamented that:

> It is disappointing to observe the passive resistance offered by Masonry to the political aggression of Catholicism in our governmental affairs. Many of us timidly stand aside through fear and for business reasons, refuse to be identified with any movement which may have for its object the suppression of Catholic influence [*sic*].
>
> Not until Masonry acts and moves together in a solid phalanx, somewhat in the order of the Knights of Columbus [*sic*], will politicians of all parties understand their duty when asked to use their influence to elevate to places of power, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.[23]

The use of gendered terms like "passive" or "timid" to critique Freemasonry reflect the discourses of Rotundo's aforementioned "passionate manhood" that had gained prominence during this period. Other important Masonic publications, such as *The New Age*, the official publication of the Scottish Rite's Southern Jurisdiction, frequently referred to such controversial and divisive topics and urged action on behalf of all loyal Freemasons and American men.

Militant Freemasonry was attracting plenty of support within the fraternity during the 1920s, but its demands flew in the face of tradition. One of the central ambitions of militant Freemasons was to create a single "Supreme" Grand Lodge that would unite and represent the fraternity at the national level. Contrary to the MSA, a confederation that was formed by a loose union of interested parties and which tried to balance between tradition and militancy, this national Grand Lodge would be founded with an expressly aggressive Masonic agenda. Such a controversial measure did not receive much attention within mainstream Masonic circles, but was often discussed among more radical members of the fraternity.

Editor George Fleming Moore was also an adamant supporter of the formation of a militant national Grand Lodge and asked his readers to start a campaign among their own brethren to implement this measure. He repeatedly made calls for more united efforts on behalf of the many Grand Lodges to stand together in matters of national interest such as education or immigration. "It is time for militant Masons to become more militant" argued Moore on one occasion; "It is not only timely, but imperative that these Masons get together with the determination to stand firmly for the cause of Americanism."[24] Although the measure appeared popular with the *Forum*'s militant readers, the idea was considered too controversial for more traditional followers of the fraternity and was never realized. Recognizing that they were a minority within their fraternity that could not hope to reform their order, militant Freemasons simultaneously attempted to form a union of all willing fraternities that could be marshalled to defend white Protestant Americanism. The idea was again well received by correspondents to the *Forum*. One letter declared: "It is about time that 100 percent Masons and 100 percent Protestants get together," while another advised that "in union there

is strength".[25] In response, the editors of the *Forum* formed the National Patriotic Council (NPC), a nativist and anti-Catholic group headed by officers such as William J. Mahoney, the Klan's head speaker, or William Parker, the editor of the rabidly anti-Catholic newspaper *The Menace.* Although the move was welcomed by many readers of the *Forum* the organization seems to have followed the path of preceding ventures of the militant Masonic movement and failed to find active support from official Masonic bodies and other fraternities.

Perhaps the most interesting of these intra-fraternal Protestant groups is the Great American Fraternity (GAF). The organization was formed in 1922 in Georgia by law partners and militant fraternalists Carl F. Hutcheson and J.O. Wood. Hutcheson, a long-term Atlanta resident, was a lawyer and a former school commissioner who was involved in a number of controversies regarding Catholics and segregation among the races in city schools. Hutcheson was also a well-known and active local fraternalist, having founded around eight secret orders, which were described as "open only to persons espousing the '100 per cent American' principles of the Ku Klux Klan".[26] His law partner, J.O. Wood, was best known for editing *The Searchlight*, an anti-Catholic newspaper that catered to the Junior Order of United American Mechanics and which would eventually become the first official paper of the Ku Klux Klan. Wood himself would go on to become an active member of the Invisible Empire's base in Atlanta during the rule of Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons.[27]

The GAF was granted a charter in Georgia in April 1922, with provisions that enabled the order to offer insurance benefits to members. The order was designed to bring together members from 13 different Protestant and nativist orders, which included the Freemasons, the KKK, the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, the Odd Fellows, the Sons and Daughters of Washington, the Order of the Eastern Star, the Orangemen, the Order of De Molay, and others. The order first advertised in the *Searchlight* on 10 June 1922, following the Klan's victory in the primary elections in Oregon. The article declared:

> The enemies of American institutions, boasting of unification and commanded by a potentate situated in a foreign land, have been overthrown…. What will the hostile hosts think when they find themselves opposed by the Great American Fraternity throughout the land?… The crisis has arrived. We must win and save our land from the blight that threatens it. We will win!

The order also described itself as "INTENSELY 100 per cent American" and espoused a plan of action that would have interested those Freemasons unsatisfied with the political neutrality of the Craft.[28]

The GAF, in essence, comprised a formal union of members from various established fraternities to act in defence of the nation from the Catholic hierarchy and various associated foreign groups. It planned to rally all militant Protestant fraternalists into one coordinated and national lobby that could enact change and defend American values. George Washington House No. 1, the first local lodge

of the GAF, was set up in Atlanta in September 1922. One journalist mocked this enterprise, saying: "They are out to unite in a single group of haters all haters in the country…." The GAF claimed to have enrolled 800 members by June 1922, and they announced that soon "the order will branch out and attempt organization work in every state".[29]

While the GAF hoped to expand and attract militant Protestant fraternalists from several orders, this venture was soon dissolved due to the almost unanimous condemnation of other fraternal leaders. George Weir, head of the Orangemen in New York, published a statement in the *New York World* that said, "The Loyal Orange Institution has no sympathy whatever with the Ku Klux Klan…" and condemned the GAF. Officials from the JOUAM and the Sons and Daughters of Washington made similar comments disavowing any connection with the GAF.[30] Masonic leaders were also quite displeased with having the name of their institution associated with the GAF and publicly indicted the order. Joe P. Bowdoin, Grand Master of Georgia, protested loudly and sought legal advice concerning the matter of the GAF. The uproar caused by the GAF controversy even forced Edward Young Clarke, temporarily Imperial Wizard at the time, to explain that the Klan was in no way connected to the order.[31]

Many of these fraternal leaders objected to the GAF because, regardless of what Imperial Wizard Clarke decried, the organization was quite transparently a Klan venture. A few days following this very public outcry, the *New York World* reported on a conference between Klan and GAF leaders, wherein J.O. Wood complained of Carl Hutcheson's aggressive promotion that had triggered this public outcry. Wood reportedly said, "You are carrying this thing too far and making an ass of yourself." A scuffle ensued, and Wood punched Hutcheson. Wood later declared to the *World*: "Hutcheson is too much of a fanatic for me to deal with."[32] Suffice to say that this rift that formed in the GAF over their aggressive and upsetting marketing was most probably what doomed the organization. The GAF, like the NPC and other militant Masonic projects like it, was unable to find official endorsement from the fraternities that it claimed to represent and so was unable to recruit members from these orders. The Ku Klux Klan would succeed where these groups had failed partly because they funded and sustained an active marketing campaign to disseminate the impression that their order did have the support and patronage of Freemasons and other fraternalists. However, the formation of the GAF and other intra-fraternal bodies like it suggests that there was indeed a rising tide of discontent within the nation's Protestant orders. These enterprises all failed to sustain their initial momentum, but should not be overlooked when considering the state of the country's evolving tastes and the growing radicalism of America's fraternities during the early 1920s.

The *Forum* carried out a poll during the autumn of 1923 to gauge the sentiment of various Protestant fraternities concerning the public school question, immigration laws, and other matters considered of national importance. Questionnaires were sent to representatives of fraternities such as the Freemasons, the Knights of Pythias, the Odd Fellows, the JOUAM, and other Protestant

brotherhoods. The questionnaire included loaded questions such as: "Does your organization prefer the public schools of this country or the parochial schools fostered by the priesthood?" or "Have you any suggestions to make regarding the cooperation of fraternal, patriotic and Protestant bodies which have the same end in view?" The questionnaire was entirely anonymous, but the *Forum* reported that leading fraternalists had been among those polled. These included a Masonic Grand Master, who had replied: "We are hostile to the political ambitions of the hierarchy and are growing more so as our members learn of the Romanist campaign for political supremacy." The *Forum*'s editorial staff concluded from one poll that their respondents believed "that the situation demands something more than mere talk of speculation" and that the "answers received indicate there is a decidedly growing tendency on the part of all fraternities to arrive at some common understanding in all matters concerning state affairs".[33]

We should be sceptical of the validity of this poll in terms of judging the attitude of the fraternities they belonged to as a whole. However, the questionnaire showed that a desire for a more decisive and politically active brand of fraternalism did exist among a portion of the membership of America's most popular Protestant fraternities. The failure to establish an aggressive national Masonic Grand Lodge or an enduring intra-fraternal organization like the NPC or the GAF merely reflects the relatively weak position of the overtly militant fraternal fringe and their discontent within existing Masonic structures. In an organization of around three million members, those Freemasons who sought a more aggressive stance from their brotherhood on social and political issues did constitute a minority, and one that could not hope to overcome the opposition of the traditionalists and those who were simply apathetic to their cause. But this does not mean that they were not a quantifiably numerous group, if we are to believe the *Forum*'s circulation figures and the reports of Masonic membership in patriotic societies. Organizations outside of the Craft – among them the Ku Klux Klan – certainly did not consider this discontent insignificant and actively targeted Freemasons on these very grounds. Many of these militant Freemasons were quite susceptible to joining the Klan because of their inability to affect change within the rigid structure of their own brotherhood and the perceived freedom to do so within the explicitly Protestant and aggressively masculine Invisible Empire.

"Whoring after the false gods" of Ku Kluxism

Speaking before the Grand Lodge of New York in 1924, Grand Master Arthur S. Tompkins was trying to gather support for a Masonic education campaign. He emphasized the importance of this project, saying it was:

> essential if we are to indoctrinate the vast throng of initiates we have taken into our lodges during and since the World War and bring them … from 'whoring after the false gods' of Ku Kluxism and like, to say nothing of excessive feasting, self-indulgence and self-gratulation.[34]

Leaving aside his anxieties of gluttony and revelry among new members, Tompkins expressed unease at the apparent popularity of the Ku Klux Klan among America's Freemasons in the early 1920s. Members who were dissatisfied with the rigid structures of the organization and their inability to express themselves or act politically sought to fulfil these ambitions elsewhere. The failure of the many aforementioned militant Masonic ventures or the attempts to reform the Craft itself made the frustration of these discontented Freemasons quite palpable. C.M. Wood, a Shriner and Knights Templar, expressed his annoyance at the absence of a national Masonic Grand Lodge in 1922, saying:

> With such an organization [a national grand lodge] we would not need such organizations as the Ku Klux Klan to fight for the things we hold most sacred, but until we as Masons can bring our organization to a concrete unit, we may expect our more aggressive brothers to take up the fight in another body.[35]

There was a sense among many militant Freemasons that there was simply no hope to transform their own fraternity. The Craft's political neutrality, as well as some of their attempts to interact with non-Protestant fraternities, was viewed as an aberration by less-moderate members. Some Freemasons even believed that their own leadership had been infiltrated by Catholic sympathizers and other un-American elements.[36] They pointed to the friendliness of some Masonic leaders to the Knights of Columbus and the public opposition to the Klan from some Grand Lodges, as evidence of this trickery. *The Fellowship Forum* made frequent condemnations of any attempts to host friendly meetings between the usually antagonistic Freemasons and Knights of Columbus.[37] One poignant example is a report of a joint session of the two orders in Syracuse, New York, which was denounced and which said:

> Masons of this city need not look far for the Jesuit 'nigger in the woodpile,' which was the occasion for the recent joint meeting of Masons and Knights of Columbus held here. Aside from the little band of soft-shelled, weak-kneed, office-seeking, buttonhole Masons, who, with the assistance of the Irish Catholic politicians, engineered the session, there is utmost indignation within the ranks of Syracuse Masonry over the manner in which the fraternity has been made the cat's-paw to further political Masons and Caseys [a nickname for the Knights of Columbus].[38]

Catholic infiltration was a genuine fear, and there were certain Freemasons who believed that the failure of the militant Masonic movement was due in part to this fifth column. In addition, the use of terms like "soft-shelled" or "weak-kneed" suggest that these militant Freemasons regarded some of their brethren as cowardly Americans who had failed in their manly duty to uphold the fraternity's values.

The suspicions of secret Catholic allegiances were also directed towards Freemasons who were public officials. Henry Justin Allen, the vociferously anti-Klan

Governor of Kansas, received several letters questioning his credentials as an honest Protestant and Freemason because of his attitude against the Invisible Empire. One Guy A. Johnson, a Freemason of Dunlap, Tennessee, wrote Governor Allen a particularly threatening letter that read:

> I notice in print where you claim to be a Methodist and a 32 degree Mason [and] a Knights Templar.
>
> If you would drop these [and] join the Catholics [and] Knights of Columbus I feel that you would feel more at home.
>
> Your little speech will only help to strengthen the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK is here to stay.[39]

Some Freemasons lacked confidence in their own fraternity because of these Catholic influences and intrusions, and found little hope in Masonic ventures like the National Grand Lodge or the Great American Fraternity to address their concerns for the nation and its wellbeing. Speaking forcefully and questioning the very manliness of the fraternity itself, A.J. Ramsey, a Louisiana Freemason, remarked in his letter to the *Forum* that:

> The spineless attitude of the Masonic order on the supreme menace of Catholicism in this good old U.S.A. is the sole reason for the existence of the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan seems to be free from the control of this treacherous bunch so far but it will have to fight to guard its portals every day of its existence or the enemy will be on the job directing the affairs of the Klan.[40]

Klansmen were acutely aware of the deficiencies of the Craft, and actively marketed their own fraternity as a militant and unrestricted alternative to Freemasonry. W.C. Wright, a prolific Klan speaker, argued that "the Protestant element in Masonry, Odd Fellowship, Pythianism, Woodcraft, etc., find common interest in Klan" but explained that "none of these orders actually exclude Catholics, Jews or foreigners; but the Protestant, Christian, native-born element in each, finds in the Klan a real Clearing House for the exchange and promotion of common thoughts". Wright claimed that the Klan could be considered the superior fraternity because of this and "there is a closer feeling of brotherhood and kinship in the Klan than is found in organizations composed of different races and conflicting religions".[41] In this sense, the Klan advertised itself as a more cohesive and worthy group specifically because it only allowed white Protestant Americans to join their order and considered such men to be the only ones capable of leading the nation. Additionally, Elmer E. Rogers, a journalist for the Chicago Klan newspaper *Dawn*, had very harsh words for the other Protestant fraternities of the day and claimed that the growth of the Klan was stimulating militancy in them. He wrote:

> The Free Masons, the Odd Fellows, etc. are scarcely constructive. Too many Roman Catholics are members, and as with Protestantism, these with their

> 'propaganda,' mostly indirectly, cause discord in these orders, preventing effort in constructive work for world betterment. The constructive work of the Ku Klux Klan is arousing the Masons, Odd Fellows, etc. …out of their Pickwickian sleep to their peril; will purge them of the evil, and start them on constructive work. (More than a million Masons and Odd Fellows already are members of the Ku Klux, which has as many as both.)[42]

The Klan was being sold to disgruntled Freemasons as the organization they had dreamed of, as Freemasonry's "fighting brother". The Invisible Empire was a decisive fraternity that did not bite its tongue or hold back its members. The Klan's explicit stance in favour of pet projects of the militant Masonic movement, such as the Towner–Stirling bill or the Johnson Immigration Act, would have been enough to encourage many to join. As part of the Ku Klux Klan, these Freemasons finally found a militant and national organization through which to enact the changes they sought in America and allow them to fulfil their duties as white American men.

Nonetheless, it would be difficult to argue that the efforts of this militant wing of Freemasonry would indicate that white Protestant American men were undergoing a "masculinity crisis" or that the Klan represented a solution to this phenomenon. The "masculinity crisis" is a concept that emerged in earlier studies of American manhood. This approach recognized how masculinity was constructed over time and argued that, as men's roles were threatened by broader political, economic, social, and cultural changes, crises emerged which forced Americans to reconstruct their values and ideals as men. The concept has merit in that it recognizes the mutability and power relations implicit in perceptions of American masculinity, but, as Bryce Traister argues, the issue is: "The history of American men as men now not only proceeds as a historiography of masculine crisis but collectively writes itself as an actual history of American masculinity as crisis." In other words, the concept is somewhat overused and does not effectively capture how American men regarded their gender and bodies. While there were substantial changes occurring in the aftermath of the First World War that affected how white Protestant American men understood their role in society, this was not a "crisis". In relation to her own research, Gail Bederman maintains that "there is no evidence that most turn-of-the-century men ever lost confidence in the belief that people with male bodies naturally possessed both a man's identity and a man's right to wield power".[43] Similarly, the threats to America that militant Freemasons were concerned about did not arouse a "masculinity crisis" where such men questioned their capacities. Quite the contrary, militant Freemasons remained confident of their ability as men to aggressively challenge those they believed to be undermining America and defended groups like the Ku Klux Klan that celebrated white Protestant masculinity.

W.D. Rodgers, a Freemason of Oklahoma City, certainly seemed to feel this way. Writing to the editor of the Texas Klan's newspaper, the *Texas 100% American*, he explained that Freemasonry had done "so much to promote the growth and development of human progress and education" but that they could

not "secure and perpetuate the great cardinal principals of truth and justice". Rodgers blamed this on the fact that the Craft had "too many Catholic Masons", men whom he declared were "unworthy of appreciating and understanding the sublime and ineffable truths and purposes" of their great order. His solution was radical. He proposed the following:

> It is, therefore, necessary that Masonry join hands with any and all fraternities and organizations which are at one with it in defending and championing religious and political freedom…. The Klan is certainly one of these. It is, in my humble opinion, THE organization which will ultimately deal the death blow to Catholic superstition and usurpation.[44]

Although critical of those who bowed to Catholic interests, Rodgers and others like him remained convinced that white Protestant American men would be able to meet the challenge if they openly embraced a militant stance.

The ambition of militant Freemasons like Rodgers, that their fraternity "join hands" with other patriotic and nativist orders like the Klan, was partially achieved in Oregon. In this state, both fraternities campaigned relentlessly for the passage of a compulsory public school education bill in Oregon.[45] The measure would have outlawed private and parochial schools, and was especially popular among Scottish Rite Masons in this state. P.S. Malcolm, head of Oregon's Scottish Rite Masons, called the legislation "a measure for the promotion for Americanism". Malcolm also justified their support for the bill, saying: "The issue presented is not an issue of religious creed or factionalism or intolerance. It is an issue of true American progress…."[46] The measure had distinctly nativist and anti-Catholic overtones, and gained widespread support in the state. The bill was passed by Oregon's legislators in 1922 but was eventually overturned as unconstitutional.

Historians still debate the extent of cooperation between the Invisible Empire and the Craft during the Oregon campaign, but it was widely perceived at the time that they were in fact working together. James A. Flaherty, head of the Knights of Columbus, categorized the "Oregon calamity" as a "national attack" and outlined how he believed it was part of a "bitter campaign" on behalf of the Klan and Freemasonry. Archbishop of Baltimore Michael J. Curley agreed and, referring to the Oregon public school bill, added that:

> America, I think, has one of the most stupid populations in this world because it allows such organizations as the Ku Klux Klan to exist.
>
> The Masonic body is directly opposed to Catholicity and has at last thrown off its mask.[47]

In Oregon, militant Freemasons found an ally in the Invisible Empire that would help them defend America and fight foreign influences. The Ku Klux Klan's flexible programme of patriotic nativism and aggressive Protestantism was proving to be quite attractive for many disenchanted Oregonians. However, such

open alliances between Klansmen and Freemasons were uncommon and only appear to have been successful in this particular state.

Marshall H. Van Fleet, Grand Master of Colorado in 1922, emphasized that Freemasonry was indeed a patriotic fraternity and therefore "we have no need of Ku Klux Klan or any such organizations …".[48] Evidence seems to suggest that this was not the case, and that a substantial minority of Freemasons were joining the Invisible Empire. It is as puzzling for historians now as it was for Freemasons during the 1920s to understand why some of these men joined the KKK. Why would they forego the power and influence of the Craft in favour of a new and controversial organization like the Klan? This chapter has shown that they indeed attempted to transform their own brotherhood first, but that these militant Freemasons constituted only a relatively small proportion of the overall fraternity and therefore could not force such radical changes. The Klan became an unusual refuge for these Freemasons. As Klan speaker W.C. Wright explained, their organization's "supreme desire is to defend and uphold the right, and to oppose and suppress the wrong by all honorable means and methods. It is a strictly militant order, which makes it unique in the fraternal world".[49]

In addition, from the very outset this Second Invisible Empire presented itself as the ultimate expression of white American manhood. One early Klan pamphlet described their organization as "a number of real men, each of whom is the embodiment of true American manhood, of kindred purpose, actuated by unselfish motives, dedicated to a manly mission and pledged to a noble ideal …".[50] This idealization and celebration of masculinity would have appealed greatly to Freemasons who felt their own organization was too passive or that their brethren were cowardly and unmanly.

Nonetheless, the Ku Klux Klan was not the only organization that preached a doctrine of vitriolic 100 per cent Americanism, or that promised to uphold white supremacy and tackle the growing influence of the Catholic Church. In fact the Klan was just one of many. The Junior Order of United American Mechanics, an anti-Catholic and nativist fraternity, listed some of its aims as "to use such means, when able, as will prevent the present system of immigration of foreign paupers to our land" and "to oppose union of church and state, and the appropriating of monies for sectarian purposes".[51] The Sons and Daughters of Washington, a nativist fraternity, also espoused a doctrine that resembled the Klan's in several respects. One of their brochures demanded that "America's gate be closed against the inrush of foreigners – to the end that democracy may remain safe here …".[52] During the 1920s, Invisible Empire was just one of many organizations that was trying to address political and social concerns about alien powers and domestic stability. Yet, it was the Klan that became the foremost militant fraternity of its time. As Chapters 3 and 4 will demonstrate, the Ku Klux Klan was able to establish its order as the most popular patriotic brotherhood by marketing and selling itself effectively. The order's capable salesmen fixed the organization's pedigree in the minds of the American public through their ongoing public relations campaign, and convinced the nation that they were the only organization capable of delivering on their promise. Their aggressive sales

team also helped to push the boundaries of the Invisible Empire and establish their organization as one of the most defining of the twentieth century. Whereas other militant Masonic projects such as the NPC or the GAF had failed to build support because they lacked Masonic endorsement, the KKK was able to succeed in part by giving the appearance that they were an organization that was tied to and patronized by Freemasons.

Notes

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2 Glenn Michael Zuber, "'Onward Christian Klansmen!': War, Religious Conflict, and the Rise of the Second Ku Klux Klan, 1912–1928" (Indiana University, 2004), pp. 48–49.
3 E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993), pp. 5–6, 222–228.
4 Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago, IL, 1995), pp. 7, 19–20; Grand Lodge of Ohio, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio* (Springfield, OH, 1922), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, pp. 260–262.
5 Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco, TX, 1925), p. 21.
6 Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville, KY, 1917), Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, pp. 80–81.
7 Knights of Columbus, "Service: All Serve Who Give – All Give Who Serve", (New Haven, CT, 1918).
8 Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville, KY, 1920), Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, pp. 29–30, 46–47.
9 "Vets Form American Legion From Masonic Ranks", *The Fellowship Forum*, 3 March 1922.
10 Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville, KY, 1919), p. 55; Grand Lodge of Oregon, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Oregon* (Portland: Grand Lodge of Oregon, 1920), pp. 155–162.
11 *Grand Lodge of Kentucky, 1920*, Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, pp. 29–30.
12 Allen E. Roberts, *Freemasonry's Servant: The Masonic Service Association of the United States – The First Fifty Years* (Washington, D.C., 1969), p. 8; "A Summary of the Proceedings of the First Meeting of the Masonic Service Association of the United States", *The Texas Freemason*, January 1920, p. 8; Joseph Fort Newton, "The Masonic Service Association of the United States: Its Purpose", *The Master Mason*, January 1923, pp. 1–3.
13 Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture 1880–1930* (Princeton, NJ, 1984), pp. 134–137; Andrew L. Randell, *Masonry and Americanism* (Washington D.C., 1924), pp. 3, 81.
14 Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York, 1920), pp. 232–243;
15 *Grand Lodge of Ohio, 1922*, Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, pp. 260–262.
16 Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York, 1921), pp. 37–40, 53–55; *Grand Lodge of Kentucky, 1920*, Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, p. 71.
17 Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York, 1925), p. 55.

18 *Grand Lodge of Oregon, 1921*, Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p. 81.
19 "The Masons and the Klan", *The Hartford Courant*, 13 June 1923; "Protestants Should Read the Forum", *The Fellowship Forum*, 16 February 1924.
20 "The Fellowship Forum is a National Fraternal Newspaper – Yesterday, Today and Forever", *The Fellowship Forum*, 3 November 1923.
21 "Letters to the Editor", *The Fellowship Forum*, 21 June 1921.
22 "Fate of Johnson Immigration Bill Rests With You! Do Your Duty!", *The Fellowship Forum*, 29 March 1924.
23 "What is the Duty of Freemasonry", *The Fellowship Forum*, 24 March 1923, reproduced from *The Illinois Freemason*.
24 "Militant Masonry and the November Election", *The Fellowship Forum*, 13 October 1922.
25 "Urges One Union of Protestants", *The Fellowship Forum*, 24 March 1923; "Urges League of Protestants", *The Fellowship Forum*, 7 April 1923.
26 "Hutcheson Explains Position on Negro", *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 March 1921; "Atlanta Public School Teacher Fired Because She is Catholic", *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, 9 July 1921; "Orangemen Burst Bubble of Ku Klux 'Bigot Fraternity' ", *New York World*, 20 June 1922.
27 J.O. Wood even wrote a pamphlet for the Klan; see J.O. Wood, "Are You a Citizen? The Klansman's Guide" (Atlanta, GA, 1923).
28 "Great American Fraternity Asks Georgia Chapter", *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 March 1922; "Great American Fraternity Given Georgia Charter", *Atlanta Constitution*, 7 April 1922.
29 "Great American Fraternity House Opens in Atlanta", *Atlanta Constitution*, 26 September 1922; Charles P. Sweeney, "The Great Bigotry Merger", *The Nation*, 5 July 1922.
30 "Orangemen Burst Bubble of Ku Klux 'Bigot Fraternity' ", *New York World*, 20 June 1922.
31 Grand Lodge of Oregon, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Oregon* (Portland, OR, 1923), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, pp. 15–17. There were additional denunciations by Grand Masters printed in newspapers, see "Masons War on Ku Klux", *Kansas City Star*, 2 July 1922; "Connection With New Fraternity Is Denied by Official of Klan", *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 June 1922.
32 "Klan's Hate Corps Disrupted by Fist Fight Over Policy", *New York World*, 23 June 1922.
33 "Protestant Spirit Unites Fraternalists", *The Fellowship Forum*, 22 December 1923. There is evidence that leading Masons received these questionnaires, and that year several Grand Masters denounced the *Forum* during the Grand Lodge for asking such provocative questions.
34 Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York, 1924), p. 49.
35 "A National Grand Lodge", *The Fellowship Forum*, 6 October 1922.
36 One good example is Grand Master Samuel Burke of California, who was repeatedly accused of being influenced by Catholics for being too friendly with them; see "Grand Master Burke Charged With Taking 'Throne of Authority' ", *The Fellowship Forum*, 21 July 1922; Adam G. Kendall, "Freemasonry and the Second Ku Klux Klan in California, 1921–1925", *Journal of Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism*, 2, no. 1 (2011).
37 Such articles abounded in the pages of the *Forum*; for a few examples see "Masons and Knights of Columbus Form Political Association", *The Fellowship Forum*, 18 October 1924; "Masonic-Casey Love Feasting Reaps Harvest", *The Fellowship Forum*, 23 February 1924; "Among Ourselves: Fifty-Fifty Masons", *The Fellowship Forum*, 29 November 1924; "Masons Slight Klan, But Bow to Catholics", *The*

Fellowship Forum, 1 March 1924; "Romanists Get Upper Hand in 50–50 Society", *The Fellowship Forum*, 3 January 1925.

38 "Masons of U.S. Indignant Over Casey Meeting", *The Fellowship Forum*, 12 January 1924. Another very similar session was reported and decried in *The American Standard*, a New York Klan paper in March. See "Knights of Columbus Guests of Masons", *The American Standard*, 1 March 1924.

39 "Letter from Guy A. Johnson to Henry Justin Allen", 11 November 1922, Henry Justin Allen Papers, Library of Congress.

40 "Warns Masons to Unite Force", *The Fellowship Forum*, 30 June 1923.

41 W.C. Wright, *Religious and Patriotic Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan* (Waco, TX, 1926), p. 17.

42 Elmer E. Rogers, "Awakening Protestants", *Dawn*, 10 November 1923.

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44 "Masons Should Join Hands with Klan Says Oklahoman", *Texas 100% American*, 1 September 1922.

45 Kristofer Allerfeldt, *Race, Radicalism, Religion, and Restriction: Immigration in the Pacific Northwest, 1890–1924* (Westport, CT, 2003), pp. 61–69; Lawrence J. Saalfeld, *Forces of Prejudice in Oregon 1920–1925* (Portland, OR, 1984), pp. 66–75. For a detailed analysis of the Second Klan's attitude towards education, with particular reference to the Oregon case, see Adam Laats, "Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and Educational Reform", *History of Education Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (August 2012).

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48 Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York, 1923), Report on Foreign Correspondence, pp. 10–11.

49 Wright, *Religious and Patriotic Ideals*, p. 12.

50 William Joseph Simmons, *The Practice of Klanishness* (Atlanta, GA, 1917).

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52 "The Sons and Daughters of Washington", *American Standard*, 23 February 1924.

3 Kluxing America

The use and abuse of the Masonic reputation

The Invisible Empire's extraordinary growth after 1921 was accompanied by a proliferation of media produced by Klansmen. As the movement established itself, its leaders and members created newspapers and gave speeches that conveyed how ordinary recruits and officers characterized their new fraternity. These speeches and newspapers offer us the opportunity to grasp how the Ku Klux Klan hoped to present its movement to its followers and the broader public. This presentation was crucial to the success of the fraternity. These media outlets allowed the Klan to defy their negative portrayal in hostile publications and to win the hearts of undecided Americans. Klan newspapers were filled with positive articles that reinforced the notion that this was a moral organization and an upright fraternity. Most issues carried several columns with lengthy defences of the movement and its ideals, or news of charitable donations and other good deeds carried out by local klaverns. They allowed the Invisible Empire to market their order to the masses and to partially control how their organization was viewed by the public.

A letter from one New Yorker published in 1924 by a pro-Klan newspaper offers a glimpse into the order's public relations strategy. This anonymous Freemason claimed to be a member of the prestigious Mecca Temple of the Shriners and the Manhattan Commandery of the Knights Templar. He had some very stern words for any Freemason who criticized the Invisible Empire, and wrote:

> These mole-eyed, skunk-bellied, reptilian-headed, yellow-feathered buzzards who claim membership in the honored fraternity and a few canine faced Grand Masters of the Pope, give me [aches] in the gluteus maximus, when one reads how they berate an organization and its pure American principles, of which they are so grossly ignorant.[1]

The author supported the Invisible Empire and questioned the manhood of any opponent of the order among the Craft, calling them a "yellow-blooded American". This letter served to support part of the order's elaborate public image. The Ku Klux Klan not only tried to show itself as an upstanding and manly organization through its media, but also as one that was composed and backed by true Freemasons. The Propagation Department and its officers hoped

to use and even abuse Freemasonry's reputation to defend their young fraternity and to advance their mission. This New Yorker's message of support served to strengthen the impression of close ties between the two fraternities, which was vital for the success of the fledgling Invisible Empire.

Historian Mark Tabbert argues that the Klan was "limited in its national political goals, because it lacked affluence and respectability. To acquire these qualities, Klansmen attempted to infiltrate Freemasonry".[2] Tabbert is correct, but there is a much more complex story behind the Invisible Empire's attempts to acquire Freemasonry's respectability. This chapter will detail not only why the Klan felt it needed to appear Masonic, but also how it did so through a sustained media campaign. By tying the members, goals, and enemies of the KKK and Freemasonry together, the Propagation Department hoped to blur the lines between these two fraternities, making them seem like natural allies. This chapter will begin by discussing how many Americans in the 1920s initially reacted to the Ku Klux Klan. It will then argue that to counter the repeated accusations of corruption and violence, this organization's promoters represented their movement as an ordinary fraternity, and one that was supported by respectable institutions like the Craft. This illusion of Masonic approval was a cornerstone of their public relations campaign. The Invisible Empire presented a façade to the American public, one which hid their unappealing qualities and enhanced their positive features, and this marketing would prove to be vital to the movement's growth.

Opposition to the Ku Klux Klan and secrecy in 1920s America

The dominant theories of the Second KKK present the order not as an aberration, but as a popular social movement that rarely indulged in vigilantism and held conventional political views. Historian Shawn Lay even describes Klansmen, saying, "Beneath the threatening white robes and hoods walked millions of otherwise respectable Americans, many of them earnestly striving to forge a better life for themselves and their families." While this assertion can be applied to a large proportion of the Klan's membership, the order itself had a significant minority that did engage in violent and intimidating acts. As such, this argument does not truly reflect how many Americans viewed the Invisible Empire and Lay himself laments that his work and that of other historians "may fail to provide readers with a full appreciation of how inherently mean-spirited the Klan movement was and thus why it was so ardently opposed".[3] The opposition to the Invisible Empire should not be ignored as this contentious fraternity grew in step with the demands and objections of the American people. The opposition to the Klan partially shaped what the Invisible Empire eventually became, and it affected how they interacted with organizations like the Freemasons.

Hundreds of communities across America felt the unsettling influence of the Klan creeping into their institutions, sowing discord and suspicion among neighbours. The Klan's masked parades and cross-burnings were designed to create

group cohesion amongst members, but they were also intended to strike fear in the hearts of their opponents. The order's rhetoric was often deliberately inflammatory to incite controversy, and the Klan's sporadic acts of violence meant that this group aroused intense opposition from many sectors of the country. For the Invisible Empire to have emerged and flourished in this competitive fraternal market, overcoming opposition from anti-Klan groups and outgrowing America's most established orders, is quite astonishing. Furthermore, unlike the Great American Fraternity, the Klan was able to recruit a substantial number of Freemasons to join their militant fraternity. The Second Klan was able to achieve this by mitigating the effects of this opposition and controlling their public image. They did so, in part by masking their group as a fraternity and as a respectable group connected to Freemasonry.

Opposition to the Klan was as varied as its objectives and practices. There were many critics who challenged their aggressive political and racial ideology. Nonetheless, since white supremacy, Prohibition enforcement or anti-Catholicism were largely acceptable ideas among the white Protestant majority in America, this criticism was not particularly effective in stemming the expansion of the Invisible Empire. On the other hand, the Klan's customs and its methods did not meet with the approval of most Americans. Their strict secrecy, masks, and their ambitious political agenda were often regarded as signs of the inherently undemocratic and sinister nature of the group. The Invisible Empire was a media-conscious organization that worried incessantly about its image and that tried to counter opposition at every turn. They often carried out smear campaigns against their most vocal critics and stressed their contributions to charity and social stability to gain support. The heads of the order, especially those in the Propagation Department, realized that to sell their fraternity they needed to ensure that at least most white Protestant Americans approved of their organization.

There were several practices associated with the KKK – and with some other secret societies more generally – that were the real focus of attacks, namely the Klan's secrecy, its oath, its vigilantism, and most importantly its supposed political power. For instance, former Klansman Lem Dever complained that:

> No man can serve this spider web combination of self-seeking interests and the American people at the same time. The two don't mix; they are not co-related, nor in any sense identical. No man should be trusted with public office who subserviently seeks the favor of a secret organization.[4]

This and the many other similar denunciations depicted the Klan as a sinister and subversive power, which controlled both local and national politics through fear and political manipulation, where members hid each other's crimes from the authorities and obeyed their officials blindly. "It is a state within a state, or rather a state above the state" explained Catholic editor James M. Gillis, "indeed, it claims to be that most dangerous of all institutions, an Invisible Empire."[5] Many of these allegations did in fact turn out to be true, as the Klan's successful

political campaigns in Indiana or Texas demonstrated. For many Americans, the Ku Klux Klan was a threatening and cabalistic secret society that instigated racial and religious tension unnecessarily. In fact, many of its critics regarded the Klan as implicitly un-American and as an unruly mob that only the unthinking or unrespectable would join. The Klan was very aware of all these defects in their organization, and they were even more aware of the negative effect that this opposition was having on public perceptions of their movement.

The 1920s KKK sometimes attempted to mitigate the effects of this criticism by slightly adapting their customs and rhetoric to avoid polemic; for instance, in the face of charges that he was running an "Invisible Empire" Hiram Wesley Evans, the order's second director, retorted: "We are dropping the expression, using it less and less. It is a ritualistic phrase referring to the geographical jurisdiction of the Order. It has no reference to any political government."[6] Imperial Wizard Evans' 1922 coup was in fact accompanied by a series of reforms that tried to improve the Klan's image, such as the dismissal of the controversial Imperial Kleagle Edward Young Clarke and many other members of his Propagation Department. Evans also issued an Imperial decree that ruled that all robes had to stay in the klavern unless duly authorized by the Exalted Cyclops, in a largely failed attempt to stop the night-riding activities of certain brothers. The Klan was desperately seeking the public's approval, as it was understood that without widespread support their movement would die.

Yet, there were elements of the order that simply could not change. Part of the order's intrinsic appeal was the thrill of being part of a controversial and militant fraternity that celebrated Protestant American values and white masculinity. The order's increasingly active role in politics and the election of dozens of local and national politicians were evident to the public. Because of this, to keep the public on their side, the Klan sought to downplay these features about their organization and depict itself as just another fraternal order. Klansmen emphasized the fact that they were not a sinister cabal, but a noble and uplifting fraternity. They also tried to portray their crusade as one of pure motives, one that had active support from respectable figures of the community like local law enforcement officers, ministers, and the honourable Freemasons. The Invisible Empire chose marketing as its most effective defence and vigorously tried to control its brand and public image.

Throughout the 1920s, the officers and members of the Ku Klux Klan passionately defended their group, disputing their characterization as a hateful, low-class or violent organization to the public. Part of this public relations campaign involved constantly reminding the nation that they were not a secret society plotting to overthrow the government, but that they were simply another ordinary fraternity. The distinction was important, as fraternities were an accepted feature of American life and membership was considered a marker of respectability. Labelling themselves as a fraternity allowed them to justify their odd regalia, their strict entry standards, or their secret membership rolls and oaths. This normalization of their peculiar displays and behaviour helped to deflect the growing criticism by placing them among familiar and esteemed orders like the Odd

Fellows or the Knights of Pythias, groups that Americans would recognize or even belong to. Fraternalism was employed as a convenient cover to shield the organization from its critics.

The first notable occasion where the Klan deployed this defence occurred in November 1921, when the group's notoriety caught the attention of politicians in Washington. Nearly all the Klan's questionable practices were raised in this special Congressional hearing, including their mysterious costumes and their exclusivity. Throughout the proceedings, Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons countered almost every charge brought against his organization by pointing out that similar practices were the norm among fraternities and that there was nothing out of the ordinary or malicious about his brotherhood. When the Klan was accused of being racially and religiously exclusive, Simmons replied with outrage that his organization was in no way different to several other fraternities with stringent entry requirements, pointing to the Knights of Columbus and to various Jewish fraternities. He also added that there were "scores of fraternal orders that will not admit a Negro to membership. We are not the only one". Simmons also defended his order more broadly before the committee, explaining that:

> The fight being conducted against the Klan is similar to the fight over 15 years ago on the Masons, as the same charges were made against them and the same effort to destroy them was made as is made to-day against the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.[7]

Simmons' defence of the Klan was so effective that once the hearing had concluded, the Congressmen could find no reason to take legislative action against the Invisible Empire, which boosted Klan growth considerably. Taking advantage of the esteem of these fraternal orders the Invisible Empire was able to deflect much criticism and make itself seem like an everyday institution by labelling themselves as a fraternity. This tactic would become a quite popular defence among Klansmen in later years.[8] The Propagation Department appreciated the value of a positive image and tried to ensure that Americans recognized their order as a fraternity, and not as a cabal or a threat to democracy as their opponents intended.

The leadership and members of this fraternity also wanted their order to appear respectable and worthy of enlisting in. The Klan was often perceived as a group that attracted the lower or rougher classes of society, a perception that damaged the order's prospects. For example, having learnt that some of his fellow Freemasons had joined, one member of the Craft could not believe there were men who:

> so far forgot the obligations they owe brother Masons, in the Masonic Fraternity in general, and in fact any respectable community in which they live, as to stoop so low as [to] join the K.K.K. It is deplorable, abominable and damnable to think members of the order as have been favored and respected by their brethren should do this.…

Although the order was composed of practically all elements of white Protestant American society, excluding the elites and those who could not afford membership, one of the central appeals of the group was the possibility of joining a respectable and even middle-class fraternity. As Linda Gordon argues: "In many areas the Klan membership brought prestige, perhaps more in the North and West than in the South …" but this image of prestige needed to be constructed and reinforced in the order's rhetoric and public displays.[9] The Klan coveted the community status that was afforded to other fraternities, particularly the more exclusive and esteemed orders. Such an approval would help attract new recruits by offering those of the middling classes the chance to secure or demonstrate their respectability, while presenting those deemed to be lower class with an opportunity to ascend in status. By labelling themselves as a fraternity, the Invisible Empire challenged the notion that their group was composed of ruffians, but in order to be respected they repeatedly highlighted their close connection to esteemed orders such as the Freemasons.

Claiming links between the Klan and the Craft

The officers of the Ku Klux Klan wanted the public to view their organization as a fraternity but understood that in order to promote themselves they needed to portray themselves as a leading fraternity. Emerging in a competitive market with plenty of opposition, the Invisible Empire had neither the prestige, respectability, nor the heritage that some of the other almost aristocratic fraternities enjoyed. Furthermore, in order to succeed they needed to counter the torrent of accusations of wrongdoing, many of which were well founded. Fortunately, Freemasonry had all the attributes that the KKK so desperately sought to strengthen their own position. The Invisible Empire's promoters campaigned to create an artificial relation between these two fraternities in the collective mind of the nation. This all served to create positive associations with the Invisible Empire; to transfer the Craft's respectability, prestige, success and heritage onto the Klan.

Freemasonry itself was composed of a variety of different classes of men, which is no surprise considering that by the 1920s the fraternity had over three million members. Yet, as Lynn Dumenil and others have demonstrated:

> The possibility of variety does not diminish the essential native, middle-class, Protestant nature of the order that was underlined by Masons' insistence on identifying the fraternity with the respectable virtues. The values Masonry inculcated – industry, sobriety, self-restraint, honesty, and fear of God – could be found in any sermon, schoolbook, success novel, or Horatio Alger tale. Masonry's native, middle-class nature was not expressed only in terms of social structure, then, but also in terms of social values.[10]

Everything the Klan wanted to be – respected, admired, powerful, and exclusive – was everything Freemasonry already was. In a sense, the Klan was like the

younger sibling, trying to imitate and associate with its more successful older brother. The Invisible Empire's feigned connection to the middle-class Craft would help to deflect much criticism and also offered the opportunity to ambitious social climbers or the lower middle-classes to join a fraternity that would allow them to gain or maintain social status.

The Ku Klux Klan, as will be discussed in the following chapter, eagerly pursued Freemasons as prime candidates for recruitment. The Propagation Department furthered their campaign to connect the two fraternities by broadcasting the large number of Freemasons within their order. The Invisible Empire's officers also attempted to convince the nation that not only were Freemasons joining their order, but that most Freemasons approved of their organization and that the two organizations were in fact allies. Masonic sponsorship, or indeed, the appearance of Masonic sponsorship, validated the Ku Klux Klan and their vision for a new America and helped to convince other Freemasons and ordinary men to join this new group.

It is in the Klan's newspapers and public rhetoric that this portrayal of the Invisible Empire, as an order intertwined with Freemasonry, is most evident. The Klan published several papers across the country, and they are an especially useful source because they contain information about what officials wanted their members and the wider public to think about their organization and the issues that concerned them. In a meeting of the Klan's administrators in 1923, the head of the Alabama Klan, the Grand Dragon, gave a lecture on how to run a "Model Realm". He recommended that each state should have its own newspaper. He maintained that this was necessary because:

> The official publication is a means whereby the Grand Dragon can speak to all Klansmen of his Realm, but in addition thereto, it helps to mold the minds and sentiments of the public at large, as you will find there are thousands who are not Klansmen but are eagerly waiting for the paper to come off the press.[11]

In other words, the Klan's newspapers were as much a public relations tool to influence ordinary Americans as they were a journalistic device for their own members, helping to inform Klansmen and the public at large of a particular set of ideas.

This analysis will focus on five major Klan newspapers: *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, *The Kourier*, *The Fiery Cross*, *Dawn* and *The Fellowship Forum.* Other minor publications will also be referred to. The first two were official and national organs of the Klan; *The Imperial Night-Hawk* was a weekly newspaper that was replaced in December 1924 with *The Kourier*, a monthly magazine that ran until 1936. This analysis will also look at *The Fiery Cross*, a semi-official Klan weekly that ran from 1922 to 1925 in Indiana, where it was extremely influential and widely read, and which sprouted editions in surrounding states like Michigan, Kentucky and Ohio. The fourth Klan paper this chapter will examine is *Dawn*, a weekly from Chicago that was quite popular in Illinois and ran from 1922 to 1924, claiming a circulation of 50,000 readers in April 1923.[12]

The last major newspaper this analysis will discuss is *The Fellowship Forum*, referred to in the last chapter. It was set up in late 1921 by Alabaman George Fleming Moore, who founded and edited *The New Age*, the official newspaper of the Scottish Rite Southern Jurisdiction (SRSJ). He left *The New Age* to take the office of Sovereign Grand Commander or President of the SRSJ in 1914, a position he held until 1921.[13] The *Forum* did not label itself as a Klan publication, but as a so-called fraternal newspaper. Nonetheless, starting in mid-1922, *The Fellowship Forum* started reporting more regularly on Klan activities in an openly supportive way, as well as increasing their anti-Catholic rhetoric to a more aggressive tone. This open, militant and partisan reporting was entirely out of the ordinary for conventional Masonic journalism, which made them the subject of criticism among more traditional Freemasons. In the face of accusations that they were a "Klan" newspaper, Moore replied in an editorial that this was "undeniably false", declaring that every newspaper in the country carried news about the Klan and that it was ridiculous to insinuate that Klan news equated to propaganda for that order.[14]

Although it certainly carried more than its fair share of pro-Klan news, and openly defended and urged support for the Invisible Empire – much like any Klan periodical – the *Forum*'s exact relationship with the Klan is unclear. It is unknown whether George Fleming Moore and James S. Vance, the two editors running the *Forum*, were in fact Klansmen. A former Klansman, Edgar I. Fuller, claimed that Moore was in the Klan's employment with a monthly salary of $1,000. Fuller pointed to the minutes of the Imperial Kloncilium of January 1923 to back his claim, but it remains unverifiable. Klansmen did openly support and read the *Forum*, however. Many donated to a fund Moore started in 1924 to build a printing press for the publication. A personal donation even came in from Imperial Wizard Evans, who sent $500 along with his own official endorsement of the paper.[15]

The Klan's enemies were particularly concerned about this newspaper's notable influence in Masonic circles. One anti-Klan publication declared that:

> This weekly paper is the most dangerous for two reasons. First, because it pretends to speak for Masonry of high degree, as well as for Kluxism, and thus endeavors to lend to the disreputable organization the prestige and good repute of the honorable Masonic Fraternity. Second, because while it is in every sense as mendacious as other Ku Klux organs, it is far more scurrilous, because it is edited with a certain degree of plausible intelligence and low cleverness. Likewise this paper, the *Fellowship Forum*, is able to gain currency for its lies amongst the unthinking, because of its false pretense to represent Masonry.[16]

The *Forum* would prove to be a highly effective public relations tool for the Ku Klux Klan to reach militant Freemasons and shape their perceptions of their order.

The Invisible Empire reinforced their association with Freemasonry wherever possible, a strategy which was evident in the pages of their newspapers. To

further cement this connection, journalists of this order tried to advertise the stories of individual Freemasons who had enlisted in their organization. The Klan was not above exploiting the death of one of their members to emphasize the close ties between the Craft and their own organization. For instance, when Charles P. Metcalfe died in July 1924, *The Fiery Cross* made sure to pay a fitting tribute to this Indianapolis policeman, all the while stressing his dual membership in both the Klan and the Freemasons. They even proclaimed to readers that Metcalfe:

> loved the Klansmen, because, as he often said, 'These men are men of power, men of character. They believe in a living God and the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of God, the brotherhood of man, free public schools and the flag of our country.'[17]

Similarly, the death of Robert H. Skaggs in February 1923 made the news in his local newspaper *The Fiery Cross*, but was also reported further afield in *Dawn* and *The Fellowship Forum.*[18] The article in *The Fiery Cross* reproduced a photograph taken during Skaggs' funeral, with his brother Freemasons and Klansmen posing together, and informed readers that: "Under the impressive funeral ceremonies of the two greatest secret organizations in the world, the Masonic Order and the Ku Klux Klan, the body of Rob H. Skaggs was given the last funeral rites by these two organizations." *The Fiery Cross* boasted that: "These ceremonies, with these two organizations united, is a tribute not only to Rob H. Skaggs, but indicates the co-ordination and sameness of purpose of the two organizations." *The Fiery Cross*, as well as *Dawn* and *The Fellowship Forum*, took advantage of Skaggs' death to show that Freemasons and Klansmen could work together and that the two orders were connected.[19] These articles served to not only inform others of the death of a fellow Klansman, but also to reinforce the public's perception of the Invisible Empire's close association with Freemasonry.

The Ku Klux Klan also regularly boasted of the large number of its own members with Masonic affiliations. They hoped that this would help deflect some of the criticism directed at them by showing that the honest and respected institution of Freemasonry stood by them. One Texan klokard, Reverend W.C. Wright, illustrated this argument clearly when he defended the Klan saying:

> Honestly, do you know of any other Order that has a better endorsement than that? Isn't the recommendation of 750,000 Masons and 50,000 ministers sufficient to commend [the Klan] to your confidence? Do you think that such men as these would endorse, defend, support and belong to an organization that was corrupt, immoral, lawless or dangerous?

These claims served as an almost indirect Masonic support and were an excellent selling point that was used by kleagles to convince Americans to enlist in their organization.[20] The Ku Klux Klan attempted to portray their organization as

prestigious, and one that could help its initiates demonstrate their respectability and even improve their social standing by allowing them to join a group patronized by Freemasons, ministers and other worthy citizens.

The Invisible Empire did not only tie their members to Freemasonry; they also tied the two institutions together ideologically, by trying to demonstrate that they shared the same objectives and the same enemies. Klan publications eagerly printed letters that urged cooperation between the two groups. One militant Freemason wrote to a Texas Klan journal in September 1922 to express his opinion on their organization. He said:

> I am not a member of the Klan, but I am a Mason and I am for the Klan one hundred per cent. Every Mason should, and those who are not for the Klan are undoubtedly inspired in their opposition by either ignorance or indifference. The Klan is fighting the things which threaten and endanger the continuance of the principles for which Masonry has always stood, and every Mason should rally in support of the Klan on every occasion, no matter what the issues at stake.[21]

The Fellowship Forum continuously carried news that showed readers how intertwined the two organizations' ideals were. Editor George Fleming Moore urged his fellow Masons to realize this fact and to unite with the Klan, and declared "it would seem the 'invisible empire' of the Jesuits is the organization that requires the careful scrutiny of patriotic Americans, rather than the Klan, which stands for the same principles and ideals as espoused by Freemasons".[22] Freemasonry was officially non-partisan, but chauvinistic patriotism and anti-Catholicism was rife within the fraternity, as it was across the entire country during the 1920s. The Ku Klux Klan appealed to these militant elements within Freemasonry and used these dispositions to make their order appear friendly with the Craft.

The Fellowship Forum carried out a relentless drive to inform the public of the mutual enemies and complementary ideologies of the two orders. Other Klan papers also carried plenty of reports of how Freemasons and Klansmen were both being victimized by the power of Rome and other "un-American" elements. *Dawn* reported that anti-Klan mayor William "Big Bill" Thompson of Chicago had been booed off the stage at a meeting of 4,000 Shriners. In a similar manner, *The Fiery Cross* reported that both Klansmen and Freemasons had been attacked by "foreigners" during a riot in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and that this mob had deliberately been beating up Klansmen and men with Protestant lodge pins. Milton Elrod, editor of this newspaper, informed readers that Perth Amboy was: "A place where today Masons [cannot] wear their lodge pins for fear of assault of death at the hands of foreigners." Both these examples showed Freemasons and Klansmen shared common enemies – Catholics and immigrants – and gave the appearance that they were fighting for the same cause. Klansmen were fond of demonizing the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope – the great bugbear of Protestant Americans – whom the Klan's journalists were quick to remind readers opposed not only the Invisible Empire but who had also persecuted

Freemasonry. "Rome hates with an undying hate, Free-Masonry, the Protestant Church and the Ku Klux Klan" stressed *The Fiery Cross*.[23]

To further emphasize the ideological similarities between the two fraternities, Klan newspapers regularly reprinted articles from Masonic newspapers that either supported the Invisible Empire or promoted its ideals. As the immigration quota debate raged in 1923, *Dawn* reproduced a nativist article from the *Masonic Observer* called "Restricted Immigration", which said:

> Some selfish foreign governments have emptied on the United States a lot of illiterate, ignorant and depraved criminals and vagabonds, and this has lowered our mental, moral and political standards. Immigration agents with the idiocy, avarice, complicity or duplicity of government agents have heaped on our shores a pile of foreign filth. Too long have we permitted it, either through laziness and ignorance, or with the desire to show how big, hospitable, rich and strong we are.[24]

Comparable articles reproduced from other Masonic newspapers also appeared in *The Fellowship Forum* and in *The Fiery Cross*. For example, *The Fiery Cross* reprinted an article from *The National Trestle Board* that condemned Oklahoma's anti-Klan governor Jack Walton and his unconstitutional persecution of the Invisible Empire. Militant Freemasons shared similar concerns with Klansmen, whether it was immigration reform or the supposed Catholic menace. The Propagation Department did their utmost to employ the printed appeals of this political fringe of the Craft to endow their organization with an aura of official Masonic approval.[25]

Yet the majority of articles reproduced by Klan periodicals from Masonic newspapers all came from a single source, *The New Age*. This was the official organ of the SRSJ, founded and formerly headed by George Fleming Moore himself. Widely read among Scottish Rite Masons, *The New Age* became a militant Masonic mouthpiece that broadcast anti-Catholic and nativist literature, and it is not surprising that the Klan pored through issues of *The New Age* to find articles that backed their point of view.[26] *The Kourier* reprinted many *New Age* articles, such as one called "Register Immigrants", calling for tighter scrutiny of the activities of immigrants, which said: "Aliens in a nation are there only on sufferance, and when they become a social nuisance and a public expense, the reasonable thing is to withdraw the privileges of residence and send them away." *Dawn* republished articles from this newspaper, and praised *The New Age*, calling it the *"*magazine of the largest circulation of its class in the world, which is one of the best edited, spirited and aggressive of the world's Masonic publications".[27] *The Fiery Cross* also habitually reprinted *New Age* articles; in fact they so approved of one piece on Catholicism's control of the press that they reprinted it twice in less than a year.[28]

The Klan eagerly printed features that linked both the Craft's members and their ideology to the Invisible Empire, in an effort to acquire Freemasonry's respectability, success and affluence. These efforts were essential to remind their

readers and the wider public that their order was not one composed of the lower classes, but of dutiful and esteemed men. Yet there was something else the Klan hoped to acquire from the Craft: their heritage. Myths and stories about the antiquity of fraternities were all part of the mystery and fun of the brotherhoods of this period. The Knights Templar traced their origins to the medieval Crusaders while the Shriners claimed their order originated in the deserts of Arabia. And yet it was more than just fun; this practice also imbued your organization with a sense of ancient lineage and afforded a direct link to respected historical figures, some real and others legendary. American Freemasonry's heritage, however, was more than mythical. The Craft's well-known association with some of the leading lights of the American Revolution was a priceless heritage. This was a coveted ancestry, something which the Klan sought to prey on and emulate. To be able to draw a direct connection to the founders of the nation would make the Klan the inheritors of the country's destiny and would make them the "100% American" organization they claimed to be. Having been founded as a result of the turmoil of a civil war, the Klan could claim no direct link to the nation's founders, but the apparent association they held with the Freemasons afforded one such connection.

The Craft openly emphasized their patriotic ancestry in the Revolution and in subsequent historical events to the wider public, and made their heritage widely known. One non-Masonic paper, printing an article called "What Every Mason Should Know", outlined the contribution of the Craft to America's foundation. This article, which was reprinted in *Dawn*, reported that:

> anyone, within or without the fraternity, taking the trouble to search for facts, will very likely be surprised to find how generally the leading men concerned in establishing the United States as a Nation were Masons…. It is a matter of fairly common knowledge that Masonic names were numerous amongst the signers of the Declaration of Independence. As a matter of fact, there were fifty-six signers, and all but six were members of the fraternity.[29]

The truth is that only nine signers were Freemasons, but this mistake indicates how Klansmen and the American public were encouraged to perceive Freemasonry and its role in the nation's history. Freemasonry was duly proud of its heritage; it awarded the fraternity a crucial role in the founding of the nation, bestowing both legitimacy and respectability on their order and its ideals, but others sought to exploit this ancestry.

The Ku Klux Klan saw itself as the new generation of true Americans, lighting the way in the darkness of modernity and fighting for their nation, much like the rebels of '76 or the pioneers that settled the West. *Dawn* for instance, carried a series of insightful cartoons that reveal the fraternity's desire to appear like America's founding generation. One cartoon, called "Duties Confront the Modern Paul Revere", featured a Klansman atop a horse emulating this revolutionary Freemason's infamous ride. Instead of warning the American militia of the British threat, this Klansman warned "sleepy" Americans about the various

"isms" that threatened the nation. Another of their illustrations presented various scenes from America's history, such as the landing of the Pilgrims or the Battle of Valley Forge, with a Klansman featured right in the middle, entitled "100% Americans".[30] Although they were fighting off Catholics or radical Bolsheviks instead of the British, the Klan saw itself as the true inheritors of America's patriotic heritage and the champions of their historical traditions.

The Klan declared it had the character and moral fortitude of past American founders and leaders – and therefore the right to decide the nation's destiny – but they could claim no direct link. Their fraternity had been born during the sectional strife of Reconstruction, an awkward and compromising birth for a supposedly "100% American" organization. But in the Klan's newspapers a scheme to "claim" important American heroes as allies is evident in recurrent articles that prompted readers to recall the important role Freemasons had in American history. In September 1924 *The Fiery Cross* carried a feature that reminded readers of important Masonic anniversaries of this month, such as the initiation of revolutionary hero Joseph Warren, or the murders in September of two Masonic presidents, James Garfield and William McKinley. *The Fiery Cross* carried many other similar columns in various issues, reminding readers that "Masonic names are conspicuous on the pages of American history".[31] Similarly, *The Imperial Night-Hawk* carried a biography of the celebrated founder of the U.S. Supreme Court and Freemason, John Marshall. *Dawn* went even further, claiming that, because most American history books used in schools were written by "non-Protestants", they felt the need to inform readers of the important role Freemasons had played in American history. The article even explained how prominent traitors from the American Revolutionary War were not Freemasons:

> The infamous quartet of major generals whose treachery, ingratitude, and selfishness jeopardized the cause of the colonies were not Masons – Lee, the traitor of Monmouth; the contemptible Gates, continually plotting Washington's downfall; the arrogant adventurer Conway; the conspirator Miflin.[32]

This discussion conveniently ignored the fact that the notorious Benedict Arnold, a man whose very name became a byword for treason, was also a Freemason.

These short biographies and histories may appear innocent, but we must not forget that the Klan's newspapers were not merely a journalistic tool, but a public relations weapon. The Invisible Empire had already established that their organization was interconnected with Freemasonry, and therefore these articles only served to inform the public of the weight of that connection. In the sharply delineated world that the Klan presented to America, the biographies of important Freemasons and the reminders of celebrated Masonic anniversaries served to empower the Klan's position with the endorsement of important historical Freemasons.

The Invisible Empire's campaign to tie itself to Freemasonry proved to be remarkably effective overall. Across the country, Masonic officials were forced

to make statements disavowing any connection between the two organizations because of how common that belief was. Even as early as 1921, Grand Master Andrew Randell of Texas explained how:

> The public in this and other states are holding Masonry responsible for the Klan. They have been given to understand that Masons compose the membership of the Klan to a very large degree, and that the Klan is really a militant branch of Masonry…. Organizers, speakers and members of the Klan are responsible for this belief among the people at large, which even extends to the school children in some of our cities and towns.[33]

Not only was Randell decrying the situation in Texas, where even some children believed the Klan was associated with Freemasonry, but he also complained that the public across America shared this false conviction. The Propagation Department had succeeded, in large part, in presenting the two fraternities as allied in some sort of way.

Appealing to Freemasons

Of course, the KKK's scheme to appear Masonic would have all been for nothing if prominent Freemasons openly declared themselves contrary to the Klan and their objectives. It was the opposition of fraternal leaders that had prevented the rise of other militant fraternal movements like the Great American Fraternity, so it was vital to counteract any similar declarations against the Invisible Empire. To maintain the illusion of solidarity, the Klan waged what might be considered as a media war against antagonistic newspapers and some of the fraternity's leaders in an attempt to silence or negate Masonic condemnations of the Klan.

In the summer of 1922, the order's most vocal opponent, the *New York World*, continued its crusade against the Invisible Empire with a new attack. A series of articles revealed that they had collected the opinions of 25 Grand Masters regarding the Ku Klux Klan, and that 24 of the respondents objected to the group. The *World* investigation was reprinted and echoed in several other newspapers across the country. "I am relentlessly opposed to any form or connection of Ku Kluxism with Masonry," wrote Maine Grand Master Albert M. Spear in his statement to the *World*, "and, as I understand it, I deprecate it in any form as a menace to law and order."[34] The Invisible Empire was forced to begin its own campaign to dispel the idea that the Craft as a whole was opposed to the Klan, and to remind people that many leading and ordinary Freemasons supported their order. This public indictment by many of the Craft's respected leaders could prove to be quite detrimental to the development of the Invisible Empire. In particular, these public attacks often hinged and gave credit to the notion that the order was essentially a mob of ruffians. The Propagation Department treasured the public image they had constructed, and Klan newspapers did their best to contain or dismiss these publicized attacks. The officials of the order

seemed determined to make it seem as if the KKK was respectable and allied with the Freemasons.

The Fellowship Forum, being a pro-Klan and militant Masonic newspaper, had a natural interest in ensuring that the Klan be looked upon with favour by Freemasons. They responded to the *New York World* articles saying that this was an attempt by Catholics and others to control Masonic policies, that the *World* was using Freemasonry for their own benefit, and that it was designed to create unnecessary dissension within the Craft. The *Forum* had stern words for four leading anti-Klan Grand Masters – Arthur D. Prince of Massachusetts, Samuel E. Burke of California, Frank L. Wilder of Connecticut, and Arthur S. Tompkins of New York – and declared it was not their right to dictate what Freemasons could do outside the lodge. They attempted to dismiss these anti-Klan statements by the *New York World*, saying:

> Conservative Masons are aghast at Masonry taking a positive stand on anything, while other Masons not so conservative are resenting the autocratic position assumed by these grand masters who are presuming to do the thinking for Freemasonry. Still others looking with kindly eyes on the Klan principles have joined that order with no thought in their minds of disloyalty to Freemasonry.

The Fellowship Forum continued their quarrel with Grand Master Burke and Grand Master Tompkins, both of whom continued to denounce the Klan publicly.[35] On the subject, George Fleming Moore declared that:

> The overweening anxiety of a few grand masters scattered throughout the country to denounce the Klan is most mysterious to the common-sense thinking of the average Mason. Masonry has some job of its own to perform if it is to protect itself from the vicious onslaughts of organizations [referring to the Knights of Columbus and other Catholic organizations] which Grand Master Tompkins and a few others are taking under their protective wings in the name of Masonry.[36]

Moore's persistent attacks on the character of these Grand Masters demonstrate how valuable the Invisible Empire's façade was. The officials of the order did not want their own members or their opponents to realize that most Masonic leaders did in fact object to the Second Klan.

The *Forum* repeatedly blamed the insidious reach of the Catholic Church for these denunciations of the Invisible Empire, and called for fellow Freemasons to dismiss the remarks made by clearly misled Grand Masters. To further drive the point home, in July 1922 the *Forum* allowed the Klan's Imperial Klokard and 32nd degree Freemason, William J. Mahoney, to make a statement regarding this controversy. The *Forum* published a letter Mahoney had sent to Grand Masters across America in response to the *New York World* article. In his letter, Mahoney urged these men to be fair and dispassionate when judging the Invisible Empire,

to ignore the unproven charges brought against them, and to realize that the Klan and the Craft stood for the same ideals. In fact, the *Forum* ensured their readers had seen the letter by publicizing it again in early October and reprinting it in other pro-Klan newspapers.[37] Accompanying this reprinted letter was an article that mirrored and counteracted the *World*'s exposé of Grand Masters who condemned the Klan. This article contained a list of several Masonic authorities who, contrary to Tompkins or Burke, recommended that no action should be taken on the Klan. Arkansas Grand Master Leonidas Kirby's statement, for example, read: "Arkansas Masonry officially neither approves nor disapproves of the Ku Klux Klan. Many Arkansas Masons are members of the Klan. Other members are opposed to the Klan."[38] Other Grand Masters agreed, explaining that it was not their business to get involved in affairs outside the lodge, while a number stated that they knew very little about the order and were therefore reluctant to denounce or comment on the subject.

The Fellowship Forum was not the only Klan newspaper that was trying to quash remarks made by prominent Freemasons. The *Texas 100% American* took issue with New York Grand Master Arthur S. Tompkins. One especially explicit columnist declared that Tompkins had an "insane desire, on his part to make a monkey of himself" and that he and others who had condemned the Invisible Empire had "shame[d] the office of grand master". He also added:

> The great majority of Masons are not in the same class as this Tompkins, and still remain true and loyal to their manhood.
>
> Masons therefore, being men and upstanding men, are not going to permit Tompkins to tell them and get away with it, why they *can't or they can belong to the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*. [emphasis in original][39]

This writer, a self-declared Freemason, attempted to ridicule Tompkins to mitigate and dismiss his allegations, implying that true Masons were manly enough to make their own decisions. By insulting Tompkins and questioning his masculinity, the *Texas 100% American* hoped that readers would question whether the Grand Master's stance was valid.

The evidence from the columns and pages of the Invisible Empire's most popular newspapers seems to reveal that there was a systematic attempt to blur the lines between the two fraternities. It is not merely a coincidence either; the patterns drawn from various distinct Klan newspapers indicate what appears to be a national strategy. This may all appear very circumstantial, as there are few documents that have survived that indicate that all Klan newspapers were following some sort of coordinated plan. However, there is very little that can be successfully proven with complete certainty about the Second Invisible Empire. The KKK deliberately destroyed and hid its official documents, so it is doubtful that historians will be able to finish the puzzle of the Invisible Empire without all the pieces.

But fortunately, one Klan apostate, Edgar I. Fuller, managed to save some of these pieces before they were destroyed, publishing them in his exposé *The Klan*

Inside-Out. Fuller was Edward Young Clarke's personal secretary, and so was party to many of the plans and conversations held at the higher levels of the order. This insightful book contains several intimate details about the Invisible Empire and authentic private documents between Klan officials and members. His account included an entire chapter titled "Conquest of Masonic Fraternity by the Klan" where Fuller reveals details about Imperial Klokard William J. Mahoney and his attempts to convince Freemasons not to oppose the Klan. Mahoney was a fervent Klansman, but he was also a high-ranking Scottish Rite Mason. He achieved the rank of Knight Commander of the Court of Honor, a degree that was only awarded to a select number of Scottish Rite Masons for their extraordinary contribution to the fraternity. Some of his known associates were George Fleming Moore, who had headed the SRSJ for seven years, and James S. Vance. They both called Mahoney a "friend" and had invited him to participate in their campaigns to create militant Masonic bodies and intra-fraternal Protestant groups.

Fuller published an authentic circular from Mahoney to klaverns in North Carolina in his account, and which presumably was also sent to Klansmen in other states. The letter informed these Klansmen that James S. Vance, General Manager of *The Fellowship Forum*, had asked that Mahoney find out the official position of any Grand Masters or Masonic officials he could contact on the issue of the Klan, asking him to furnish the names of 50 or 100 prominent Masons whom they could write to. Mahoney wrote in his own letter to his Klanish subjects: "Since this is his purpose it will be well for us to be sure that these letters reach men who will express themselves favorably" and asked Klansmen to furnish him with "the names of addresses of at least two prominent Masons in your state who, if they write at all, will write favorably to our cause".[40] Mahoney was selectively picking Freemasons for their opinion regarding his order to give the appearance of popular approval. This deliberately selective collection of Masonic statements referring to the Invisible Empire, which has been discussed previously, appeared two weeks later in the *Forum*, and contained statements that mostly claimed it would be un-Masonic to declare themselves either for or against the Klan.

What we see here then is official orders from the Propagation Department to ensure the illusion of widespread Masonic support for the Klan and its cause. Fuller goes further and also printed telegrams from 1921 between Imperial Kleagle Edward Young Clarke and other Klan officers. These telegrams informed Clarke that the vocally anti-Klan Masonic newspaper, *The Missouri Freemason*, was being sold to someone connected to a high-ranking member of the Knights of Columbus. Clarke then had his men enquire as to possibly purchasing the paper, saying that "vital quick action necessary as *Freemason* making vigorous fight on us and influencing Missouri Grand Lodge with hazard of spreading". Missouri's Masonic officials and publications had been particularly vocal about their opposition to their movement, and the Klan's promoters were interested in quashing both. What we see here is more direct proof that Klan officials deliberately sought to stem or silence anti-Klan Masonic media,

by both bolstering *The Fellowship Forum* with pro-Klan statements and by buying up anti-Klan Masonic papers like *The Missouri Freemason*. The Propagation Department understood the importance of establishing their reputation in the minds of the American public. This evidence, alongside that from various Klan newspapers, suggests that there was in fact a national strategy, and that klaverns and officials cooperated to present their version of the Ku Klux Klan to the public.

The Invisible Empire's deliberate and sustained campaign to appear Masonic, both in membership and in ideology, makes the KKK seem like a brotherhood insecure with its position in American society, a fraternity that depended on others to seem acceptable. But although the Klan hid behind the label of "fraternity" and looked to their Masonic connections to defend them from opposition, there is a strong sense that the group saw itself as more than just a fraternity and that they considered themselves an improvement on Freemasonry. At the 1923 convention of Grand Dragons, one Exalted Cyclops declared, to the approval of the high-ranking Klansmen present, that:

> The Klan is more than a fraternal Order. It has something more to justify its existence than a ritual and ceremonies that are no more fantastic than are to be found in other organizations…. In the genius of the Klan is to be found something more than ritual, and ceremonial and symbolism. In the Klan is to be found a movement in which is crystalized devotion to principle and eagerness to make those principles effective in American life.[41]

Imperial Wizard Evans himself declared how superior the Klan was as a fraternity, stating how:

> The average fraternal organization is, to a considerable extent, shorn of its power for good by its inactivity. The Klan is so constructed that inactivity would mean its decease, in any community. It *must* keep going, and in its routine of living it takes the principles of the better class of lodges out of the abstract and puts them into the concrete – it is operative.…[42]

This does not mean that the Klan did not respect the Craft; they certainly did and looked up to it. They merely felt that they were an improvement, an enhanced version of Freemasonry, and that is how they marketed it towards militant members of that order. One article appearing in *The Western American*, a Klan periodical from Portland, Oregon, outlined the Klan's attitude towards the Craft best, saying:

> The Masonic order is the great exemplar and umpire among the fraternal societies, ancient in lineage and honorable in achievement beyond comparison with any other, but the standard of the Klan is equally as lofty, its ritual as impressive and beautiful, its ideals and methods as attractive.…

They also pointed out that while Freemasonry had been infiltrated by pro-Papists and agents of Rome, the Klan remained pure and militantly Protestant.[43] It is ironic then, that the Invisible Empire spent so much time and effort trying to convince the American public and their membership that they were a respectable fraternity, so similar to Freemasonry that they were practically brothers, and yet they considered themselves more than a fraternity and even a superior version of Freemasonry. In order to market itself to Freemasons, the Ku Klux Klan needed to demonstrate that their order was an upgraded version of their own, an organization that would fulfil their needs as militant Protestants and white American men. To sell their order to the Craft they had to distinguish themselves as a new form of militant fraternalism.

The Ku Klux Klan had a fluid and ever-changing conceptualization of itself. Part of this resulted from the fact that the order was composed of so many different factions who had distinct ideas about what the Invisible Empire was and could be. The marketers and editors that controlled the group's public image would employ whatever definition suited them at the time. When the KKK was under attack, the order justified itself as a fraternity and compared their own pursuits as those of just another brotherhood. The Klan also regularly highlighted its close association with the Craft, in an effort to imbue their own organization with this fraternity's respectability and heritage. They also deliberately downplayed their more aggressive features before their enemies. One former Klansmen recalls how his superior instructed him to soften his rhetoric in public meetings, but that: "You can't make it too strong against the Jew and the Catholic in a closed meeting – give them hell."[44]

Though the Ku Klux Klan was made to appear docile and respectable to outsiders, to those who had already accepted its doctrine of white supremacy and 100 per cent Americanism it was sold as an order that reached beyond the bounds of traditional fraternalism. To its supporters, the Invisible Empire was advertised as an aggressive and politically active brotherhood. The Propagation Department's image management was so effective they were able to present the Klan as both harmless and forceful, depending on the audience. The *New York World* described this second characterization of the Ku Klux Klan saying:

> [It] is known by *The World* to be a fact that every official of the Klan who can do so plays his Masonic affiliation for all it is worth twenty-four hours a day. Indeed the appeal for members is made on the ground that the Klan is a militant body picking up where Masonry leave[s] off.[45]

Although the Invisible Empire had frequently alluded to their ties with Freemasonry, they distinguished themselves by emphasizing their active involvement in political and social affairs. Klansmen were not trying to be like the Freemasons; they were trying to improve their formula with an innovative and flexible model that responded to the needs of its members and of the times.

Charles J. Orbison, a Past Grand Master of Indiana's Freemasons and a national officer of the KKK, testified to this approach at a 1924 speech in

Wilmington, North Carolina, where he praised the contributions made by traditional fraternities like the Freemasons, Elks or the Red Men. However, he also pointed out that:

> These fraternities have sought merely to inculcate religious principles in the hearts of men, leaving men in their individual initiative to carry them out. The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan seek to mobilize these forces and make them a militant, aggressive power in building up American citizenship, in safeguarding these shores from the pollution of Europe and eliminating the undesirable from American soil.[46]

The genius of the Propagation Department lay in this two-pronged marketing strategy. They defended their organization from external attacks by shielding it behind the mantle of fraternalism, painting themselves as a harmless brotherhood and by emphasizing the support their movement had from the prestigious Freemasons. At the same time though, they grasped the sense of frustration that so many Freemasons felt with the antiquated restrictions guarding that organization, and marketed the Ku Klux Klan as the solution to this intransigence. "They wanted action. Thousands upon thousands of Masons were tired of seeing Rome's gradual encroachment on all American privileges…all glory to the Klan in getting the secret societies awakened to the Catholic menace" proclaimed one Klan publication.[47] The Klan targeted these anxieties, and convinced Americans it was both a harmless brotherhood and an aggressive militant order. The Propagation Department's intelligent and effective strategy is perhaps one of the most undervalued factors of the Klan's success. It helped to distinguish the Invisible Empire from the many other patriotic societies it was competing with at the time, and made the task of selling the order much easier.

This convincing façade helped the Invisible Empire expand to practically every state in the country and establish itself as an influential force in American society. But much of this supposed power was illusory, a result of the order's secrecy and effective image management. The Ku Klux Klan succeeded in attracting recruits by presenting itself as a resolute mass movement, by making themselves seem as if most of the neighbourhood, town or state were supporters of this new drive for 100 per cent Americanism.

The Klan did not only use the institution of Freemasonry in its newspapers to make their fraternity and ideology seem respectable; they also used other institutions that they admired to defend themselves. *The Kourier* printed a section called "Said President Coolidge So Says the Klan" where they reprinted statements by President Coolidge that they approved of, while *The Fiery Cross* reprinted articles from *The Dearborn Independent* that was directed by the popular auto magnate and fierce anti-Semite Henry Ford.[48] These examples show figures the Klan hoped to have on their side, and it is no secret that the Invisible Empire was trying to create an organization composed of select groups of people. What is interesting though, is that, despite having a membership composed of Klansmen with allegiances in dozens of fraternities, the Invisible

Empire focused practically all of its attention on appearing like an organization patronized by Freemasons. The Klan did not display itself as a either a Republican or a Democrat organization, nor did they attempt to portray themselves as belonging to one particular Protestant denomination. Yet they desperately wanted to appear Masonic. Not an organization of Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias or Woodmen of the World, and not an organization of Red Men, but a powerful and respectable fraternity composed of and supported by Freemasons.

Notes

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4 Hate at $10 a package

Selling the Invisible Empire

In his 1922 novel *Babbitt*, Sinclair Lewis introduces his readers to a curious protagonist, George F. Babbitt, a middle-aged realtor from the booming fictional town of Zenith. Babbitt is an entirely ordinary American; in many respects he is *the* average middle-class American of the 1920s. Lewis presents a scathing satire of post-war culture in this book, with the character of Babbitt expounding the beliefs and mannerisms of his milieu. In the novel, George discusses with his neighbours the importance of having a sound Republican business administration; he admires the technological wonders in his possession, such as his car or the electric toaster in his modern kitchen; he commends the enacting of Prohibition to protect those with weaker minds, although he regularly breaks the Volstead Act to indulge himself and his dinner party guests with forbidden liquor. George F. Babbitt was, all in all, the quintessential 1920s middle-class American.[1]

Literary critics have recognized that stylistically, *Babbitt* leaves much to desire. The development of George's character is confusing and unrefined, while the plot seems disjointed, with a sudden and unexplained conclusion. But it is not in the realm of story-telling that Sinclair Lewis excels, it is in the documentary depiction of his writing. Lewis was a savvy and comprehensive writer, carrying out vast amounts of research on his subjects, all in an effort to accurately mock them. His papers show that he spent most of the spring of 1921 travelling around the Midwest, which was just then starting to hear whispers of a revived Ku Klux Klan, and how he pored over salesmen's and realtors' advertisements to be up to speed with the jargon and techniques of the day. During the 1920s, Lewis's caricature of the American middle class was commended for its amusing accuracy; one review of the novel in *Nation* declared that *Babbitt* "represents a deed of high cultural significance", and that the "future historian of American civilization will turn to it with infinite profit …".[2] Lewis' diagnostic and documentary style means that historians have been able to use *Babbitt* to gain a deeper understanding of the world of business and 1920s America as a whole.

The character that Lewis described in his documentary novel – this enthusiastic and modern 100 per cent American businessman, with a passion for sales and fraternalism – is the precise sort of man that the Ku Klux Klan was

looking for to distribute their organization to post-war America. This chapter will outline and describe the often-forgotten task and purpose of these Klan recruiters, known as "kleagles", an indispensable force of foot soldiers who delivered the Invisible Empire to countless communities and helped recruit thousands of Americans. More than that, this chapter intends to show how the ambitious task of selling the Klan was delivered in a uniform manner by a core of efficient officers using the latest techniques of the new "science" of salesmanship. The central argument of this chapter, however, will be to demonstrate that there is reason to believe that many, if not most, kleagles were also Freemasons, and that they abused their membership to invite their brothers into joining the Invisible Empire. This idea has been alluded to many times in the past by historians, but there has not been a sufficiently comprehensive review of the evidence relating to this issue. To truly understand this Second KKK and its successes, we must examine the Propagation Department in detail from a perspective that outlines not just their methods, but their overall purpose and composition. Without its army of kleagles, the Invisible Empire could never have spread into every corner of the country as it did during the 1920s.

Edward Young Clarke and his kleagles

The Second Invisible Empire emerged at a distinct point in American history. The Roaring Twenties were defined by a sense of modernity that impacted politics, society and culture. Post-war America was breaking conventions and turning their backs on the formalities and traditions of the past, which was increasingly seen as outdated. The world of business was also afflicted by this new dawn of modernity. As Lynn Dumenil has argued,

> The 1920s was marked by a sense of prosperity and get-rich quick mentality, evident not only in the stock market but also in the giddy land booms in Florida and Los Angeles that reflected Americans' sense of a new era of unlimited material progress.[3]

This new America, captured so faithfully in the pages of *Babbitt*, required a new approach. Businessmen were already adapting their sales techniques to improve their profit margins. The Propagation Department would also have to create an efficient recruitment machine that understood the needs of the public and the best way of delivering the Klan's unique product. The Invisible Empire would succeed where other militant fraternal movements had failed, with a competent branch of salesmen and speakers that could enlist the masses into their fraternity.

This Second Klan was a bit of an oddity when it came to its propagation. Its Reconstruction predecessor had spread orally throughout the ex-Confederate states, organizing chapters wherever it was felt that the racial hierarchy and white supremacy was threatened. Membership in this new Klan, on the other hand, was marketed like any other commercial product of the 1920s. The

determined efforts of the Invisible Empire's salesmen would become an indispensable factor in the rise of the movement. Reporter Stanley Frost recognized the significance of the order's Propagation Department, explaining how they had "brought recruiting to a point of efficiency which is almost scientifically perfect and far beyond any similar system. No matter how much credit is given to the appeal made by its ideals and purposes, these could not propagate themselves".[4] The Invisible Empire's nativist ideology and crusader zeal was not a particularly innovative formula in American politics and society. There were plenty of rival organizations already in place, such as the Junior Order of United American Mechanics (JOUAM) or the Patriotic Order Sons of America, with nearly identical platforms and traditions. It was the Propagation Department's careful image management and coordinated recruitment drive that helped make the KKK the foremost nativist movement in post-war America.

The approach and methods employed by individual kleagles, as well as their own charisma and skill, played a vital role in the establishment of the Invisible Empire in a new town. The development of the Klan in Madison, Wisconsin is a perfect example of the bearing of this factor. A kleagle arrived at some point in late August 1921, placing an ad in the *Wisconsin State Journal* that read: "Wanted: Fraternal Organizers, men of ability between the ages of 25 and 40. Must be 100% Americans. Masons Preferred."[5] This kleagle was trying to find local men to become Klan organizers themselves but did so in a very visible and alarming way. The Propagation Department was still in its infancy and had not fully refined some of the methods and approaches that would make it so effective in subsequent years. The community's response to the arrival of the order was mostly negative. In early September the same kleagle gave a public speech about the Klan's ideals, and after distributing some literature and unsuccessfully soliciting some locals, he gave up and left Madison. The loud and conspicuous approach to selling the Klan used by this kleagle upset many people in the town. The campaign's public nature allowed the group's opponents, including Madison's Freemasons who were infuriated by this presumptuous newspaper ad, to rally against the Invisible Empire before it gained a foothold in their town. Madison was visited by a more discreet kleagle a year later, selling exactly the same fraternity. This second kleagle implemented a secret drive for members that would avoid hostilities and managed to find a base of support from which a strong klavern developed.[6] This more discreet second campaign also benefited from the national publicity awarded by the 1921 *World* exposé and from the experience of previous attempts.

How the Klan was sold was of critical importance to its success in Madison and other locations. One Freemason from southern California argued that the main reason that the Invisible Empire had been unsuccessful in recruiting in his community and lodge was because of the "short-comings of their organizer" which had appeared "to put a damper on things".[7] However, previous accounts of the Klan have not fully addressed this fact, primarily because there is so little accurate information about the kleagles and the Propagation Department. Although Klan records are already quite rare, the solitary travelling kleagles

existed as an almost semi-independent wing of the organization, and there are limited surviving records that outline their tactics.

What have certainly survived are the impressions that kleagles made on Americans inside and outside the Ku Klux Klan. During the 1920s, the kleagles and their promotion activities were regarded quite negatively by many in the American public, and this characterization has greatly coloured subsequent perceptions of these elusive salesmen. Kleagles received $4 for every member they recruited, and many Americans came to see them as charlatans motivated by avarice. As former Mississippi Senator LeRoy Percy proclaimed in 1922:

> What reason could there be at this time to drag from its grave this old Southern bogey, with its secrecy, disguises, mask, Kleagles, Wizards, and fee-fi-fo-fum clap-trap? Why was this new Klan formed? The easy and half-true answer is: 'For profit.' The initiation fee is ten dollars for each Klansman. Without that high incentive, certainly no clannish brotherhood would have been attempted.[8]

Kleagles remained one of the most criticized aspects of the Invisible Empire throughout its burst in popularity. Their reception was so negative that even Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans went on to disavow them publicly in 1926, remarking that they sold "hate at $10 a package".[9]

The Klan only really started to pick up speed when Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler, two local promoters who ran the Southern Publicity Association (SPA), joined the Invisible Empire in 1920. Before this, Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons had only managed to sell membership to a small number of men in Alabama and Georgia and the organization was languishing. Tyler and Clarke had been successful promoters for some time now, working for organizations such as the Red Cross or the Young Men's Christian Association. Clarke was referred to by those who knew him as "a disciple of P.T. Barnum" or "a super-salesman". The SPA was a prosperous promoting firm, and very in tune with latest techniques in the new "science" of salesmanship and recruitment. While working for the Anti-Saloon League, Tyler and Clarke were possibly the very first people to drop pamphlets out of plane as part of a publicity drive.[10]

It was under Clarke and Tyler that the nation was sliced up into pieces, and using their system of incentivized selling, this small fraternity really started to become an empire. Kleagles first spread the brotherhood from its heartland in Georgia and Alabama to surrounding Southern states, but it soon found real popularity in the old Southwest, especially in the states of Texas and Oklahoma. Kleagles leapfrogged west across the country to California and Oregon, while others spread northward towards the Midwest and the Northeast. Many people at the time commented that all this success seemed to be all Clarke's doing, that he was running the organization. One U.S. Senator appraised his role during those early years as being "pretty near the whole shooting match". Edward Young Clarke played a much more public role, as he was the Imperial Kleagle and de facto head of the Invisible Empire for a period, but his business partner and lover

Elizabeth Tyler was equally influential in the development of the SPA. Together, they established the pyramid selling scheme and instituted the techniques that would help spread the Invisible Empire to every state in the continental United States. This system and the Propagation Department's role in distributing the order were vital for the success of the order. As Stanley Frost commented: "[Anyone] who has ever tried to enlist people, at a price, in any general movement will testify that it is no mean achievement to induce four million men to pay anything at all."[11] It is thus essential to analyse the role of the Propagation Department to truly appreciate how the Ku Klux Klan became a national phenomenon.

To understand how the kleagles recruited members we need to contextualize their approaches and techniques by examining the history of salesmen in America, and by comparing the differences between selling ordinary products and selling membership in fraternities like the Ku Klux Klan. All this will serve to show that the Invisible Empire was not sold by a band of conmen but an organized core of salesmen who recruited Americans in a specific and uniform manner. The Propagation Department was a driven, modern, coordinated, and intelligent sales force, and it was these characteristics that made this group such effective recruiters.

Much like other companies, the Klan's salesmen carved up the nation into territories and established an organized, almost bureaucratic, pyramid system whereby the different levels of authority controlled the progress of recruitment and shared in the profits. The country was divided into Domains, essentially a group of states, which were headed by a Grand Goblin. The states within these Domains were referred to as Realms, each directed by a King Kleagle. The Realms were subdivided further into Provinces, and again into Klantons, which composed the territory of an individual klavern. Membership in the Invisible Empire cost $10, a fee referred to as the "klectoken". Of the $10 klectoken, the kleagle who initially recruited the prospect received $4 and his King Kleagle took $1. The Grand Goblin took a further $0.50, while Clarke and Tyler kept $2.50, leaving just $2 for the Klan's Imperial Treasury. Each kleagle was assigned a territory, and it was up to him to set up as many klaverns as possible, travelling around his territory to different locations periodically to find new recruits and hold rallies and other events. By September 1921, just over a year after the SPA signed its contract with Simmons, the Propagation Department had over 200 kleagles working for them and had established recruitment drives in 35 states and the District of Columbia.[12] It was not unlike the system used by dozens of national companies to sell their products. The travelling salesman had been a staple of American business life for decades, but rather than sell books or insurance, these salesmen were selling a unique fraternal experience.

The hundreds of kleagles who arrived in cities probably believed and supported the ideology of white supremacy, conservative Protestantism and 100 per cent Americanism that they were promoting through the Ku Klux Klan. But their work was driven by the immense profits that could be made from the order. "As far as its chief protagonists are concerned," declared one critic of the order,

"the Ku Klux is a huge money-making hoax – a gold mine."[13] The alluring profitability of the Propagation Department's commission system spurred kleagles to energetically solicit practically any possible recruit. Another observer remarked that many experienced salesmen from other companies were flocking to the Klan purely because of the financial opportunities that this order afforded. Using the term "Babbitt" as an allegory for the gullible middle-classes, this writer explained that "Babbitt is a Klansman because he hopes to make more money being one. Every other Klansman is a Klansman for just this same simple reason".[14]

Precise records for the exact amounts a kleagle made are rare. The figures that do exist are tainted by the fact that many kleagles would have probably lied about their sales figures in order to pocket the klectoken, rather than share it with their superiors. Yet, there is one account that does offer an accurate enumeration of this lucrative trade of "kluxing". Ernst and Ernst, an accounting firm from Ohio and one of the precursors to the multinational company Ernst & Young, carried out an extensive audit of the sales figures for membership in Indiana submitted by King Kleagle D.C. Stephenson. Their evaluation revealed that between 25 June 1922 and 21 July 1923, Indiana's kleagles had enlisted 117,969 men in that state alone. Only 117,245 of these initiates paid the $10 klectoken, as the remaining 724 joined free of charge as honorary members. Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans was understandably ecstatic at these impressive recruitment figures, and even offered to reward Stephenson with $5,000 for his outstanding performance. Stephenson politely declined the reward, a justifiable modesty when we consider that he personally made an astonishing $117,245 as King Kleagle from the commission on Hoosier memberships alone.[15] Evans also rewarded Stephenson for his skills as a kleagle and sales coordinator by appointing him as the Grand Dragon of Indiana. In fact, many of the Klan's local and national leaders were former kleagles who had proven their worth as recruiters. The Propagation Department was a fundamental branch of the order, so it is not surprising that many of its leading salesmen would be promoted within the brotherhood. Grand Dragons such as Arthur Bell of New Jersey or George McCarron of Missouri had formerly been King Kleagles within these states. Nathan Bedford Forrest II, grandson of the Reconstruction Klan leader, became Imperial Nighthawk of the order and Grand Dragon of Georgia but began his career as the King Kleagle of Mississippi. Stephenson probably amassed the largest fortune by a single officer of the Invisible Empire, and his wealth and power demonstrates the astounding financial and advancement opportunities that working for the Propagation Department offered.

The officers of the Propagation Department were driven by the immense profits that could be made from the order. The $4 commission encouraged kleagles to work tirelessly and to try to enlist as many people as possible. To achieve such impressive recruitment figures the Ku Klux Klan's kleagles implemented the latest "scientific" salesmanship techniques and carried out a national sales campaign that rival patriotic fraternities such as the JOUAM simply could not compete with. Much of their success derives from the lure of the commission

system, but the field of "kluxing" was not a free-for-all. Kleagles were not simply trying to scam the public; they soon realized that, if they established a strong klavern, membership would grow steadily, as would the profits. The Propagation Department instituted a modern, coordinated and intelligent sales campaign throughout the nation that introduced standardized sales approaches and established clear guidelines about how to set up a klavern. Much like their public relations campaign, the Invisible Empire's sales strategy was carefully planned. They employed the latest sales techniques to ensure that the flow of new initiates and klectokens would not dry up.

The Second Klan emerged at an exciting time for commercialism, the 1920s, a decade in which many Americans could finally afford modern commodities like cars or electric washing machines. Although it had been a progressive phenomenon, consumer culture became quite prominent during this era, and the nation became swamped with advertising and publicity. Ever since the turn of the century, the business of selling had slowly been transforming from an "art" into what 1920s Americans believed was a "science". In other words, selling was no longer based on the innate skills or charm of the salesman. It was now a science, whereby the salesman and his trade were to be analysed, and his repertoire of tricks could be distilled and practised by anyone who learnt its methods. Since the early twentieth century, salesmanship had become a "formal discipline and a practicable theory" according to one historian. The number of books catalogued in the Library of Congress reflects this growing interest in salesmanship, with only ten books relating to the subject from before 1900 and over 200 catalogued between 1910 and 1920; stories of salesmen and their techniques flourished in the press and in the American imagination.[16]

As part of his own research for *Babbit*, Sinclair Lewis delved deeply into the world of salesmen. His novel describes the culture and camaraderie amongst sales agents in one passage, wherein the different characters conversed about their field:

> To them, the Romantic Hero was no longer the knights, the wandering poet, the cowpuncher, the aviator, not the brave young district attorney, but the great sales manager, who had an *Analysis of Merchandizing Problems* on his glass-topped desk, whose title of nobility was 'Go-getter,' and who devoted himself and all his young samurai to the cosmic purpose of Selling – not of selling anything in particular, for or to anybody in particular, but pure Selling.[17]

Through his classic satire and dry humour, Lewis encapsulated the new attitude of the nation towards salesmen. Selling and salesmanship had become a vital subject of interest not only for businessmen but also for psychologists, economists, politicians and everyday Americans, and had become a crucial feature of any successful company of the 1920s.[18]

One such successful company was "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Incorporated", the official name of the KKK, an organization that utilized conventional and modern selling techniques. As historian Craig Fox has argued:

> At least part of the reason for the Klan's great success can be found in the very systematic and business-minded methods by which the organization recruited members. Exported nationwide from Atlanta, the hooded order arrived locally as a ready-made 'product'….

As Fox posits, the Klan was sold as a commodity, an established brand, and was advertised almost like any other goods of the time. Tennessee kleagle Henry Fry commented in 1922 that other kleagles he knew were "selling memberships [in the Klan] as they would sell insurance or stock" and behaved very much like travelling salesmen of the time.[19]

It may seem odd that a fraternity like the 1920s Klan needed to be actively marketed instead of spreading naturally like its previous incarnation, but this new Invisible Empire was emerging in an extremely competitive fraternal world. Mary Ann Clawson describes this curious change in the fraternal market during the early twentieth century, explaining how as the number and popularity of fraternities was growing rapidly, lodges were forced to change their recruitment models.[20] Fraternities, especially newer fraternities, could no longer afford to rely exclusively on members themselves to bring in acquaintances to the lodge. This approach was far too gentle. Many fraternities started to employ fraternal agents whose sole purpose it was to recruit prospects and organize new lodges across the nation, selling the fraternity like a travelling salesman. Imperial Wizard Simmons commented on this recent adjustment in fraternal recruitment practices, saying:

> All of the fraternal orders of which I have any knowledge, with the exception of one or two, have used and resorted to the same methods. If you will go back and study the records of the fraternal orders, especially in recent years, you will find that they have propagation forces and workers.

The Woodmen of the World was one of these fraternities that adopted the agent system to extend its growth, and Simmons became one of their organizers in the years before he founded the Klan.[21] Fraternal agents had become a necessity during this time, and Simmons naturally drew on his experiences during his successful years with the Woodmen of the World to help his own fraternity grow.

The Ku Klux Klan's sales agents used careful and intelligent techniques to recruit members. The case of Jesse M. Whited, a San Francisco Freemason, is telling. Whited received a letter in March 1921 from a John Dicks Howe, a visiting kleagle who was chartering local klaverns in northern California. This kleagle made sure to flash his own Masonic credentials – a "member of Paul Revere Lodge No. 462 [based in San Francisco], Past Master of Nebraska Lodge No. 1" – as part of his introduction and asked if Whited would like to meet and discuss the Invisible Empire.[22] As a fellow Freemason, Howe hoped to earn Whited's confidence as a member of the Craft and prove that he was a trustworthy man. Whited wrote back asking for more information, and Howe replied furnishing a pamphlet about the order and a membership questionnaire to sign up. Howe also wrote that:

> I have many requests for these questionnaires – so many in fact that I have been obliged to wire for an additional supply. Among those already returned, signed, are a number of Masters and Past Masters of Masonic Lodges in this city, in the Bay cities, and scattered throughout the state. No questionnaires are sent to men who are not Masons, and only to those who it is thought can measure up to stand the acid test.[23]

The approach is vaguely reminiscent of modern email scam. The kleagle's slick letter made it seem as if Whited had been specifically selected for solicitation, hinting that plenty of his brethren had already joined. The letter has an urgent tone, and was probably meant to make Whited feel as if he needed to join before it was too late. It also appealed to his vanity by implying that he was one of the few who had been chosen to join this rapidly growing movement because they were sure he could "measure up" as a real man. Though Whited does not seem to have joined the order, this kleagle was clearly quite experienced. He employed a personalized approach, providing information and emphasizing the necessity and appeal of joining the Invisible Empire.

Despite what many of their opponents claimed, the Ku Klux Klan did not unwillingly convert ordinary Americans to the doctrine of white supremacy or the dangers of Catholic encroachment. The Invisible Empire advertised itself as a solution to these perceived ills. The order's kleagles traded on the imagery of the movement, on the desire of the American public to feel like a loyal Protestant citizen and a manly white patriot to enlist followers. The Propagation Department sold a product that the American public wanted. However, these salesmen did often overstate the dangers of foreign influences and racial minorities to encourage men and women to join their organization.

Where the Ku Klux Klan's sales force excelled was in the field of exaggeration and flattery. In speeches, newspaper articles and pamphlets, the promoters of the SPA formed an almost illusory front around the Ku Klux Klan. As the Propagation Department matured, they developed ingenious approaches to attract new supporters. They exaggerated the KKK's size, the scope and nature of its activities, and the fraternity's influence in politics and society. They presented the order as a grass-roots mass movement for white Protestant American men, a fraternity that would listen to them and could defend their interests. To disgruntled militant Freemasons they advertised the group as an aggressive and politically active brotherhood for patriots and manly men. The powerful imagery of the order was especially alluring. Kleagles organized parades and posted notices with the intention of creating mystery and impressing the public. The image of a silent mass of Klansmen in their snow-white robes walking in tandem down the streets, wrapped in the symbols of the people – the flag, the cross, the Bible – all served to help create the illusion of the Invisible Empire. For many Americans, whether from the city or the country, these public displays had a profound effect, an effect that was powerful enough to convince them to pay ten dollars to join the movement. As one contemporary sociologist commented: "One does not take the price of sixteen bushels of wheat [essentially the price of

a klectoken] away from a Missouri farmer without having produced a state of considerable excitement in the ordinarily placid mind of that citizen."[24] Kleagles roused the spirit and emotions of the public, presenting their order as the solution to all their ills.

The Propagation Department's modern approach to recruitment required national coordination and consistency. Analysts and practitioners believed this new "science" of sales could produce replicable results across the country by perfecting a reliable pitch and employing systematic campaigns to reach potential buyers. Businessmen P.W. Searles, writing in 1904, described the changes he had seen in this field during his career, explaining how salesmen had been transformed from independent sellers who travelled and sold according to their instincts into almost robotic agents for a company who sold products precisely as they had been instructed to. Companies even taught salesmen on how to talk to clients and on such minutiae as how to hand over a pen.[25] Businesses demanded that salesman practise an effective, predictable and uniform method of selling, one that could be replicated throughout the country and taught to new salesmen. In this regard, the Klan's Propagation Department and its kleagles were no different from the sales divisions of companies like Coca Cola or General Motors. Kleagles sold their product in a tried and tested way, following certain steps and carrying out the same tactics to gain recruits.

Some bigger companies, like the National Cash Register Corporation, had special schools where new salesmen learnt not only about the products they were selling, but also about how to sell them and what steps they had to follow to close a deal. The Klan did not have anything as established as a school to train its kleagles, but they certainly taught them certain steps and techniques. Former kleagle Henry Fry discussed his training to some extent. He explains in his book how in east Tennessee in January 1921 he joined the KKK and was soon after offered a position as the local kleagle in that territory by J.M. McArthur, future King Kleagle of the state. Upon accepting, he recounts how McArthur spent the day instructing him on how to solicit people for membership. For instance, McArthur was emphatic that Fry should definitely attempt to get people in leadership positions to join, such as the mayor and members of the local police department. This strategy was not only intended to help recruit men in positions of power, but also men who were respected and admired by the community in order to attract others. By the time McArthur returned from a short trip from Atlanta, Fry had a group of 36 men who had paid their klectokens and were awaiting initiation.[26]

The Invisible Empire managed to keep an efficient and uniform cadre of salesmen through its military business model, where high-ranking officers would instruct and direct their subordinates. However, they also disseminated new recruitment ideas and supervised progress through newsletters and newspapers. In the Klan's earliest days, Clarke maintained contact with kleagles and Klansmen nationwide through a newsletter called the *Weekly News-Letter*, which was published exclusively by the Propagation Department. In many ways, this publication was just like newsletters sent out by other companies to their salesmen,

and had a similar purpose. Heinz salesmen, for instance, received the company newsletter *Pickles*, which advised them on how to sell their products properly. By advertising certain methods, sales divisions and their newsletters attempted to standardize their agents' approach and improve results. According to one of Clarke's assistants, their newsletter was similar and often contained news of

> either some event that had been pulled off by Klansmen in some part of the country, or a speech or some happening that we thought would be of propagating interest to the Klansmen and would assist them in propagating the Klan.

A systematic survey of these newsletters is impossible because no collection has survived, but excerpts have appeared occasionally, and usually contain information about kleagles who were carrying out events, like speeches or hosting film nights, that were effective in bringing in many new recruits. One newsletter detailed how useful Klan lecturers could be for arousing interest in the order and increasing the number of applicants to a klavern:

> Colonel Nolan won the hearts of all who heard him and the request for his return comes not only from Klansmen but from men and women from all walks of life. At the meeting following Colonel Nolan's address, ninety-one applications were presented and interest has been aroused to fever heat here.…[27]

Information like this would have encouraged kleagles to use certain methods and techniques, standardizing their techniques and producing a uniform system of selling the Klan.

The uniformity of the Klan's recruitment campaign is most apparent if we simply observe the ways different kleagles across America sold the fraternity, and note the glaring similarities. All across the country, kleagles were using the same sorts of techniques to infiltrate communities. Usually arriving quietly, announcing their presence to only a few, kleagles found an initial base of recruits from which to grow from, usually garnered at the local fraternal lodge or veterans' organization. The Propagation Department's agents then tried to recruit locals in leadership positions, men such as mayors or policemen, before moving on to important community figures such as local ministers. After a solid group of loyal Klansmen had formed in the community, what followed was typically a series of escalating and conspicuous publicity stunts and public displays, such as the burning of a fiery cross or a donation to a local church during service. As the Klan became more and more powerful, their recruitment efforts became more and more visible. Huge parades would follow, as well as public initiations and Klan rallies and barbecues. This pattern was replicated in hundreds of communities across America, and became a familiar sequence to many observers of the order.

If we examine the public initiation ceremonies that became commonplace in the 1920s we see that kleagles purposefully organized them in an effort to attract

attention to their fraternity, and hopefully gain some new recruits. The Klan broke any semblance of secrecy or exclusivity by holding public initiation rites, an act which contravened the practices of every other major fraternity of the time.[28] In the Klan's first semi-public rally in Birmingham, Alabama in January 1921, journalists were even given a special enclosure by local kleagles within the grounds so they could closely observe the ceremony and spread the word.[29] The Birmingham Klan was intent on limiting what these journalists could see and on controlling information relating to their order. The Invisible Empire seemed more interested in attracting members than in keeping the secrets of their ritual hidden from the public.

Kleagles followed a simple set of steps, which were repeatedly used throughout the nation, to slowly build up support for the Invisible Empire and which worked remarkably well. This is not to say that the kleagles' approach was immutable; although they followed a rigid system to sell the Klan, they were extremely adaptable to local circumstances. Similarly, the order's kleagles were instructed to adapt their sales pitch according to their audience. One Indiana kleagle recalls that his superior advised him that:

> You can't sell two men alike – don't think you can sell all men on one thing. If you see that this is a religious fellow, or a minister, talk to him on the tenets of the Christian religion and bring up this subject of white supremacy, in this way-not anti-negro, but to keep the black man black and the white man white.… You have got to sell men the thing they want.[30]

A kleagle would adjust to the wishes, reactions, and replies of the community. If the local minister was hostile to the organization, the kleagle would most probably skip the Klan's church visit in that particular town.

Recruiting in Masonic lodges

One of these steps that seems to have formed a part of the Propagation Department's overall plan to sell the Klan to America was that the first stop on a kleagle's agenda in a new town was the local fraternal lodge, preferably that of the Freemasons. Using their Masonic affiliation, kleagles would enter local lodges in new territories and could expect a warm greeting. Some kleagles were known to join the Freemasons just so they could enlist fellow members. Taking advantage of this fraternal welcome that visiting Masonic brethren were accorded, these kleagles would recommend this new fraternity to them. Most general and local studies of the Klan, from Buffalo, New York all the way to Eugene, Oregon, make the claim that kleagles were using their Masonic affiliations to plunder lodges for recruits to join the KKK.[31] The matter has never been fully investigated, due to the inherent difficulty of researching this elusive group of salesmen.

American salesmen have had a long tradition of joining fraternal lodges such as the Freemasons. Ever since the 1700s, salesmen and peddlers had frequently

held membership in the Masonic lodge, as it provided a friendly and welcoming haven to make contacts in an unfamiliar territory. Not only that, membership in a lodge as exclusive and respected as Freemasonry was the sign of an upstanding and honest man, a useful attribute when trying to sell goods to wary strangers. During the 1920s, many businessmen and salesmen maintained this practice, as it was an ideal place for networking and finding new customers. As the fraternal world expanded, so did the number of lodges that many businessmen would have considered joining, and many held multiple memberships. As Sinclair Lewis explained when describing George Babbitt's interest in fraternities, "It was the thing to do. It was good for business, since lodge-brothers frequently became customers." He also added, "Of a decent man in Zenith it was required he should belong to one, preferably two or three, of the innumerous 'lodges' and prosperity-boosting clubs …".[32] In much the same way, many of the Invisible Empire's recruiters were experienced salesmen and would already hold membership in a number of clubs and fraternities like the Freemasons.

There is also plenty of evidence that the Propagation Department preferred to hire kleagles with Masonic affiliation, from the frequent remarks made by Klansmen and contemporary observers who made this allegation. This revelation gained prominence in the 1921 Klan exposé by the *New York World*, who employed ex-kleagle and active Freemason Henry P. Fry as their source. The popularity of the *World*'s exposé meant that their claim was reprinted by several other newspapers, and the idea that many kleagles were using their Masonic membership to recruit new members became quite widespread.

Journalists later expanded this claim, and maintained that in early 1921, in a meeting of the Propagation Department that included Grand Goblins and kleagles, Clarke realized that the recruitment figures of salesmen who happened to be Freemasons were higher. This was because "upon entering a strange town or city their Masonic affiliation served as a welcome into desirable circles". The article elaborated, explaining how "Clarke, with a sharp eye to the main chance, immediately issued orders that all non-Masonic kleagles and king kleagles be dismissed and that none but Masons should thereafter be employed in these capacities".[33] Although the idea that Clarke fired all non-Masonic kleagles seems unlikely, since no disgruntled former employees came forward to denounce this practice, it does seem possible, and even likely, that Clarke issued some sort of order to his underlings that Masonic membership was advisable. The workings of Clarke's Propagation Department, with its tightly controlled and uniform system of selling would have been amiss without some position regarding the Craft. Clarke's own personal assistant, Edgar I. Fuller, would later claim that this was in fact the case. He noted how:

> Propagation of the Klan was directed from the beginning to a conquest of the Masonic fraternity. Nearly all of the organizers sent into the field and commissioned as Kleagles were members of the Masonic fraternity. These men wore Masonic emblems and symbols as passports to the leaders in Masonry in every community in America. Some of them wore as many as

> three Masonic emblems conspicuously displayed and of such size and design as to attract attention and be easily recognized at a long distance. These Kleagles were instructed in founding the Klan in a new community to first of all enlist all Masons in good standing and through them find ready access to the lodges and use them as a nucleus to organize a Klan.[34]

More significantly, some Masonic Grand Masters who came out and denounced the Klan made this exact assertion. One Texas Grand Master declared "that he found Masonic temples had been invaded by the organizers of the Klan, who claimed to be Masons".[35] During their pitch, many of these Masonic kleagles would try to make it seem as if the Craft and the Klan were closely related. Many of them appealed to the frustrated militant factions present within Masonic lodges, advertising the Invisible Empire as a viable alternative to their own mild fraternity. William N. Vaile, Colorado's Grand Master during 1925, recalled how Klan salesmen had arrived in that state's Masonic lodges and that:

> In its solicitation of members the Klan relies largely upon the idea that it is similar and allied to Freemasonry. 'The same thing as Masonry,' is a frequent expression of its organizers. One of them, soliciting my own membership, said 'it is Masonry in action,' and I have heard members of the Klan who are also Masons use the same phrase in describing it…. There is no doubt whatsoever that [the Klan] has made special efforts to get into its membership the officers of Masonic lodges and get its members elected to office in Masonic lodges.[36]

Across the country, Masonic authorities had grown increasingly alarmed at the number of kleagles with membership in the order who were deliberately abusing their affiliation to convince their brethren to join.

The idea of exclusivity was vital to the growth of the Invisible Empire. Enlisting civic leaders, successful businessmen, religious figures and Freemasons allowed kleagles to advertise their order as a select organization where only the best men would be allowed access. In this sense, the Invisible Empire's marketing and sales branches were mutually dependent and closely intertwined. As one Klan writer noted:

> The majority of reputable citizens are going into [the Ku Klux Klan] and the bad ones are kept out by the simple process of not asking such persons to join. You see the Klan is a select crowd. You can't join in unless some one asks you to join. Such invitations are not pressed. None but good men are asked to join and in that way bad men are kept out.[37]

The Invisible Empire was not as select as this Klansman described it. The order itself recruited from a broad spectrum of social classes, and the klavern's class makeup often reflected the socioeconomic makeup of its community. In addition, historians have long held that those joining the fraternity early on and those

who formed the klavern's leadership were of a higher socioeconomic standing than those who joined later. This theory has been supported by a number of studies in local communities.[38] Yet, as Rory McVeigh has argued, despite this diverse composition "the fact that movement leaders described the organization as being primarily a middle-class movement, and articulated grievances shared by many middle- class Americans, is meaningful when trying to understand the sources of the movement's strength".[39] Kleagles went to great lengths to advertise the Klan's exclusivity, respectability and adherence to middle-class values. They tempted blue-collar and lower-middle-class Americans with the opportunity to become a member of an organization that the community's elite had joined. Many of the Klan's new recruits, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 6 with reference to Anaheim and Dallas, were aspirational and ambitious, men hoping to acquire social status and community approval. This partly explains why the Propagation Department was so eager to recruit Freemasons and other upright citizens into the fraternity.

Recruiting Freemasons was also a shrewd move because they could be employed to enlist their friends and family. Historians of the Ku Klux Klan have noticed that kleagles frequently encouraged new members of the order to bring suitable candidates from among their friends and family. Some Klansmen were even tempted to bring in new recruits to their local kleagle with promises of a share of the $10 klectoken. Kleagles were usually not local residents, so they depended on the experience and social contacts of the first members of the Klan who were more familiar with the residents of the community. Records from several different klaverns have indicated how membership in the Invisible Empire spread among families, work colleagues and even lodge brothers.[40]

The practice of having Klansmen soliciting among their social circle was an essential part of the Propagation Department's recruitment policy, and one that the national officers of the Klan endorsed. One of Clarke's subordinates described this approach, saying:

> A Klansman was ordered to bring in two friends he could trust and vouch for. When the friends were initiated ('naturalized') they in turn were instructed in the same manner. The plan worked so well there were not enough officials to take of the rush.[41]

This approach took on a variety of forms. One issue of the Propagation Department's *Weekly Newsletter* describes how Klansmen from Lynchburg, Virginia, organized a contest within their chapter to see who could recruit the most men, with prizes ranging from a barrel of flour to a box of cigars. This type of contest was even discussed and recommended by the Klan's national officers.[42] It was in the interest of the average Klansman to help his kleagle with his extension efforts, since it meant more prestige and power for his fraternity.

The career of one New Jersey Klansman illustrates how individual Freemasons and national officers assisted the growth of the Invisible Empire. Edwin P. Banta was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1872. He was descended from

Dutch settlers, and was very proud of his native and Protestant heritage. Banta was prolific joiner and seemed to be particularly obsessed with joining patriotic and Protestant fraternities. He was a 32nd degree Freemason, as well as a member of the Salaam Temple of Shriners in Newark. He joined a number of nativist and explicitly anti-Catholic organizations, such as the JOAUM and the Loyal Orange Institution.[43] Banta was a dedicated and active nativist, holding very radical opinions regarding the Catholic presence in America. His political views were evident when he ran as a candidate for councilman of West New York City in 1920. The *New Menace*, one of the foremost anti-Catholic papers of the period, endorsed his campaign and described it, saying:

> The candidacy of Mr. Banta is understood to be strictly on the anti-Roman Catholic platform…. Those who favor the Constitution, the flag and the public school should support Mr. Banta with the vigor and enthusiasm which spell victory.[44]

Edwin P. Banta joined the Ku Klux Klan in New York in January 1923. He served as an organizer for the New Jersey Klan and worked closely with their King Kleagle and Grand Dragon, Arthur Bell. For example, as he worked in the newspaper business Banta was asked to arrange the press coverage at a public initiation in New Brunswick on 2 May 1923, with strict instructions from the Grand Dragon. Bell wrote to Banta, explaining that he was "exceedingly anxious that no hitch occur in this work" as they wanted "our publicity on the highest plane possible". Banta was asked to only allow journalists from the *New York Evening World*, *The Good Citizen*, the *New York Herald*, and the *Hudson Observer* to attend. He was also told to choose a number of other trusted newspapers from New Jersey, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. to cover the event. Bell's detailed instructions indicate how tightly controlled the Klan's public displays really were, and how carefully the Invisible Empire prepared its marketing and cherished its public image.[45] These events served a secondary purpose other than to initiate new brothers or show strength, and the Propagation Department understood that they could employ open-air initiations and parades to boost their numbers.

Banta received further letters from Bell that give some insight into the workings of the Propagation Department. Grand Dragon Bell understood the importance of recruiting selectively and discreetly, bolstering their numbers and finding high-ranking allies. When Banta pressured him to make their movement's presence in New Jersey public and to start acting aggressively against Catholics and other un-American influences in the state, Bell replied, saying:

> The fact is that what you suggest in your letter is exactly what we must do at the proper time, but we are not strong enough yet to even begin to consider such a move. For us to do so now would be an invitation for defeat. Our one supreme thought now must be organization. When we can boast of not fewer than 10,000 men in the county and from 3,000 to 5,000 women,

> then we can line up the Masons, the [JOUAM], the Tall Cedars, the [Patriotic Order Sons of America], and other patriotic bodies and can present such a solid front as will ENSURE VICTORY. This is where all of our patriotic movements of the past have failed. They have started something before they were ready. Let us get ready and by the grace of God we are getting ready for this movement.[46]

The officers of the New Jersey Klan realized the value of patience, preparation and coordination. Their approach was carefully planned, and reveals Bell's shrewd strategy to build their forces until they could present a solid and united front of patriotic fraternities. New Jersey would eventually become one of the few Klan strongholds in the region, aided partly by Bell's leadership and his calculating and efficient kleagles.

Banta himself acted as a fervent recruiter and publicist for the Invisible Empire. Bizarrely, during the 1920s he worked as travel advertising representative for the anti-Klan *New York World*. His experience in the world of journalism made him a valuable asset for the Ku Klux Klan and the other patriotic orders he belonged to. He subscribed to most of the widely read anti-Catholic and nativist newspapers of the day, such as *The Fellowship Forum*, the *Dearborn Independent* and the *New Menace*, and read Klan publications like *The Searchlight* and *The Kourier*. He regularly sent clippings from various publications to editors of these nativist papers and various Klan leaders on matters related to the Catholic Church and radicals. He served as a useful informant in this network of anti-Catholic patriotic bodies, and did his best to keep his colleagues informed of different incidents in New York and New Jersey relating to nativist issues.

Banta was an exemplary Klansman and kleagle. His correspondence indicates that he worked tirelessly to recruit other Americans and educate them about the influences threatening the nation. One letter to Milton Elrod, the editor of *The Fiery Cross*, shows how he campaigned for the Ku Klux Klan among his associates and people he believed might be interested in the fraternity. Banta explained in his correspondence that he was "submitting confidentially the names of a few people I have continuously drawn on the K.K.K. question" and asked Elrod to send them some free copies of his newspaper to stimulate interest in their fraternity. Banta submitted a list of potential recruits to Elrod, most of whom were Freemasons. Among them were William Neal Reynolds, president of the successful R.J. Tobacco Company of North Carolina, who although not a Freemason was a Presbyterian with several hundred Klansmen in his employ. In fact, Banta had been investigating Reynolds for some time. He had consulted with James S. Vance, one of the editors of *The Fellowship Forum*, as to Reynolds' political leanings, and whether his company discriminated against employees with Masonic affiliations.[47]

Included in Banta's list of prospective targets for recruitment were a number of Shriners that he presumably had met at his own Shriner temple or at gatherings of this fraternity. Among these were J.T. Davis, a Pennsylvania Prohibition

agent; Claudius H. Huston, a 33rd degree Freemason and an influential Republican; and Robert A. Alberts, vice-president of a New York paper manufacturer and Shriner from Banta's own town.[48] Banta described all of the Freemasons on his list as "prominent men" and recommended that they be contacted immediately for potential enlistment. Banta must have also wanted to recruit these men due to their positions in law enforcement, politics and the media. The fact that most of these men were also Freemasons was not coincidence.

Banta's service to the Invisible Empire was probably not out of the ordinary for those more dedicated and passionate members. Klansmen understood the importance of creating a robust organization and realized that their service would be valued. In Banta's case, he probed a number of well-known or prominent citizens and Freemasons and tried to convince them to join. The evidence from New Jersey indicates that the leadership in that state understood the value of selling the Klan effectively and of employing ordinary members for this end. This included controlling their public image, building their strength slowly, and recruiting select allies that could help advance their mission. These kleagles barely resemble the avaricious conmen that they were frequently portrayed as. The Propagation Department may have been driven by the dollar, but they worked effectively, employing modern sales techniques and a national strategy. The evidence also indicates that the Klan leadership actively targeted Freemasons for recruitment, and that they employed other Freemasons to reach these men.

The role of the Propagation Department

All throughout the early 1920s, Masonic jurisdictions complained about the invasion of their lodges by recruiters from the Invisible Empire. Kleagles were gaining access to their lodges by way of their own Masonic affiliations and convincing members to join their new militant fraternity. The Ku Klux Klan spread through the work of the Propagation Department, but it also proliferated through social channels. The recommendation of a friend, family member, work colleague or lodge brother was vital for the establishment of the Invisible Empire's chapters. Clarke created an efficient core of salesmen who delivered a popular and identifiable product in a systematic and uniform way, which included hijacking the local fraternal lodge to use as a pulpit for the Klan's message.

The Propagation Department's honeymoon quickly ended in early 1923 with the rise of Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans and his sweep of "reforms" that promised to change everything that was wrong with Simmons' Klan, starting with the kleagles and the Propagation Department. Evans had been a longtime member of the order, and realized that the power of the organization had been concentrated almost entirely within this division of the fraternity. Klan leaders such as Clarke, Stephenson, Bell and even Evans had managed to amass great fortunes and power through their careers as Klan salesmen. In order to cement his own leadership and to reinvigorate the order, Evans had promised to do away with the Propagation Department entirely. He renamed this branch the

Extension Department and initiated a very public campaign to reform the practices of its salesmen.

Evans tried to portray his new kleagles as apostles spreading the gospel of Klan truth. These men would be the very reverse of Clarke's salesmen kleagles. In reality though, Evans changed very little about the Propagation Department. The commission system worked effectively, and was still closely regimented by the Imperial officials. The only problem was that the public and even some members believed it was a corrupt scheme. Because of this, Evans only gave the Propagation Department a facelift; his changes amounted to firing Clarke, renaming the department the Extension Department and getting rid of the Grand Goblins whom he thought were unnecessary.[49] Evans saw no need to change the Klan's recruitment policies to any significant extent; he only detested the fact that the money was going to Clarke and his underlings instead of towards the Treasury and his own supporters. Evans' 1922 coup saw the diffusion of the lucrative trade in Klan fees among the men who had supported the new Imperial Wizard's rise to power. Grand Dragon James C. Comer of Arkansas and his wife Robbie Gill were rewarded for their support in 1922 with exclusive control of the new Women's Ku Klux Klan and the lucrative trade in initiation fees in this new female auxiliary. New kleagles were hired to replace those still loyal to Clarke, but there is little to suggest they acted differently. The new Extension Department differed in very few ways from its predecessor; it was simply under new management. The Invisible Empire's recruitment campaign was highly effective, and it made little sense to change it. This system was praised by many studying the Klan in the 1920s, including Stanley Frost, who, after spending several months working alongside Evans and other Klansmen, commended it, saying:

> The commission system is, naturally, immensely effective, far more than any straight salaries scheme. It keeps each Field Kleagle on his toes every minute, stimulates his salesmanship and ingenuity to the utmost, eliminates unsuccessful men promptly and leaves no room for discord. It has resulted in what seems the best selling organization in America.[50]

Historians studying the Ku Klux Klan have considerable trouble ascertaining anything conclusive about the appropriately named Invisible Empire. The deliberate destruction of Klan documents has made it difficult to make irrefutable statements about this ephemeral fraternity, especially if the subject has anything to do with the Propagation Department. The constant barrage of criticism that the Klan's recruitment wing was subjected to in the American press made them pariahs in the eyes of many. However, as has been demonstrated, the Klan's kleagles were mostly skilled salesmen who effectively sold a product that Americans wanted. Part of their repertoire of tactics seems to have involved using their Masonic membership to solicit their brothers in the friendly and fraternal atmosphere of the Craft. In addition, many kleagles realized that they would surely find new recruits among the more militant members of these

Masonic lodge and men who were frustrated with Freemasonry's inaction on crucial issues such as immigration reform or the Catholic menace. The Propagation Department's policy of recruiting within Masonic lodges periodically resulted in turmoil among this fraternity's members and a substantial inflow of new initiates affiliated to Freemasonry into the Invisible Empire's klaverns. The support and membership of Freemasons within their order would prove to be fundamental to maintaining the KKK's image, attracting new members and establishing more chapters.

Many observers have argued that it was either William Joseph Simmons or Hiram Wesley Evans who most shaped the Ku Klux Klan, but it was probably Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler who helped to develop the organization from an insignificant brotherhood into a mighty Invisible Empire. The Propagation Department created a remarkable marketing and recruitment campaign, one that elevated their fraternities above similar organizations like the JOUAM or the Sons and Daughters of Washington. The Ku Klux Klan simply marketed and sold itself better. The profits of "kluxing" helped to drive an army of kleagles employing intelligent sales techniques to spread the message of the Ku Klux Klan. Under the guidance of the national leadership of the Propagation Department, and then the Extension Department, the Invisible Empire's recruiters were able to enlist millions of eager Americans into the order.

Notes

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5 Hooded Freemasons

Dual membership and conflict in local lodges

Frank R. Kent, a prominent journalist working for the influential and acerbic *Baltimore Sun*, published a series of articles in December 1922 in this newspaper on the recent resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. Travelling throughout the country and visiting the national officers at the Imperial Palace in Atlanta, Kent interviewed Klansmen and their opponents to try to understand this intriguing movement. Reporting that the KKK had managed to recruit a million Americans to its ranks and had become a crucial factor in local and national elections, Kent remarked that: "Clearly, it is rather an important thing for the rest of us to know the truth about this association of men." Despite the many well-publicized examinations of the Second Invisible Empire over the years since its foundation, this columnist felt that they had been far too denunciative. While not explicitly criticizing their work, he described the popular *New York World* 1921 exposé as "a vigorous assault" and a "very thorough and red-blooded crusade": Kent proposed to re-assess the movement, "not with the idea of assailing the Klan, but of 'sizing it up' without bias".

His review of the movement includes several insightful observations regarding the nature of the order and its members. On the makeup of the Invisible Empire, Kent explained:

> By other Klansmen in New Orleans, Atlanta and Washington I have been told that far more than a majority of the Klan throughout the country are Masons. Klansmen who are Masons have described the Klan to me as 'militant Masonry.' One member in Washington, who is himself a thirty-second degree Mason, estimated the proportion of Klansmen who are Masons at 70 per cent of the whole….
>
> I also know there are a great many Klansmen … who are not Masons…. But it undoubtedly is true that a considerable proportion of them are….[1]

In a quite matter-of-fact tone, the *Baltimore Sun*'s article lent further credence to the recurring reports of a significant crossover between the two fraternities. This study earlier detailed how many Freemasons did in fact express frustration with the political limitations of their fraternity in post-war America and sought another organization to pursue a more active role in national affairs. The Klan

also repeatedly tried to portray itself as an order that was patronized by Freemasons, and that the Invisible Empire deliberately instructed its kleagles to recruit from Masonic lodges. But these discussions all raise the same question: precisely how successful was the Klan at recruiting Freemasons into their fraternity?

This chapter aims to analyse and understand the available evidence regarding dual membership in both orders, and the effect that this crossover had on individual lodges in different Masonic jurisdictions. By contrasting the varying claims from supporters and opponents of the Invisible Empire as to the number of Klansmen with Masonic affiliations, we can attempt to get a clearer picture of the level of shared membership. Additionally, this chapter will begin to examine the effect that this shared membership had on different Masonic lodges by exploring several incidents between brethren of this fraternity. Essentially, this chapter will try to establish the veracity and significance of Frank Kent's claims that a "considerable proportion" of the Invisible Empire was composed of Freemasons.

Reports of the shared membership of the two fraternities

Due to the absence or deliberate destruction of Klan membership records in the decades after the 1920s, historians have struggled to gauge the number of Klansmen with additional fraternal affiliations and have often relied on questionable claims. Yet even the leadership and membership of the Invisible Empire seemed unsure of how many Klansmen were also Freemasons, despite repeatedly claiming that they composed a large proportion of their order. Imperial Kleagle Edward Young Clarke himself seems to have only had a rough idea of the matter. "Masonry numbers among its membership hundreds of thousands of the highest type of Klansmen" he stated in one interview in June 1922. That summer, other officers within the organization offered similarly vague figures. Following Clarke's statement, two Klan representatives made their own estimates for the proportion of Freemasons within their organization across the country. The first, from Kentucky, declared to a local paper "it is true that practically 75 per cent of our members are also members of the Masonic lodge". The second, a Baltimore kleagle, placed the total national figure even higher, at 90 per cent. He explained that this was due to the fact that "the Klan seeks the most prominent citizens who are not Catholics".[2]

The Invisible Empire's salesmen and speakers were, of course, prone to exaggeration. One prominent Klan lecturer from Texas claimed in 1926 that the entire order had five million members at that time, 750,000 of whom were also initiates of the Craft. This total is quite implausible, especially when we consider that the order's strength had been declining by this point in time. As discussed earlier in this study, the order's public image depended on the impression of Masonic endorsement and patronage, and its representatives and writers regularly made outlandish claims to support this idea. The Klan's newspapers often printed such exaggerated statistics. One 1923 article in *Dawn* insisted that over a

million Freemasons and Odd Fellows were already members of the Klan, while a writer in *The Fellowship Forum* asserted that 75 per cent of all Klansmen were members of the Craft.[3] Official sources from the Klan's leadership, management and publications could not seem to agree as to the precise figure of Freemasons within the nation's klaverns. Many observers during the 1920s remarked that even if these claims were true, they were completely unverifiable for those outside of either fraternity. "Promoters of the Ku Klux Klan brag that most of its members are Masons" remarked one critic of the brotherhood in 1922; "Whether this is true or not no one on the outside can tell."[4] From a national perspective, it appears, not even the Klan itself truly knew how many of its recruits were affiliated to a Masonic lodge, although they loudly and repeatedly broadcast the fact that these men were active supporters of their organization throughout the early 1920s.

The precise level of dual membership across America between the two fraternities probably eluded the Invisible Empire's leadership and its newspaper editors, though they were careful to never admit this. Yet even at the state and regional level, sources from within the Klan presented dubious figures for the number of Freemasons in their klaverns. Following the passage of Oregon's controversial anti-private-school bill, some mainstream journalists began to claim that the conflict this measure had aroused had pushed Freemasons to renounce their membership in the Invisible Empire. Reporters for *The Fellowship Forum* stringently denied this allegation. In 1923 they published an article announcing that in fact Freemasons had not withdrawn from the state's KKK and that: "Sixty percent of the Master Masons of Oregon are Klansmen and many of the Oregon officers of the Klan are prominent Masons."[5] There was no further detail as to how the *Forum* had arrived at such a conclusion, and readers were expected to take this rather tenuous statistic at face value.

Individual Klansmen outside of the fraternity's hierarchy also made boasts as to the number of Freemasons within their own local klaverns. Leslie Zaerr, a resident of Billings, Montana, presented his own assessment of the level of crossover between the two fraternities in his community. In 1923 Zaerr, both a Scottish Rite Mason and a Klansman, specified that in his city of 15,000 people there were approximately 1,000 members in his klavern. He further stated that of these 1,000 members around 60 per cent were Freemasons and 50 per cent were affiliated with the Scottish Rite. Zaerr also believed that: "Perhaps 75% of the petitioners to the [Scottish Rite] are Klansmen." One similar claim comes from Morganton, North Carolina, where a local resident declared to their local newspaper that:

> I would like to state for your information that exactly 47% of the Klansmen here are members of the Masonic order. In fact the man who had been elected as Exalted Cyclops of Burke Kounty Klan is a Past Master.[6]

Certainly, while these Klansmen were probably more familiar with their local communities and therefore their estimates carry more weight than the vague

totals offered by the group's officers and leaders, it is still impossible to verify if there is any truth behind these allegations.

Klansmen from all branches of the fraternity's complex structure were in agreement that Freemasons constituted an important segment of their order. However, these sources from within the Invisible Empire presented varying and even competing statistics for the correct percentage of Freemasons in their order at national, state and local levels. Outside of the Klan, Freemasons also discussed the topic of dual membership quite vigorously and debated the number of their brethren who attended the klavern as well as the Masonic lodge. What is quite surprising is that many of these Freemasons submitted comparable statistics to those presented by members of the Klan. An issue of *The Square and Compass* from late 1923 published an anonymous letter from a Freemason from Clyde, Mississippi, who was discontent with this Masonic newspaper's attitude towards the Klan. This Freemason maintained that: "As for the Klan being a part of Masonry, it is not, but I can say this truthfully, that 60 per cent of its members are Masons." The editors published this letter only because they considered his letter to be "dignified", compared to the other "hot-headed" subscribers who had written threatening retaliation against their newspaper for their anti-Klan views.[7] A comparable figure was given in 1922 by Thomas G. Knight, of Fort Worth, Texas in a private letter to California Grand Master Samuel E. Burke. Knight was both a Scottish Rite Mason and a member of the Knights Templar, and he objected to Burke's denunciation of the Klan, stating that: "The Ku Klux Klan stands for all the Flag of our Country stands for, the Constitution, Christ and the Cross and to be one you have to be 100% American, absolutely." Knight then went on to write: "Furthermore, at least 75% of Klansmen are Masons; true, tried and tested…." Another Texan Freemason wrote to the Grand Lodge of California in 1922, but in this case it was to seek advice on how to oust the Klan from his lodge. Writing from Beeville, H.L. Atkinson recounted how he had opposed the Invisible Empire and the membership of his Masonic brethren in that order. He also said: "It seems that the Klan is trying to get hold of the lodges in this state, and in the local lodges here, I would guess about 80% of the membership to be members of the Klan."[8]

In a sense then, the KKK's Propagation Department was right to state that the Invisible Empire had the support and patronage of members of the Craft. Sources from within both fraternities suggest that there was significant crossover between the two organizations, although the exact figure of Klansmen with Masonic credentials varied substantially, from slightly below 50 per cent to as high as 90 per cent. The Klan's crusade against the perceived power of Catholicism, radical communist agitation, unrestricted migration or the threat to white supremacy and masculinity resonated among many Freemasons, particularly those hoping to use the power of their own fraternity to promote change and defend the nation's values and heritage. The KKK was an attractive organization for militant Protestant fraternalists and was deliberately advertised as a more active and aggressive order for "manly" patriots and nativists. Freemasons were also probably overrepresented in the order's klaverns due to the targeted recruitment in Masonic lodges that the Propagation Department encouraged.

The Invisible Empire's claims did not go unquestioned though and cannot form the basis of a credible assessment for the proportion of Freemasons within the Klan. J.W. Scott Sanders, the King Kleagle of Connecticut and New Hampshire, gave an interview to a local publication where he stated that: "Klan organizers have truthfully stated that the bulk of our members were Masons." His comments proved quite contentious in that state, and were later categorically rejected by Connecticut's Grand Master, Frank L. Wilder.[9] This example illustrates the epistemological difficulties of ascertaining the exact proportion of crossover between these two fraternities, as the Ku Klux Klan repeatedly highlighted the large numbers of Freemasons within their fraternity to enhance their own organization's standing. The editor of the *Hartford Courant* commented on this ingenious marketing strategy, saying:

> [It] infers that Masons are flocking to the blazing cross and desire above all things to become subjects of the invisible empire. It creates a good impression, and what is by no means unimportant, there is no way of refuting it. We can see many reasons why the members of the Klan should be unwilling to have their membership known to all men and this one is more to their credit than are some of the others.

Furthermore, as a journalist from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* stated, many of these declarations were "pretty broad statements and certainly not to be taken at their face value, especially against positive denials from brother Masons".[10] Investigating the second Ku Klux Klan has always been a tricky affair for historians, but establishing a precise figure for dual membership is a remarkably complex matter. Edward Young Clarke himself denied many of the figures presented by other officers in his order when he declared that:

> Masons do not predominate. We have a great many of them in this organization because Masons are Protestants, but we have attempted to prevent the Klan from becoming over-loaded with any one or other secret order membership because we want the Klan to stand on [its] own bottom and not be an adjunct to some other organization.[11]

In this case, Clarke was probably trying to minimize the wave of anti-Klan sentiment among Freemasons that had flared up in the summer of 1922, but these comments highlight the contradictory nature of the Klan. Always careful of its public image, the Invisible Empire changed its tune according to its audience, making it difficult for historians to adequately examine this controversial fraternity. Different officers within the organization presented conflicting accounts of the makeup of the order, its priorities and its political vision for a new America. The KKK presented a fluid and ever-changing image of itself to the American public, which was often baffled regarding who to trust when it came to this organization.

Historians face the same challenge today. Even something ostensibly simple like calculating the total membership of the order remains an unanswered

question. This is not because historians lack the sources to try to assess the strength of this popular fraternity. In fact, this pressing question remains unanswered mostly due to the overabundance of contradicting figures, as well as the lack of any official evidence. W.C. Wright, the Klan speaker from Texas, placed the figure at anywhere from five to seven million. Another of the fraternity's speakers from California stated that the order had "6,000,000 members including the governors of two-thirds of the states, and 46 senators and congressmen". This speaker also declared that the recently deceased President Warren Harding was an initiate of their order, a dubious claim at best. Journalist Stanley Frost, who spent several months in 1924 travelling and interviewing the fraternity's leaders and members, was the first to suggest the total of four million. Since then that number has become a fairly standard answer, although there is limited information to support this figure. Historian Kenneth Jackson attempted to tackle this question, and by taking into account the figures given by a wide range of sources and historians, believed the total to be about 2,030,000 members between 1915 and 1944. Nonetheless, this calculation still remains something of a personal estimate.[12] The Klan was always rather secretive about official numbers, and always tried to exaggerate their total membership and true strength in the eyes of the public. At times they even hid this exact figure from their own officials. The Exalted Cyclops of the St. Joseph County Klan, based in South Bend, Indiana, recalled seeing the membership figures for the movement in the state, but that his Grand Dragon had asked him not to publicize the number as "for us to allow those figures to get out in public, it would kill us".[13] The Klan presented their movement as a popular and vigorous organization, but in reality we know very little about their actual strength outside of a handful of communities with surviving records and there is no conclusive evidence that contains official membership figures for the Invisible Empire. We encounter similar complications when trying to calculate the levels of shared membership between the Ku Klux Klan and the Freemasons.

Furthermore, we need to take into account the highly localized nature of the Klan's success. Historians have recognized the importance of locality to the establishment of this organization in any community. A particular kleagle's approach to recruitment was also vital to the fraternity's success in towns and cities across America. This theory has helped to explain why the Klan managed to get more members in the city of Indianapolis alone than it did in the entire state of Mississippi. The issue is outlined by historian Shawn Lay, who remarked that:

> the Invisible Empire's interaction with leading civic elements was exceedingly complex and varied from community to community. Depending on the local set of circumstances, the Klan might support, oppose, or ignore a particular group. Essentially the Klan was a chameleon during the early organizational stage, adjusting its sales pitch in light of the local context and dictates of opportunism.[14]

This observation is very much applicable in terms of the relationship between the Ku Klux Klan and the Freemasons. In different cities, the Masonic lodge could permit or forbid the presence of kleagles among their brethren and therefore curb or spur the success of this rival fraternity.

For instance, a Freemason from Kansas City, Missouri wrote to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in late 1922, expressing his support for the newspaper's fervent opposition to the Invisible Empire and their disapproval of that organization's attempts to portray itself as a Masonic organization. He wrote to the publication, saying:

> Ku Kluxery and Masonry are considerably farther apart than Venus and Neptune; and when a preacher or anybody else seeks to create the impression that the ancient fraternal order stands for the K.K.K. claptrap, it is high time for Masons to stand forth and toss the dirty insult back into the teeth of the cowardly pillow-slipped anonymities who utter it.

This Freemason also intimated that in his own local chapter, Ivanhoe Lodge no. 446 of Kansas City, Missouri, there were nearly 4,000 members and "so far as I am aware not one of them is a Ku Kluxer". However, studies have shown that in the nearby Roger E. Sherman Lodge no. 239, located just over the state border in Kansas City, Kansas, the Invisible Empire found plenty of support and followers among the Freemasons.[15] Two neighbouring Masonic lodges had entirely different responses to the arrival of kleagles in their city. Any national estimate for the level of crossover between the two fraternities needs to take into account the highly regional and even erratic nature of the Klan's popularity with ordinary Americans and Freemasons.

Estimating the levels of dual membership

Because of the unverifiable and contested character of many of the claims made by both Klansmen and non-Klansmen, the figures offered by the sources mentioned at the beginning of this chapter cannot form the basis of any believable estimates. Both supporters and opponents of the Invisible Empire had an interest in exaggerating the exact levels of dual membership. However, when coupled with more robust evidence, these claims can serve to inform our estimates. Furthermore, it is crucial that we take into account the highly localized and complex nature of the Klan's popularity across America's lodges. The Invisible Empire was neither universally popular nor unpopular within Masonic circles, and this circumstance needs to be factored into any calculations of the levels of crossover among the two groups.

There have been a limited number of studies carried out by historians as to the number of Klansmen with Masonic affiliations, and they constitute the most reliable evidence on the exact levels of dual membership. This research has been carried out in five locations: Colorado, Montana, Kansas, Michigan and Texas. Because of the difficulty of obtaining a valid list of Klansmen as well as access

to Masonic records from the same location, each of these studies has used entirely different approaches to obtain its results. To adequately assess them and to understand the conclusions each study offers, it is necessary to properly analyse each of these microstudies. Compiled together, these studies provide the most accurate calculations based on the available material for the number of Freemasons within the Invisible Empire.

The first case, historian Robert Goldberg's analysis of the Klan's membership in Denver, Colorado, was the first and perhaps the most extensive study of its type.[16] Denver was one of the jewels in the Invisible Empire's crown, and it can be said that Colorado itself was one of the strongest Klan realms. Although the KKK never recruited the impressive numbers it did in states to the east, the electoral victories and public support for the movement made Colorado a promising rising star within this national movement. Goldberg's analysis was based on two comprehensive membership records: the Klan's Roster of Members and the Membership Applications book. The Denver Klan roster alone numbered 16,727 members, making this an invaluable source for an evaluation of the organization's makeup. Goldberg decided to divide the membership into those who had joined earlier and those who had joined later, in order to test a long-standing hypothesis about the inherent socioeconomic differences between the initiates who first joined the movement and those who enlisted later. The study selected a sample of 375 men from those who had joined the Denver Klan before January 1923, a period in which the Klan was still in its formative stage and was still rather discreet in terms of recruitment. A second sample of 583 Klansmen was selected from those who joined after May 1924, as this was when the Denver Klan started to pursue a more widespread membership campaign. Goldberg's research revealed that from the so-called early joiner sample, 166 of the members held membership in the Freemasons, about 45.5 per cent. Of the "late joiner" group, only 107 members were also initiates of the Craft, or 18.35 per cent. The total proportion of dual membership between both the samples of the late and early joiners was 28.5 per cent. Goldberg warns that Masonic records from Denver are incomplete, and that, even though other miscellaneous sources were used to try to supplement the data, this figure can only be judged as the minimum figure for dual affiliation.[17]

Christine Erickson's work on Kontinental Klan No. 30 from Butte, Montana presents very different statistics. A sparsely populated state with no major cities during the 1920s, Montana was never the real focus of the order's kleagles, but they did manage to establish several important and quite resilient klaverns that lasted long after the organization's collapse in other parts of the country. Led by Grand Dragon Lew Terwilliger, the Montana Klan formed key enclaves in Helena, Billings, Missoula and Butte. Erickson has argued that in Butte, even though "the Masons never officially sanctioned the relationship, the Masonic lodge no doubt served as a pipeline for the Kontinental Klan". She backs up this statement by reviewing the obituaries of 68 Butte Klansmen that died between 1933 and 1980, 58 of whom were also Masons. She also states: "The percentage who belonged to both groups may have been higher since it is quite probable that many of the Klansmen who left Butte after the late 1920s also enjoyed dual membership."[18] Although

by no means an ideal survey, especially when we compare it to the more robust evidence from other studies, Erickson's work nonetheless demonstrated that 85.29 per cent of Butte's Klansmen were Freemasons.

A detailed analysis of the levels of crossover between the Klan and the Freemasons has also been carried out in Kansas by Kristofer Allerfeldt. Again, the influence and size of the Invisible Empire in this state is not comparable with that of strongholds like Indiana or Texas, but the history of this organization in Kansas is nonetheless interesting. Although very alike in terms of demographics and economy to some of the Midwestern states where the Klan proved so popular, the growth of the Invisible Empire in the Jayhawker state was stifled from the very beginning by virulent opposition from established leaders, such as Governor Henry Justin Allen. Allerfeldt's analysis is based on the efforts of the anti-Klan editor of the *Emporia Gazette*, the renowned Progressive icon William Allen White. In the pages of his newspaper, White published a list of attendants and their addresses to the Kansas Klan's state convention. This list was obtained from the Broadview Hotel of Emporia, where the only other guests aside from these Klansmen were a barbershop choir from Italy. Discerning the Klansmen from the Italians was simple; the Klansmen were obviously those whose addresses were not overseas. Allerfeldt cross-referenced the names with local Masonic records and found that from a sample of 95 Klansmen at least 42 were Freemasons, a proportion of 44.2 per cent.[19]

Perhaps the most dependable statistics for the number of Klansmen who held additional membership in the Freemasons comes from Newaygo County, Michigan. The Klan Realm of Michigan was overshadowed by some of its other powerful Midwestern neighbours, but it took the state by storm with its message of 100 per cent Americanism. Detroit in particular proved to be a fruitful hunting ground for kleagles, as they fed off of the latent post-war patriotism and the racial tension arising from the migration of African-Americans to the city. Craig Fox has demonstrated that the Klan also became a pervasive feature of life in rural Michigan. While work by other historians into this matter has depended on sometimes patchy Masonic records, the Newaygo County Klan records specifically included the fraternal affiliations each initiate had on their Klan membership card. This means that we know precisely how many Klansmen belonged to other fraternal orders, and what is even rarer, which fraternal orders. Fox's research reveals that 183 of Newaygo County's 776 Klansmen belonged to the Freemasons, a proportion of 23.58 per cent. It also reveals that an almost equal number belonged to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and that a minority were also members of other popular fraternities such as the Woodmen of the World, the Loyal Order of the Moose, the Knights of Pythias or the Elks.[20]

The final study took place in Dallas, Texas, arguably the second most significant Klan state in the country. From the very beginning of the Southern Publicity Association's takeover of the recruitment of the order, the Klan proved to be a popular organization in Dallas. Spawning an unprecedented wave of violence in this town and infiltrating practically all levels of local and state government, there were few towns that felt the pernicious influence of the KKK as Dallas did.

Although further information will be detailed in the following chapter, a list of Klansmen from Dallas Klan No. 66 was obtained by a local reporter of the *Dallas Dispatch* newspaper.[21] Using a register of all the Freemasons from Dallas, this study ascertained that from a sample of 83 Klansmen, a total of 44 were also members of Masonic lodges. This would indicate that 53 per cent of the sample held dual membership in both orders.

The data presented in Figure 5.1 then seems to suggest that the number of Klansmen with Masonic affiliations was anywhere between 25 and 50 per cent. A reasonable estimate for the national figure would indicate that about a third of the Invisible Empire's members were also affiliated with Freemasonry. Of course, there are several caveats to this estimate. The example of Butte demonstrates that some klaverns were rife with Freemasons, and that some of the claims for lodges where nearly everyone held dual membership could indeed be true. Furthermore, the notable variation in figures these studies present seems to suggest that the exact proportion of Klansmen with Masonic affiliations fluctuated significantly according to location. In addition, Goldberg's findings suggest that Klansmen who joined earlier were more likely to belong to the Freemasons, indicating that the proportion of dual membership shifted over time. This data also reveals that some of the claims made by Klansmen and Freemasons as to the levels of crossover in individual locations were not all inaccurate. One previously mentioned figure of 47 per cent given by a Klansman for Morganton, North Carolina seems entirely possible. However, the figures presented by national Klan leaders do seem vastly exaggerated. The quoted figures stated that anywhere from 75 to 90 per cent of all Klansmen were Freemasons, a statistic that is heavily contradicted by this study. Frank R. Kent's observation, that a "considerable proportion" of Klansmen also belonged to the Freemasons, seems to have been broadly accurate when we consider that around a third of them held dual membership. This statistic also reveals that Freemasons were even overrepresented in the Invisible Empire when compared to the white American male population as a whole.

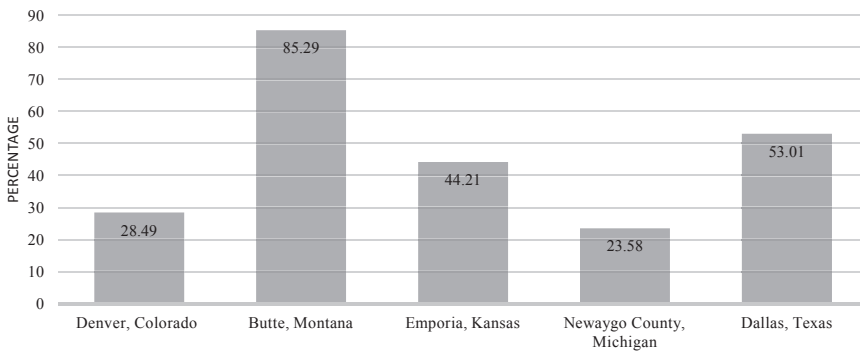

Figure 5.1 Dual Membership Among Klansmen from Colorado, Montana, Kansas, Michigan and Texas in the 1920s.[22]

Effects of dual membership in individual lodges

H.L. Atkinson wrote to the California Grand Lodge in 1922 to discuss the situation at his local lodge in Beeville, Texas. As mentioned earlier, he believed that 80 per cent of the klavern in his town were Freemasons, and he found this quite disconcerting. He mentioned that:

> I was opposed to the members of this lodge joining the Klan for the simple reason as stated in the charges to Masons…. The news conveyed back to me that I would be expelled if I did not hush and say no more about it.[23]

Atkinson described a very tense atmosphere within his local branch, an example that was echoed in several other Masonic chapters across America. In fact, judging by the response of several Grand Masters and the media's coverage, the Klan was having an overwhelmingly negative effect on lodges all over the country. We now know that around a third of all Klansmen were Freemasons, but what effect did this dual membership have on Masonic lodges in America? Were all lodges afflicted with the same spirit of mistrust as was reported by Atkinson in Beeville Lodge No. 261? And what aspects of the Invisible Empire were Masonic brethren arguing over?

Analysing the controversy caused by dual membership has proven quite problematic for historians. Not only are minutes of individual lodges difficult to find or access, but these sorts of matters would probably be discussed outside of the lodge itself, in private conversations that went unrecorded. However, we can get a sense of the hostility between individual Freemasons on the subject of membership in the Klan from the pages of *The Fellowship Forum*. In the correspondence section of this publication and over the course of several issues, supporters and detractors of the KKK had heated debates over this order's intrusion into the lodge room. For instance, in late 1922 N.W. Schlossberg, a Jewish Freemason from Roanoke, Virginia, wrote to the *Forum* to cancel his subscription to this publication due to their obvious pro-Klan stance. In his letter Schlossberg condemned the Invisible Empire for trying to usurp the authority of the state and accused the editors of the *Forum* of being either members of the KKK or on their payroll.[24] In this instance, this Freemason objected primarily to the Invisible Empire's infiltration and influence in local politics, and Schlossberg expressed genuine concern about many of the practices of the order. Schlossberg's correspondence unleashed a firestorm of condemnation from other readers that gives us an indication of the level of vitriol between supporters and opponents of the Klan within the Craft.

One reply to Schlossberg's accusations came from a militant Freemason from Cincinnati, Ohio, who referred to himself only as "Cincinnatus". This writer questioned Schlossberg's understanding of the Klan, believing it to be influenced by certain Catholic newspapers. This would become a common complaint and point of contention among supporters and detractors of the Invisible Empire, both within the Craft and the nation as a whole. "Cincinnatus" also questioned

Schlossberg's Masonic credentials and reminded him that it was his duty as a Master Mason to "teach those of your race who are less enlightened … to not hold themselves as a race apart, with strange customs, strange laws, and a strange language". He then launched into an anti-Semitic tirade where he condemned the un-American nature of the Jewish communities in New York and Cincinnati. In this case, it seems that the issue was not merely that Schlossberg was attacking the KKK, but that he represented an American minority that did not fit into this man's narrow expectations of citizenship and national duty. A writer from Baton Rouge, Louisiana was similarly incensed with Schlossberg's letter, and tried to alert him to the dangers posed by the Catholic Church, saying:

> [The Klan] have seen the grasping hand of Rome in public offices and have dared to stand for America first, last, and all the time. You Jews have listened to the siren's song that [the Klan] is fighting the Jew and have joined hands with the Church of Rome to down this order. If you help them succeed, then your children will pay the price with their blood and the Jew will become a wanderer on the face of the earth again.[25]

Hyman J. Rosenstock, a Jewish Freemason from Ellicott City, Maryland, took offence to these letters, and rushed to defend Schlossberg and other Jewish-Americans. He asked "Cincinnatus" why Jews were barred from the Klan if in fact they were only fighting the Roman Catholic Church. He declared:

> The reason the Jews are barred is because they don't believe in mob rule. [The Klan] object to the Jews for the reason that the Jews will not follow hooded howling hooligan leaders. For you have never heard of a Jew being a member of a lynching party or a whipping carnival like the K.K.K. often indulge in.

The clearly discriminatory membership requirements of the Klan were often used to attack the order and to demonstrate its racist practices and ideology. Furthermore, these were used to prove the un-Masonic nature of the Klan, since the Craft's own dogma promoted universal fraternalism and harmony. The fraternity's reputation as a vigilante organization was also a cause for concern for many Freemasons. Such practices were not only an affront to the nation's democratic principles but were also explicitly forbidden by Masonic custom. Rosenstock concluded saying simply: "My idea is that a man cannot wear a [Masonic] apron and a [Klan] nightgown at the same time." His comments received quite a few replies, including one from an R.M. Stephenson, a Freemason and Klansman from Lexington, Mississippi. Stephenson accused Rosenstock of having formed his opinions on the Klan based wholly on the "mouthpieces of the Pope" without adequately investigating the matter for himself. He concluded that "if the Jews voluntarily ally themselves with the enemies of the Ku Klux Klan, they are frankly admitting to the world that they are un-American".[26] In the sharply delineated world presented by Klansmen there was no room for neutral factions.

Klansmen like Stephenson took issue with his brethren within the Craft who lent even nominal support to Catholics and immigrants or their institutions and with those who did not share his fervent beliefs.

This sort of arguing was frequent within the pages of the *Forum* and was not solely directed at Jewish Freemasons. A slew of disparaging letters were sent in after one Protestant reader, Ed Vandersluis, criticized that newspaper's attitudes towards the Roman Catholic Church and the KKK. One writer said he felt sorry for Vandersluis and declared:

> I for one have no patience with a Protestant, be he Mason or otherwise, that will pay allegiance to political Rome. Some Protestants do not know the meaning of the word Protestant, and if they do they give it no thought.

Another reader was equally critical of Vandersluis's stance and said: "It's a good thing that there is not many Protestants of that stripe in the old U.S.A. or the Pope of Rome should find this country an easy mark." The next issue had an even more biting reply. While the others had questioned his credentials as a Protestant and a Freemason, one writer stated that if Vandersluis was:

> a Mason and a Protestant, an American and that he says he is, he surely has been imbibing some of the rottenest corn juice that he could find when he wrote that piece…. Just such men crucified Jesus Christ and are helping to throw this government of ours into the hands of the Dago Pope of Rome.[27]

Moderate Freemasons such as Vandersluis were criticized by their more militant brethren for eschewing what they considered to be vital Masonic, manly and patriotic duties: the protection and defence of the nation and its institutions from alien powers. The apparent interference and influence of the Vatican on American politics was an obvious danger to these militant Freemasons, and they condemned any fellow Freemasons that tried to stop them from their obligation to combat Catholicism and other foreign influences.

Other Klan newspapers also carried offensive comments made by Freemasons against other members of the Craft who disagreed with the Invisible Empire and its methods. The *Texas 100% American* published the outburst from one contributor who said:

> It gets on my eternal [goat] when I hear a Mason getting up, and following the lines of mouthy denunciation usually followed by Romanists, denouncing the Klan.
>
> I feel like taking that bird (and if he were not a brother Mason, I would do so) by the seat of his pants and giving him one swift pitch right into the Vatican at Rome, where he could kiss the Pope's toe, if that happened to be the exposed part of the Pope at the time.
>
> Such silly rot as some of my brother Masons have shot off from their 2×4 mouths from time to time.[28]

This bickering and fighting in the correspondence columns of pro-Klan newspapers reflects the sort of conflict that was developing in America's Masonic lodges as this alien fraternity slowly infiltrated their membership. In fact, it even resembles the heated political arguments that are rife throughout the Internet and social media. Like these contemporary debates, the arguments between supporters and opponents of the Klan were somewhat exacerbated by the indirect medium through which these Freemasons communicated, and the relative anonymity or unaccountability afforded by the newspaper. In face-to-face interactions, supporters and opponents were probably less rude and overt, but the same basic insinuations were probably whispered about other brothers of the lodge. Nonetheless, these disputes were not only intended to discuss the nature of the Klan; they were also a way of defining what Freemasonry's role was and a means of demonstrating your militancy to other Freemasons who belonged to this political fringe of the fraternity. Throughout his study of American college fraternities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, historian Nicholas Syrett details how ideas of masculinity or manliness evolved, and how men on university campuses who belonged to such groups policed each other's behaviour to earn respect and maintain power. As Syrett explains:

> what remains consistent is that performing masculinity in particular ways establishes men as worthy of respect and emulation, especially by other men … most American men have been well aware of these standards, and many of them quite consciously have tried to meet them. Whether or not they have done so successfully is another matter, one adjudicated by their male peers.[29]

In the same way, militant Freemasons policed the behaviour of their fellow brethren with regards to proper manly behaviour, in this case with regard to their attitude towards the Klan. As these letters to the *Forum* demonstrate, to criticize the Klan was weak, cowardly or irresponsible. To believe the anti-Klan propaganda or to support Catholic institutions meant that these brothers neglected their proper duty as men, as Americans, and as Freemasons.

In some cases though, these disputes seem to have even extended beyond mere squabbles, and rumours reached higher officials that Klansmen were infiltrating Masonic lodges and trying to govern affairs by rigging votes and electing their own officials. All in all, it seems as if the Klan and its agents were having a negative effect on the daily activities of the Masonic fraternity. The impression given by the media, particularly anti-Klan publications like the *New York World*, was that the Invisible Empire was purposefully trying to take over America's lodges and was disrupting the fraternal bonds among Freemasonry's members.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to say how extensive or common this conflict really was, as newspapers and observers frequently overstated the negative influence of the Klan within fraternal lodges. Many Masonic leaders and newspaper editors made generalized statements about the divisive effect of the order, when the reality on the ground was not as clear cut. The example of California helps to

illustrate this point. Grand Master Arthur S. Crites announced at the 1924 California Grand Lodge in October that:

> There is indisputable evidence that certain Klan members are endeavoring to mix the affairs of Masonry with those of the Klan, thereby causing discord and confusion in the Craft and also by fostering the wrong impression as to the actual standing of Masonry in this regard. It must be understood that such action is very objectionable.

Crites made this declaration out of concern regarding the rumours of disturbances within California's lodges. He referred to the Klan as a "hydra-headed" monster, which, despite the Grand Lodge's efforts in previous years, continued to cause problems in their jurisdiction.[30] Grand Master Crites had decided to take a stand against the Invisible Empire because of various incidents that had been recounted to him, and of rumours of disturbances in some lodges. This statement was based on an investigation Crites had undertaken during the summer. The Grand Master had asked various Masonic officers from across the state to ascertain the influence and number of Klansmen in individual chapters of the fraternity, as well as whether this intrusion had disrupted the harmony of said lodges. Crites' general remarks suggest that this order was greatly hampered by the presence of the Ku Klux Klan, but his inquiry and the responses of his officers into the matter reveals that this issue was usually localized and not entirely widespread in California.

Apparently, much of what Crites was concerned about appears to have been mostly gossip, at least according to some of his officers. Crites wrote to a W.W. Abbott, a Masonic officer from Livingston in the San Joaquin Valley, asking him to investigate the situation in the town of Merced and the state of Yosemite Lodge No. 99. Abbott reported that:

> Those Brethren who do not sanction the K.K.s are very outspoken in their attitude towards those who do, or who belong to that order [–] on the other hand there are some eight or ten Brethren who belong to the Klan and naturally resent the attitude of those who do not belong. I do not wish however to convey the thought these Klansmen resent all those who do not belong to the Klan simply those whose attitude towards the Klan is resentful.[31]

Although this lodge did display some tension, Abbott portrayed these disputes as mere personal differences. He even interviewed one Freemason affiliated with the Invisible Empire who said that the members of Yosemite Lodge no. 99 disliked him before he even joined the Klan and that this was merely "something more to bring against him".

Crites also collected short reports from various Masonic officials across the state to ascertain the number of Klansmen and the influence of the Klan within California's lodges. These reports also suggest that there was a range of different responses to the Invisible Empire's expansion from Californian Freemasons.

One Byron F. Hilhouse wrote to Crites saying simply that, in his community, "Some members of the Lodges are I think members of the Klan but no discord has been brought into the fraternity." C.G. Lambert reported that, even though he suspected that Freemasons belonging to the Klan had denied the applications of two foreign-born applicants, "The lodges in the 50th district are most harmonious and getting along splendidly." Writing from Santa Monica, Edward Massey denied that Klansmen were causing trouble and added: "Can say nothing regarding the K.K.K.'s except that quite a few number of our best members admit membership in organization. Some of these men are my personal friends and are thought of very highly in neighborhood."[32]

Of course, some of these Masonic officers may have simply been unable to detect any form of tension within their lodges as to the matter of dual membership. Many of the replies to Grand Master Crites' investigation admitted as much, saying they believed there was no disruption as far as they were aware. One officer stated that, in regard to Klansmen dictating the affairs of the fraternity, "There has been a rumor of it in one lodge, but it could not be traced to any conclusion." A few of the lodges, however, did describe more troubling conditions. R.H. Reinhert replied to Crites' inquiry and said that there had been some disturbances in his lodge after one former Master had given a speech at a luncheon as to why he was a Klansman, while another member later replied to this speech. Reinhert elaborated and said: "An announcement was made at this luncheon that this meeting would forever terminate discussion relative to this subject." William W. Abbott, referred to earlier, stated that he had been forced to appear before lodges in Merced, Modesto and Turlock because members had charged Klansmen with trying to take control of these posts, and that he felt it necessary "to reprimand them for their conduct and warn against any infraction of Masonic law".[33]

This collection of reports cannot be considered representative, but they do illustrate the flexible character of the Invisible Empire as a movement. Although there are some individual replies that indicate that Klansmen were disrupting Masonic affairs and breaking down brotherly relations, most of these officials announced that either they were unaware of any Klansmen in the ranks of their lodges, or these men were simply not causing any disturbances within the fraternity. As such, interactions between the California Klan and the Craft were quite complex and varied from location to location. These reports demonstrate the importance of using a microhistorical approach to the Ku Klux Klan. Generalizations tend to overlook the subtle local distinctions in the conflict between these two orders. To truly understand how the Craft and the Klan interacted, we need to focus on case studies of individual communities before drawing conclusions about the overall national picture.

Yet, as has been argued throughout this study, the members of the Second Klan were careful and discreet when it came to recruiting American men to join their group, and often worked covertly to raise the profile of this militant fraternity among outsiders. Hugh Emmons, Exalted Cyclops of the South Bend klavern in Indiana, recalls how he worked within his community to promote the

Klan indirectly. He was instructed to attend local neighbourhood meetings, such as prayer gatherings, or even to host playing card parties, and invite non-Klansmen to drum up political support for the order. More importantly however, as Emmons recalled, he was instructed to "absolutely not mention the Klan in these meetings. That was one of our secrets" but simply insinuate that something needed to be done to defend white Protestant American interests and the need for organization.[34] Therefore, many Klansmen within California's Masonic chapters may have simply been discreet about their membership to infiltrate the lodge and influence attitudes towards the Klan. In addition, the order's notable efforts to control their public image and challenge accusations that they were a lowly vigilante group had helped to cultivate plenty of support among Freemasons who did not belong to the Klan and the wider public. Consequently, the Klan's efforts to access and influence Masonic lodges may have simply gone unnoticed or were dismissed as being an unnecessary cause for alarm because of the false charges put forward against the Invisible Empire.

For instance, in August 1924 Crites contacted Irving Magnes, a Freemason from Oakland, to try to ascertain just how powerful the Klan was in that city. He wrote:

> I have word from Oakland that the Klan is very strong there and are openly claiming that they can throw the Masonic fraternity. I am very anxious to get definite information as to just how strong they are … and whether they are planning on securing control of our order.

Concerned about these possible conditions, Crites asked Magnes to carry out an extensive investigation of the Klan's affairs, and even proposed that he hire a detective agency to acquire evidence. Magnes wrote back later that month, saying he had some limited information but that it was "not an easy task". His letter to Crites said:

> By general reputation here the order [the KKK] has a better than fifty per cent membership made up of our members. They are in all our Lodges. The actual influence they exercise is not ascertainable; by which I mean I cannot find that the course of conduct of our meetings is much different than in past years.

Magnes included one example where a Jewish applicant had been rejected, but mentioned that Jews had been denied membership in this city's lodges long before the Klan's existence. Magnes had also conferred with a "good friend" who held dual membership about the activities of the Invisible Empire, and whom he believed to be "sincere". Magnes recounted how this Oakland Klansmen said "he has never heard of any mention being made along the lines of influencing our Order [the Craft] here and he insists that when they are in our Lodge they act as Masons and without other influence". If there was any disruption from Klansmen within Masonic lodges, it was the work of individual "pinheads".[35]

Magnes' investigation raises some interesting points. Although Oakland's lodges had plenty of Klansmen, he concluded that they did not seem to be having much effect on everyday Masonic affairs. Yet, considering the Klan's secretive attempts to influence various other institutions, it seems likely that Magnes may have simply been unable to recognize their efforts. More importantly, Magnes relied on the honesty of a good friend of his from the Klan to draw his conclusion. Magnes was not the only Masonic officer who trusted Klansmen to be honest about whether they were trying to influence local lodges. That same month, Crites wrote to a J.B. McLees and asked him to investigate a number of newspaper articles that alleged that Klan speakers had given speeches at Masonic lodges in San Diego, saying he was "quite surprised as well as disturbed over this information". McLees wrote back to confirm that yes, a Freemason name Ezra Metz did give a speech at a Masonic luncheon called "Why I am a Klansman". However, he also mentioned that two weeks previously a local rabbi gave a speech before the same meeting on why he was not a Klansman, and "so both sides have been aired before Masons of San Diego who attend the weekly luncheons". McLees also declared frankly: "[Now] as to the seriousness of the situation in San Diego I do not agree with the person who has written to you …" and like Magnes, he explained that he had consulted several "close friends" on the matter of dual membership and its effects on San Diego's lodges. He concluded that:

> I am not a member of the Klan and can only rely on information that I receive from members of the Klan whose integrity is unquestionable; the Klan is accused of doing many things they are not guilty of, and enemies of the Klan whether Masons or not are ready to condemn the Klan and by every effort fair or unfair to bring that organization under the finger of scorn.[36]

The Klan in San Diego, as in Oakland, seems to have been present and active among Freemasons, but contrary to the rumours, seems to have avoided any sort of overt confrontation with the fraternity. In addition, other Freemasons may have simply refused to believe that the issue was cause for concern, professing that the Klan was being hounded and mistreated by the press and other public figures.

The Ku Klux Klan valued Masonic patronage and worked to combat any anti-Klan opposition among the members of this fraternity. It is because of this that the lack of overt confrontations between opponents and supporters of the order in San Diego or Oakland is not entirely unexpected. The Invisible Empire's hierarchy only defied Freemasons who could damage the order on a national level but avoided upsetting ordinary members of the Craft wherever possible. The illusion of cooperation between the two fraternities was too precious for the Klan to squander on petty squabbles in local lodges. To attempt to openly direct the affairs of Freemasonry, particularly in lodges with hostile audiences, would have been counterproductive for the Invisible Empire's supporters.

Similarly to the issue of calculating the crossover levels among the two orders, there is conflicting evidence regarding the influence of the Invisible Empire in individual lodges. As has been argued, the Klan was a flexible organization, and its members could act both aggressively or passively within other fraternal lodges. Furthermore, Freemasons themselves reacted to the Klan in a variety of ways. One lodge or community is simply not representative of the situation nationwide. Consequently, and in some senses unsurprisingly, the Invisible Empire's relationship with the Craft in America can only be described as complex and variable. Freemasons from across the country joined the Ku Klux Klan, but the only way to know how their brethren would react is by carrying out case studies and analysing this issue from a microhistorical perspective.

Passionate exchanges between Americans over the question of the KKK were frequent in the pages of Masonic newspapers and mainstream publications. Responding to a fiery letter sent into the *Square and Compass* defending the Invisible Empire as a fraternity that could protect the Craft's and the country's values and heritage, this Masonic weekly argued that the two orders were incompatible. Their article asked readers to choose, either between "Masonry, which seeks to bring about harmony and concord among various members of the human family, or Ku Kluxism the aim of which is to create strife and discord among the citizenry of our great Republic".[37] Yet, although such arguments were common in print, this was not always the case at the local lodge and cannot help us fully understand how Freemasons interacted with Klansmen at a personal level. Focusing exclusively on individual communities can help us isolate some of the factors influencing the success and decline of a Klan among a group of Freemasons in an individual community, as well as provide us with interesting examples of the effect that this order had on different lodges. To this end, this study will now turn to two very different communities – Dallas, Texas and Anaheim, California – to further understand the complex relationship between these two giants of the fraternal world. Following this microhistorical analysis, this study will try to take a broader view by discussing how Masonic authorities from across the country reacted to the Ku Klux Klan. It is crucial to observe how these two fraternities interacted from a number of different perspectives, as this will allow us to gain a better understanding of the matter. This more national examination, coupled with the local examples from the case studies, will hopefully provide more general conclusions about the complex nature of the connection between the Craft and the Klan.

Notes

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6 Dallas Klan No. 66 and Anaheim Lodge No. 207

A case study of two communities

In several ways, the cities of Anaheim and Dallas were two entirely different communities following the end of the First World War. Dallas, the significantly larger of the two, had grown from an agricultural economy based around cotton at the turn of the century to become the banking, transport and retail centre of the Southwest. Anaheim, on the other hand, was still largely a rural California town that relied heavily on citrus groves, ranches and a budding oil industry. However, these two cities share a common heritage, namely an uncomfortable association with the Second Ku Klux Klan. Both communities felt the divisive effects of this fraternity during the early 1920s. "Whippings, tar and feathers and running people out of town seem to be the order of the day," declared one former Texas Governor in 1922; "Dallas has been made a spotlight spectacle to its detriment in the eyes of the Nation by the lawless occurrences within her limits." A month later, a journalist from Anaheim described the order as the "self-constituted guardians of the morals of the city", and recounted how "threatening letters have been mailed to victims, ordering them to put their houses in order and depart in a given time, insinuating dire consequences if they fail to comply".[1] The Invisible Empire established two powerful klaverns in these cities that would shape the course of their history during the first half of the Roaring Twenties.

As in other cities across America, the kleagles that arrived in Dallas and Anaheim initiated their recruitment drives at the local Masonic lodge. The rise of this new fraternity in both communities would lead to conflict between residents and among Masonic brethren. This chapter aims to explore these issues and the relationship between the Ku Klux Klan and the Craft in these two cities. This discussion will demonstrate some of the points made in earlier sections about the growth of the Invisible Empire, as well as highlight some aspects of the conflict between the two fraternities that might be particular to their locales. By examining Dallas and Anaheim, this analysis will demonstrate how kleagles initiated their recruitment drives, how Klansmen presented their order to the local community and how the rise of this fraternity affected public life. Furthermore, we will examine why it was that individual Freemasons joined the KKK, what the proportion of dual membership was and the effect that this crossover had on these fraternities and the cities themselves. While it is possible to theorize

from these discoveries, the conditions in both Anaheim and Dallas were not always representative of the situation in other parts of the country. Nonetheless, they constitute two useful examples that illustrate the range of possible forms that the Invisible Empire could take and the distinct effect they could have on local fraternities. This analysis will be mostly comparative, focusing on Dallas first and then Anaheim, in an effort to show the similarities and differences between the two cases. Ultimately, this chapter will show how differently the Klan could manifest itself, and, just as importantly, how differently people outside of this fraternity could respond and react to its presence.

Historians writing about the Ku Klux Klan have always been constrained by the lack of available primary sources relating to this organization. Dallas and Anaheim are two communities that happen to have substantial historical material relating not only to the Invisible Empire, but also to Freemasonry and the connections between the two fraternities, making them ideal locations to focus on for the purposes of this study. Although Dallas and Anaheim are among a small handful of communities where such material exists and where this research is possible, such investigations still present difficulties. The Klan is still a delicate subject in both communities, and locals can be resistant to such inquiries. Some 50 years after this order marched in Anaheim's streets, a journalist phoned an elderly resident of the area to ask what he knew about the city's sordid relation to this fraternity. The man only replied: "Don't you go around asking about the Klan. Don't do it. You'll be sorry," before hanging up.[2] Previous accounts of the Klan's rise in Dallas and Anaheim have had to skirt around the topic of this fraternity's evident relationship with Freemasonry because of the sensitive nature of the topic and other obstacles. However, access to new material finally allows the complex relationship between the two fraternities to be properly examined.

The Ku Klux Klan in Dallas

Its own members boasted that Dallas Klan No. 66 was "the largest Klan in the realm of Klandom", a justifiable claim considering this klavern's size and sway within the Invisible Empire. Texas was one of the first states to be targeted by kleagles following the Southern Publicity Association's takeover of the organization's propagation and proved to an abundant market for klectokens. Historian Charles Alexander believed that Dallas probably had the highest number of Klansmen per capita among the major urban centres, numbering nearly 13,000 members in 1924. The Klan in Dallas set itself up quietly in late 1920, recruiting members and building its strength covertly before launching a more widespread publicity campaign.[3] Although still in its formative stages, Dallas Klan No. 66's appetite for violence was felt even then. In April 1921, Klansmen kidnapped an African-American bellhop, branded him with acid and gave him 25 lashes for supposedly making advances on white female patrons of the hotel where he worked. Reporters had been invited to attend the horrific punishment and witnessed what is thought to have been the Dallas Klan's first act of vigilantism. One newspaper article reported that "the alleged Klan ha[s] a strong organization

here, but no one appears to know who they are". Many within the city seemed unsure about the rise of this movement, but still others welcomed what they felt was a patriotic and manly organization that could restore order to Dallas. The attack even received the approval of local authorities, including a judge who said: "Maybe it will be a lesson. It is time something was done in cases of this kind."[4]

Dallas residents would soon become very familiar with the KKK and reports of vigilante attacks would become quite frequent over the course of the coming year. Once it had gathered enough members, Dallas Klan No. 66 announced its presence in the typical manner: by organizing a large parade. On 21 May 1921, 789 Klansmen marched silently and in full uniform through the centre of Dallas carrying flags and crosses. This attracted a large audience, many of whom cheered and applauded as Klansmen walked by holding signs reading "White Supremacy", "Dallas Must Be Clean" and "Our Little Girls Must Be Protected". Dallas Klan No. 66 also sent an advertisement to the local papers to promote their order. The notice was a standard enunciation of the Ku Klux Klan's beliefs, and professed that they planned "to uphold the dignity and authority of the law … no innocent person of any color, creed or lineage has just cause to fear or condemn this body of men". They also declared "our creed is opposed to violence, lynchings, etc. but that we are even more strongly opposed to the things that cause lynchings and mob rule". The Dallas Klan's focus on moral purity served to bolster male dominance by invoking patriarchal notions of men's duty to protect families and the race, but it was also intended to demonstrate the respectability of Klansmen by highlighting their adherence to strict moral standards that few could question. Overnight, Klansmen also posted red warnings all over the city that read simply "Lawbreakers to reform or leave".[5] With this bold entrance into the public sphere, the KKK made its objectives and priorities quite clear to Dallas and announced that they would pursue a programme of moral reform and 100 per cent Americanism by practically any means necessary.

The media and the public's response to the order's provocative displays testify to the Propagation Department's careful marketing and sales strategy. After having built a solid base of recruits, the Invisible Empire's kleagles hoped to cause controversy and to focus attention on their fraternity wherever they went, and Dallas and Anaheim were no exception. Almost immediately, the Dallas Klan's detractors published condemnations of the parade and the order in general. An editorial in the *Dallas Morning News* declared that the city had been "slandered" by the Klan's unnecessary existence, explaining how: "White supremacy is not imperilled. Vice is not rampant…. There is no occasion for the revival of it now." Residents of the city wrote to this publication to endorse their position. One reader stated that:

> This institution seems to be a return to barbarism by self-righteous persons who are filled with ignorance, bigotry and intolerance. This Ku Klux Klan will, if it continues, make the South ridiculous and a stench in the nostrils of the entire civilized world.[6]

Other readers relayed similar sentiments. Yet not all Texans felt the Klan was such a blight on their state. The Invisible Empire and its officials had hoped to stimulate debate with their sensational appearance, realizing that campaigns against the order often resulted in increased applications to their fraternity. The Dallas Klan had deliberately organized a dramatic parade to encourage their quiet supporters to rally against those who dared to condemn their message of 100 per cent Americanism and clean living.

The response from Dallas was as expected. One reader wrote to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* to defend the Klan, saying "a law breaker or a moral or social degenerate usually gets what he deserves on short notice in the hands of the K.K.K." and explained that this system was cheaper and more effective because it did not include "a bunch of lawyers whose business it is to construct testimony to free criminals". For many, the Klan's vigilantism may have broken the law, but extra-legal justice was warranted by the failures of the legal system. T.O. Perrin, pastor of the city's Westminster Presbyterian Church, even sensed divine intervention and declared: "It may be, however, that the hand of God is working in this organization to bring about a solution of the various problems."[7]

These "problems" Reverend Perrin mentioned referred to a number of social ills that afflicted Dallas and which the Ku Klux Klan had promised to rectify, much to the relief of some of the city's concerned residents. Prostitution, gambling, bootlegging and general lawlessness seem to have been the main focus of the Invisible Empire in Dallas. National issues like renewed mass immigration, moral decay, disrespect for the rule of law, and demands for racial equality also worried citizens from this community. While there were no major demographic shifts and no extraordinary spikes in criminal or radical activity in Dallas to precipitate such concerns, many residents within the city were still apprehensive about these issues. As historian Mark N. Morris has argued, even though there was "little to suggest that society was in any immediate danger of disintegration, many in Dallas were convinced the threat was real".[8] The KKK promised to address the fears of the majority of the city's white Protestant residents, and many seemed to approve of both their message and even their methods.

The vehemently anti-Klan newspaper, the *Dallas Dispatch*, published an insightful examination of the Second Klan, listing the reasons they supposed Dallas men were joining the order. The editor believed religious prejudice played a major part in the order's popularity, writing that "notwithstanding the Protestant majority in American politics, 'Get the Jew' and 'Swat the Pope' slogans are always popular". The editor noted that the post-war jingoism was another seemingly important aspect of the Klan's success, declaring that: "It's easy to pervert patriotism these days…. The 'holier-than-thou' element is attracted by the Klan's promise to clean-up the town and banish all criminals except bootleggers and Klansmen." In many respects, this list mirrors the reasons given by current studies as to the growth of the Invisible Empire in Texas. The *Dallas Dispatch*, however, also emphasized that the "lodge instinct" was boosting the Klan's numbers in the city, explaining that: "Many men are professional [joiners]. They want to be a member of anything the least bit exclusive….

A secret lodge is powerfully attractive to these folks." The article further remarked that the "sheep instinct" was another critical aspect of the fraternity's popularity, outlining how:

> Organizers whisper that Dr. So and So, the big dentist, is a member. That Rev. This and This and That of the East Dallas church is the grand chaplain. That Mr. So Forth, who occupies a prominent downtown corner is foreman of the Klan jury. If all the big men are in, the prospect concludes, he might as well be, too. One sheep, all sheep.[9]

Before many other commentators had noticed, the *Dallas Dispatch* had detected some of the key elements of the Klan's recruitment tactics. For many prospective Klansmen, particularly those hoping to climb the social ladder, this image of respectability, exclusivity and the potential for social advancement were a powerful selling point. As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, the Propagation Department purposefully exploited the so-called lodge and sheep instincts, targeting fraternalists and attempting to recruit respected citizens to boost the organization's standing. It was these tactics that inevitably led the Klan to try to recruit from the Freemasons in both Anaheim and Dallas.

Historians have claimed that Dallas's kleagles commenced their recruitment efforts within the city's Masonic lodges, attempting to find distinguished white Protestants to swell the ranks of their budding organization.[10] In September 1921, the *New York World* described how kleagles lured Dallas Freemasons into their order, proclaiming that:

> Since the advent into the South, and more especially in Texas, of the Ku Klux Klan, there have been efforts made to tie the proposition onto the coattails of leading members of the Masonic fraternity, leaving the impression, both with the public and the younger Masons, that Freemasonry was sponsoring the Klan…. Good men have been induced to join the Dallas Klan on the claim that within its ranks must be found certain men of local Masonic prominence, only to find that they have been have been misled.[11]

It is difficult to establish whether Freemasons had in fact been among the first to join the order, but we do know that many of the charter members of Dallas Klan No. 66 were initiates of the Craft. As part of their celebration of the massive gathering of Klansmen at the Texas State Fair in 1923, Dallas Klan No. 66 released a souvenir booklet that included the biographies of the event's organizers. These organizers were all leading Dallas Klansmen, men who had joined the fraternity before its chartering and early on in its development in the city. The list included: Zeke E. Marvin, former Exalted Cyclops of Dallas Klan No. 66 and Great Titan or leader of Province No. 2; J.D. Van Winkle, then current Exalted Cyclops in Dallas; Edward M. Nelson, office manager of the klavern; Earle H. Silven, klaliff or vice-president of the Dallas Klan, who joined as early as February 1921; M.M. Hinton, head of the Dallas Klan Band; J.W.

Hutt, the editor of the *Texas 100% American*, the local Klan publication; and W.L. Thornton, Chairman of the Klan's Legal Committee. Of these seven, Marvin, Van Winkle, Silven and Hinton were confirmed Freemasons. Nelson was apparently "a member of several other fraternal orders, and is very active in the [Elks], being a member of Dallas Lodge No. 71". Hutt was also "a member of several fraternal organizations, and is a Past Grand of the [Independent Order of Odd Fellows]". Hiram Wesley Evans himself, the first Exalted Cyclops of the Dallas Klan and one of its charter members, was a respected 32nd degree Freemason. The high rate of fraternal membership among these early members and leaders of Dallas Klan No. 66 indicates that it was quite likely that kleagles began their recruitment efforts within Protestant lodges like that of the Freemasons. This would have helped to boost the Klan's popularity and establish it as a respectable order among the city's residents.

During the summer of 1921, a wave of attacks perpetrated by Klansmen throughout Texas shocked residents of Dallas, and seemed to confirm the terrifying predictions of those who opposed the order. Benny Pinto, a petty criminal of nearby Fort Worth, was kidnapped right in the middle of the city in July 1921 by hooded Klansmen. He was ordered to leave the area, was given a coat of tar-and-feathers and later was dropped off before a gawking crowd. Pinto refused to leave the city, and the following month he was again forced into a car and driven to a secluded area where he was warned to leave and given 60 lashes. This time, he promptly departed. The Klan wrote an official communication to the local paper to give their version of the events, and explained that: "Pinto had been charged in the courts with having committed felonies. He was never convicted…. He had bragged that the 'law could not touch me.' But the hand of the Klansmen can and did!" There were also a number of vigilante incidents within the city of Dallas itself during the summer of 1921, and although many suspected it was the work of the Ku Klux Klan, there was no way of ascertaining who the perpetrators were.[12]

The fraternity's leadership, always sensitive to their portrayal in the media and their image in the minds of the American public, launched a publicity campaign in Texas to deflect this negative attention. Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons announced to the press that 30 men had been assigned to Texas and Oklahoma to investigate the allegations of vigilantism made against the order in those states. Simmons made it clear that he trusted that these Klansmen were innocent of all accusations and that: "I rather believe that there is some force at work in Texas and Oklahoma attempting to shield their crime under the cloak of the Ku Klux Klan."[13] Simmons released several similar statements in the coming weeks and published advertisements defending the Klan in popular newspapers in an effort to combat the negative portrayal of his brotherhood. Imperial Kludd Caleb A. Ridley, the national chaplain of the Klan, was dispatched on a speaking tour throughout Texas and Oklahoma that August to try to minimize the effects of the opposition to the order. He gave a speech in Dallas at the Fair State Park before 2,200 people where he said: "The Ku Klux Klan of the West has been accused of everything during the last two months, from kicking a crutch from

under a cripple to stealing butter from a blind negro's bread." Ridley also pointed out the duplicity of the press when he discussed a murder that happened in Georgia:

> Some time ago, there was a fellow killed in Atlanta. Five men were with him at the time. Two were Klansmen, three were Masons and two were Odd Fellows. The press said the Klan was responsible. It didn't say Masons or Odd Fellows were responsible.[14]

Ridley tried to shield the Ku Klux Klan under the mantle of fraternalism, a defence that had become standard practice among the order's national officers. His speeches also seem to have been well received by the audiences. The public relations wing of the Invisible Empire was aware of the importance of managing the order's image and campaigned across the country in cities like Dallas and Anaheim to ensure that the Klan was looked upon with favour by white Protestant Americans.

By 1922, the Invisible Empire's effective image management and sales, coupled with the free publicity provided by the headlines of the city's newspapers, had led to a rise in membership intake. The Klan's increased membership and influence in both Dallas and Texas as a whole would indicate that the efforts of the national leadership had managed to convince citizens that the accusations of night-riding and vigilante justice made against their order were unfounded. But it also seems that some believed these attacks were warranted and many appeared to welcome the Klan's extra-legal brand of violent justice. Dallas Klan No. 66 continued to grow at a steady pace; in January 1922 Imperial Kleagle Edward Young Clarke visited the city and declared: "Our greatest growth is in Texas and Chicago. It is not strange for both these places are made up of real men." Although probably an exaggeration, Clarke announced that Dallas numbered 9,000 Klansmen among its citizens.[15] Despite attempts to curb violent attacks, that year Dallas Klansmen continued carrying out their own extra-legal form of justice. For example, in March 1922, a group of men presumed to be Klansmen kidnapped a white Dallas lumberman named F.H. Etheredge and drove him to the Trinity River bottoms. Here they tied him to a tree and whipped him severely. Journalists reported that members of the nearby New Zion Colored Baptist Church had frequently heard screams coming from the grove where Etheredge was whipped, and referred to one of the trees as the "torture tree".[16]

What this case emphasizes is not only the persistently violent nature of the Dallas Klan, but also how firmly entrenched the group had become in both the government of the city and its police force. Journalists from the *Dallas Morning News* predicted that the Etheredge flogging would join the pile of unsolved vigilante attacks and demanded that the police force sever any connections with the KKK.

"Not until the community shall be assured in a way to satisfy it that its police forces are not under the thrall of that masked organization will it be able to

believe that they have done all they are capable of doing in the effort to get the men who committed these crimes", read one press editorial. Dallas Chief of Police Henry Tanner admitted soon after the Etheredge case that he in fact had been a member of the KKK, believing the order would assist law officers with their duties, but left the fraternity when he found that they did more than just aid the police. He also recounted that he suspected that members of the police force were deliberately hindering the investigation of the floggings at these "river bottom courts".[17] In fact, cases such as this indicate there is reason to believe that many Klan attacks may have gone unreported or unresolved. Particularly in the South, as Nancy MacLean has warned, there is a danger in "the uncritical reliance on public sources in writing the history of the Klan…. Rarely does a story so vividly illustrate the maxim that history is written by the victors". Yet even outside the South, attacks on vulnerable populations, especially immigrants and racial minorities living in more isolated communities, may have been ignored by authorities and have been left unrecorded in official sources.[18]

The papers of Earle Cabell, future mayor of Dallas, even include an unmarked list compiled by an unknown author of Dallas policemen believed to be Klansmen, demonstrating the influence of the Invisible Empire among Dallas County law officers. Historical studies have also shown that in addition to the many police officers who were members of the KKK, several important civic and business leaders of the city were also associated with the fraternity, including judges and state and county officials. "The authorities of the courthouse are now the undivided power of the Ku Klux Klan" lamented one Dallas reporter after a number of Klan candidates were elected to judicial positions in 1922. Political victories at the local, county, state and even national level allowed the Dallas Klan to become firmly rooted in the city's power structure, and demonstrate a fair level of popular support among residents for this order and its objectives. Furthermore, it rewarded those who had joined the Klan in order to climb or cement their place in the social ladder with powerful positions in government and the judiciary.[19]

Considering how well assimilated the Klan had become in practically all facets of Dallas society, perhaps it is not surprising to note then that it was also a popular organization among the Freemasons. Dallas County had a total of 8,881 Freemasons at the end of 1922, divided among 24 different lodges. According to the 1920 census, the county itself had a total adult white male population of 90,872, meaning that around 9.77 per cent of all adult white Dallas males were Freemasons.[20] The official membership registers for Dallas Klan No. 66 remain lost, but fortunately a dependable list of Klansmen has survived. In May 1922, a reporter from the *Dallas Dispatch* managed to jot down the license plates details of a group of Klansmen who had driven to a meeting at the city's Fair Park, by then a regular spot for the order's rallies.[21] The newspaper investigated and contacted the cars' owners to allow them to explain what their vehicles were doing at this parking lot, and printed the names of those who did not deny being Klansmen.

The Dallas Klan was infuriated at the publication of their members' names in the press. An article in their newspaper, the *Texas 100% American*, expressed the outrage of the membership, but did not once deny that the men listed were affiliated to their organization. The article accused the *Dispatch* of publishing this list of Klansmen in an attempt to ridicule these men and damage their businesses. The *Texas 100% American* proudly affirmed that those attending did not need to justify their allegiances and declared:

> Mr. Editor of the nigger daily, you forget yourself. This is not the day of the inquisition and this is not the Rome of 1865 where one must confess and ask absolution, but this is the Grand Old United States, the citadel of the world's civilization and its tower of freedom.[22]

The *Texas 100% American* boldly asserted their right to assemble, and the brazen tone of this piece suggests that the Dallas Klan was not ashamed at the names of its members having been revealed. Neither this article nor any other subsequent communications from Dallas Klan No. 66 tried to refute the list, meaning that it can be positively used as a reliable roster of klavern members.

A random sample of 83 attendants at the Fair Park Klan meeting was taken from the *Dispatch* article, selected only on the basis of their residence in Dallas County. This was confirmed by checking the names and addresses with the 1920 census. These 83 names were then cross-checked with the rosters of the county's Masonic lodges.[23] The results of this analysis revealed that out of the sample of 83 Klansmen attending the Fair Park meeting, 44 of them were also Freemasons, a proportion of around 53 per cent. If this sample can be treated as representative of the membership of Dallas Klan as a whole, then Freemasons were notably overrepresented in the Invisible Empire, since less than 10 per cent of the total white adult male population of the county was an initiate of the Craft (see Figure 6.1).[24] This data helps to confirm the long-standing claims that the Dallas Klan was especially popular among Freemasons and bolsters the theories that kleagles began their recruiting in the Masonic lodges of the city.

The *New York World* claimed in 1921 that Dallas Freemasons had been "lured" into joining the Klan with deceitful claims of Masonic patronage. One article stated:

> As a result of the tactics used by the Klan organizers in Dallas, many of its members have withdrawn from the membership rolls, and the movement that way is increasing. Official edicts have gone forth from the leaders of the Masonic order to the effect that Ku Kluxism is tinged and marked as a practice unbecoming a Freemason.[25]

The evidence from the 1922 Fair Park meeting contradicts this report from the *World*. Even after the Grand Lodge of Texas and other Masonic authorities had condemned the Klan and warned brethren to avoid the organization in late 1921, some Dallas Freemasons maintained their allegiance to the Invisible Empire and remained committed Klansmen.

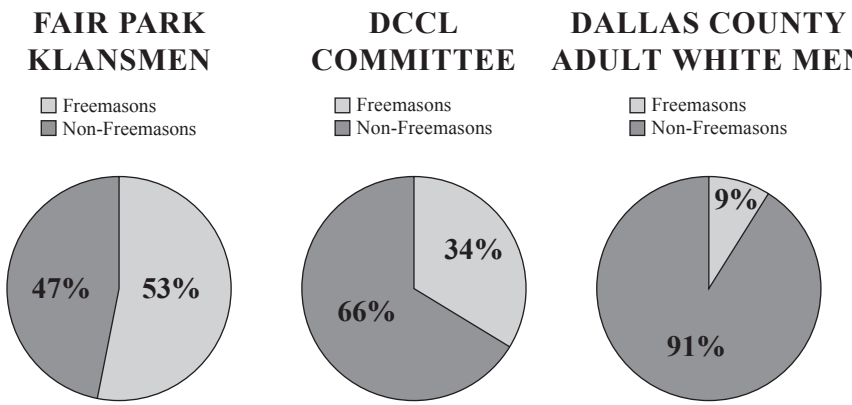

Figure 6.1 Masonic Membership among Klansmen, the DCCL and Dallas Men, 1922.

Many Dallas Freemasons appear to have joined the Ku Klux Klan, but still others joined organizations whose main objective was to stamp out this secret order. The sudden rise of the Invisible Empire in Dallas, as well as the repeated vigilante attacks and the organization's following among city officials, had prompted the Klan's detractors to organize. Five thousand citizens gathered at City Hall to form an anti-Klan lobby named the Dallas County Citizen's League (DCCL) in April 1922. The organization was led by various civic leaders of the city, such as local prosecuting attorney Martin M. Crane or former Texas governor O.B. Colquitt. The DCCL was determined to stamp out the Invisible Empire's control of the city's police and politics, and proposed to send a questionnaire to all public officials to ask their opinion of the Klan and ascertain whether they were members. The organization argued they represented the true interests of the city, claiming to have 10,000 subscribers in Dallas who had endorsed their stance and their questionnaire initiative less than two months later.[26]

The Invisible Empire's supporters portrayed the DCCL in completely different terms. They described the initial meeting of his anti-Klan movement as a "big fizzle" and rejected the notion that the meeting was representative of the city as a whole. The Dallas Klan also decried the allegations made against their order, saying: "There was never a greater aggregation of slander, innuendo, actual false charging and blackmail ever issued."[27] The two organizations were diametrically opposed in their views, and each characterized the other as a nuisance and unrepresentative of the wider views of the public. There is some truth to this argument; employing a thorough socioeconomic analysis of the membership and leadership of both the Dallas Klan and the DCCL, historian Mark N. Morris has determined that the former group was composed mostly of "business-orientated citizens who were unhappy with their political influence and concerned with social changes" while the latter group was "led by established

civic and urban leadership".[28] In this sense, neither organization's membership was representative of the city as a whole, and appears to have reflected the aggressive interests of the groups they served. The struggle between these two groups could even be described as a form of status conflict between established and upcoming citizens vying for political power.

Unsurprisingly, included within the "civic and urban leadership" that formed the DCCL were a significant number of Freemasons. The publication of one Dallas County Citizen's League pamphlet allows us to review the number of Dallas Freemasons among the opposition to the Klan. In June 1922, this organization mailed a petition to residents of the city with a brief outline of their objectives, asking citizens to express their sympathy with the DCCL and its aims. The pamphlet also printed the names of the executive and advisory committee of the organization, a total of 87 people. To analyse the Masonic affiliations of the leadership of this organization, a sample of 71 men was taken from this group, selected on the basis of their residence in Dallas County. Their names were cross-checked in the census and in the Texas Masonic rosters, which revealed that 24 of the 71 leaders of the Dallas County Citizens League were Freemasons, a proportion of around 33.8 per cent.[29] The DCCL may have portrayed their organization as a cross-section of society, but among the leadership at least, membership in the Craft was proportionately higher than average. There were Freemasons on both sides of the city's debate on the Invisible Empire, as there were across the country.

Included among the founders of the DCCL was Sam P. Cochran, a prominent businessman in the city and a distinguished Masonic leader. The list of Masonic offices held by Cochran is extensive, making him one of the most prominent Freemasons in Texas and the country as a whole. He was elected as the Grand Commander of the Texas' Knights Templar, was a member of the ruling body or Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, and held various other positions in several other Masonic ancillary groups.[30] His stance on the Ku Klux Klan was unequivocal. At a gathering of Scottish Rite Masons in Houston in 1922 he advised the Invisible Empire to "make good on its repeated proclamation as an institution devoted to the maintenance of law and order, and in proof of its sincerity in this declaration, disband". He further encouraged Texas to "again become a united citizenship, determined to enforce the laws, and give peace and protection to those who believe in legally constituted government".[31] Cochran gave a damning speech at the DCCL's founding meeting, and became a part of the group's advisory committee. Dallas Klan No. 66 decried his allegiance to the DCCL and questioned whether this respected Masonic authority had been "hoodwinked" by forces loyal to the Pope. His public condemnation of the Klan made him a target for the Invisible Empire. One Klan writer asked Cochran:

> Is it politics or a realization of loss of hero worship from the men to whom he has so long taught Masonry and what it stands for, that prompted him to allow his name and the principles he has been known to stand for, now to

> turn coat and align himself with a crowd of men – 75 per cent Catholics – whose paramount ambition is to tear down the very things he is supposed to have stood for all his years of activity.[32]

Cochran was a member and past head of Hella Temple, the city's local Shriners lodge. Zeke E. Marvin and George K. Butcher, Dallas Klan No. 66's Exalted Cyclops and kligrapp respectively, were also members of Hella Shrine. Similarly, Hiram Wesley Evans and George B. Dealey, the editor of the vocally anti-Klan *Dallas Morning News*, were both members of Pentagon Lodge No. 1080. Indeed, if we compare the samples of Klansmen from the Fair Park list and the committee of the DCCL, we can see that a fair number of these usually fierce opponents would have seen each other at their local lodge. Twelve Klansmen sat alongside three members of the DCCL sample in Oak Cliff Lodge no. 705. Seven Klansmen from the Fair Park meeting attended Pentagon Lodge no. 1080, as did five members of the DCCL committee. In Dallas County's 24 Masonic lodges, proponents and opponents of the Ku Klux Klan sat together as brothers to perform their ritual and promote fraternalism and charity.

Grand Master Andrew Randell observed in 1921 that this was the case in several lodges in Texas, but, that in some, the Klan had caused severe disruptions. He affirmed that:

> Already from all over this Jurisdiction have the rumblings of disharmony and discontent reached the ears of Masonic leaders. Brethren are no longer dwelling together in unity in many lodges in this state. Applicants have been blackballed, brethren have been protested for advancement, the installation of officers has been objected to, arguments have arisen and factions have been formed, all because of the suspected activity … of the Klan…. Members are remaining away from their lodges because they cannot meet their brethren upon the level or part from them upon the square.[33]

However, notwithstanding this troubling news, Randell reported that an overwhelming majority of Texas' lodges approved of his position against the Invisible Empire. He announced that only 20 of the 912 lodges in the state explicitly disapproved of his condemnation of the Klan, none of them in Dallas. Those few Texan lodges where troubling conditions existed were probably rare and isolated affairs. Grand Master Randell did not expel any Dallas Freemasons from the fraternity for disrupting the affairs of the lodge or for supporting the Klan as other Masonic officials had been forced to do in other parts of the country. Neither were there reports of disruption among Dallas lodges in the city's press or in statements released by the DCCL. Dallas lodges appear to have remained unperturbed by the rise of the Invisible Empire, at least at a local level. This may be because Freemasons traditionally avoided revealing their private affairs with the outside world, and this included discussing the delicate issue of the membership of their brethren in the Ku Klux Klan with the uninitiated. Many Freemasons may have also simply not been troubled by the presence of the Invisible Empire

or did not feel it was their place to scold those who had joined and were content to simply disassociate the two orders. The lodge was not the place to discuss such matters, and brothers of Dallas Freemasonry chose not to spend their time arguing over such issues. Furthermore, as has already been discussed, Klansmen were often discreet about their membership and dared not risk exposing themselves to the ire of Masonic authorities who had vehemently condemned their organization and threatened expulsion from the fraternity.

Dallas Klan No. 66 had managed to entrench itself in practically all levels of the city's government and its churches, political parties and fraternities. This powerful influence, coupled with a long tradition of white-capping and vigilantism in the state, had encouraged some of the Dallas Klan to engage in acts of violence against their fellow citizens without fear of prosecution. Furthermore, since the Klan often targeted Dallas' racial minorities, lawbreakers and other undesirables, the group's attacks were sometimes welcomed by the white Protestant citizens of the city. However, these actions troubled certain sectors of the public and especially the media, and anti-Klan groups began to agitate for action against the takeover of the government. Freemasons did in fact join both sides of this argument. Despite the elevated rhetoric of both the Klan and anti-Klan groups, and aside from a few notable exceptions, direct confrontation between factions at a local community or lodge level were rare or muted.

This example illustrates the Klan's careful approach to recruitment in this city. Kleagles exploited the power of the "lodge-instinct" and eagerly encouraged Freemasons to join. They also protected their public image and created their own media to defend their interests and control public perceptions of their order. In this sense, the Dallas Klan was very much like Anaheim's own klavern, or like the hundreds of other chapters of the Invisible Empire. However, the main difference between these two cities was probably the reception they received. Whereas Dallas had a prominent anti-Klan pressure group, the city and its residents seemed unconcerned about the order. Large campaigns to oust the Klan in Dallas continued until 1924, but the fraternity's decline in the city was mostly due to internal dissension rather than outside pressure. The city's Masonic lodges did not side openly with the Invisible Empire or the anti-Klan pressure groups and civic leaders that emerged after 1921. Not even the frequent incidents of violence were enough to spur the city's Freemasons into forcefully expelling the Invisible Empire's agents from their lodges. The Dallas Klan had managed to grow and entrench itself in government and society, through a supportive base of members and a largely indifferent public. Anaheim, on the other hand, was a much less receptive community. In this California city, residents were drawn into a tense standoff between the order's supporters and detractors,which helped to quickly disperse the local klavern.

The Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim

The Klan's intrusion into community affairs and Masonic lodges in the city of Anaheim had an entirely different effect on the civic life of this community.

Because this city was far smaller than Dallas, and because both sides of the Klan issue escalated the conflict markedly with boycotts and inflammatory rhetoric, there was significant tension within the Orange County community and many neighbours were forced to make their allegiances clear to avoid complete alienation. One journalist from the vehemently anti-Klan *Anaheim Gazette* described the fraternity as an "insidious influence which has long been secretly at work in the city, seeking to array class against class, [which] has become a menace to the growth and prosperity of the community …".[34] In this small community of just 5,000 Californians, the Klan's divisive effects were magnified by an active opposition, disrupting relations within the town and between its inhabitants.

The Ku Klux Klan's growth in this city was largely rooted in existing tensions between different blocs within Anaheim. Leading the community was an established elite, a group of prominent Orange County families, many of them of German descent, who held the political balance in the area. Many of the city's residents felt powerless and ignored by this elite, and were discontent with a number of matters within their community. Key among them was the wasteful government administration and a lax attitude towards Prohibition enforcement that had disconcerted many voters. Ultimately, a substantial section of Anaheim's citizens came to regard the administration of their city as corrupt, undemocratic and self-serving. This rival group, composed mainly of aspiring and politically active citizens, was intent on challenging the establishment and creating a more efficient and representative government for Anaheim.

Other organizations had attempted to wrest control from this elite, including the American Civic League of Anaheim, a group which challenged the establishment in the 1922 elections and among whose ranks were many who would subsequently become Klansmen. This group ultimately failed to wrest political control from the elites or address the concerns of the community's disaffected public, opening a social niche for an opportunistic organization like the Klan to find supporters. The Invisible Empire set up its first klavern in the city in March 1922, but this branch was quickly dissolved in the aftermath of the Inglewood Raid. This raid refers to an attack by a group of Klansmen on some local bootleggers in the nearby town of Inglewood. The raid turned sour when a local marshal confronted them and a Klansman was killed during a shootout. The dead Klansman was actually a local police officer from Inglewood. In the resulting disarray and public outcry, Los Angeles District Attorney Thomas Lee Woolwine seized and threatened to publicize the California Klan's membership rosters. This revelation virtually destroyed the budding Anaheim klavern. The branch was eventually re-founded later in the autumn by the future Exalted Cyclops Reverend Leon Myers, an Oregon minister who had recently arrived in town to lead the congregation of the First Christian Church, Anaheim's largest religious body.

The Anaheim Klan grew using familiar recruitment strategies that had been previously implemented in Dallas and other parts of the country. Visiting churches in regalia to make donations, burning crosses on hills, infiltrating local civic groups and fraternities and arranging speeches by lecturers, the Klan in this

small town managed to attract initiates into the order.[35] The city's klavern focused on a combination of typical national Klan concerns mixed with local matters. The content of two separate speeches given by Exalted Cyclops Myers detail the main issues that the Anaheim Klan felt apprehensive about. The first talk promised to answer such questions as:

> Have certain Merchants Joined Hands with Roman Catholics to Rule or Ruin Anaheim?…
>
> Will a Rome Controlled Administration Enforce Law?…
>
> Are Civic Clubs of Anaheim Controlled by Rome?

A second lecture by Myers revealed the discontent with local government felt by Klansmen, and asked:

> Shall Criminals Rule Anaheim?…
>
> Taxpayers! Shall $35,000 be paid for about one acre [of] land?
>
> Shall $7,500 be paid for extra police force while rum runs riot?[36]

The Anaheim Klan localized the national ideology of the order by portraying community disputes as part of an overarching struggle between the Invisible Empire and its un-American enemies. National issues such as the rise of Catholicism, the perceived wave of crime and immorality in post-war America and the immigration question were translated into local clashes that would energize the Klan's followers and dramatize their movement.

The Klan's first bid for power in Anaheim took place in April 1924, when the group put up a slate of four candidates for a decisive city council election. The platform was composed of Elmer H. Metcalf, Dean W. Hassom, Arthur A. Slaback and Emory E. Knipe, all respected local citizens and Klansmen. The candidates did not advertise their affiliation or their Klan backing, and their opponents had no way of proving they were members, so this did not become a central issue in the election. With the support of the local pro-Klan paper, the *Orange County Plain Dealer*, the candidates campaigned on a popular programme of efficiency and accountability, and attacked the current elite council's poor administration of the city. The Klan slate won the election, but their allegiance to the Invisible Empire was not a factor in their victory. In fact, as mentioned, it appears that the issue was deliberately avoided. These candidates won a vital election by appealing to community values and promising sought-after reforms.

The new Klan-dominated council, led by its new mayor, Elmer H. Metcalf, did not have long to enjoy their positions. The city council received a public letter three days after the election from S.I. Scott, Anaheim's local kleagle. The

letter congratulated Metcalf and his associates on their appointment and reminded them:

> It is no secret that the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan were a considerable factor in your election to the position of responsibility which you now occupy by reason of our suffrage with which we have helped elevate you to office.

The letter was supposed to indicate the order's approval of the regime change, and their willingness to assist with law enforcement. Scott had also hoped to dispel any rumours of Klan influence by indicating that the fraternity expected no favours from the city government. To highlight this point Scott specified that:

> Having confidence in your integrity and manhood we desire that no strings of any kind exist between yourselves and ours or any other organization. We advise you that our citizens stand ready any time day or night to render any assistance in their power to aid you in the enforcement of the law or in any other way which may be in our power and to this we stand pledged with our lives. Nearly a thousand men are ready at a moment's notice to serve and sacrifice for the right.[37]

This letter did not achieve its desired effect and served to confirm the doubts of the overthrown city elite regarding the Invisible Empire's role in the ballot box coup earlier that month. The new council inaugurated its mandate by clearing house, replacing a number of non-Klan city employees with members of the order. Metcalf and his fellow Klansmen also delivered on their campaign promise of improving law enforcement by instituting harsher punishments for bootleggers and expanding the police force from just four members to fifteen. Ten of the eleven new appointees just happened to be Klansmen.[38] Such clear evidence of Klan control of local politics and law enforcement helped to galvanize anti-Klan forces. The conflict between Klansmen and their critics in Anaheim worsened from then on, and many of the brotherhood's opponents and the broader community began to regard the group as a serious threat. The Anaheim Klan's monumental parade of 29 July 1924 seemed to confirm some of these suspicions. In this show of strength, 10,000 to 20,000 curious spectators watched thousands of Klansmen march from the train depot to the city park for a mass open-air initiation of around 800 new members. The parade attracted Klansmen and spectators from all over southern California, and included hymns, fireworks and even an airplane displaying a fiery cross in lights.[39] As in Dallas, the Anaheim Klan's parade was intended to demonstrate the power and numbers of the Invisible Empire in that community, and to inspire others to join the organization. In Anaheim, however, this public display unsettled many and unintentionally strengthened the anti-Klan movement.

Historian Richard Melching has observed that the enmity between the city's factions really came to a head following that summer of 1924, and has noted that: "Increasingly, citizens in the community who had previously tried to remain

neutral now found themselves forced to choose sides. The Klan issue was rapidly splitting the community into two hostile camps."[40] Organized boycotts of businesses and establishments quickly led to a breakdown in social relationships between the two groups, and many residents recalled much of the tension. Charles Tuma remembered how his father had resisted the Klan, and said:

> I remember the burning crosses. There was one in front of St. Boniface Catholic Church, not too far from the school.
>
> They tried to get my father to join, but he was definitely against it. He was against anyone who would show preference to any group or color.
>
> I saw the literature they gave my dad. I remember the heated discussions when Klan members ran into non-Klan members on the street. The Klan members would start throwing rocks right there in downtown.[41]

The Anaheim Klan's opponents campaigned tirelessly against the order and quickly managed to gather enough signatures to initiate a recall election in November 1924 to oust the city council, with the vote scheduled for the following February. Anti-Klan groups within Anaheim, unlike in Dallas, had managed to successfully initiate proceedings to oust the organization from the city's institutions. The *Anaheim Gazette* welcomed the recall announcement and declared that there were "ample grounds for complaint" since Metcalf, Hasson, Slaback and Knipe:

> are now known to be members of the Ku Klux Klan, and so long as they hold the balance in the city it will be governed by a hidden Cyclops, who was not elected to office by the citizens, or by the Imperial Wizard of the Invisible Empire, who lives two thousand miles away.

A number of other leading citizens and civic institutions also made declarations against the Anaheim Klan, including Reverend James A. Geissenger, who remarked: "The whole movement, root and branch, and from center to circumference is 'teetotally' un-American." Geissinger was actually forced to hire a bodyguard to protect his home after he received a number of threatening letters that promised to "get him if the four Klan councilmen were recalled".[42]

During September 1924, many of Anaheim's fraternities and civic clubs also took a clear stand regarding the Klan in response to the heightened tension within the city and the surrounding political rhetoric. The Kiwanis passed a unanimous vote and declared to the press that the "Anaheim Kiwanis club does unequivocally and unreservedly condemn and denounce the Ku Klux Klan and activities in the community both individually and collectively" and hoped that the community would "use all honorable means to eliminate from our community the blighting and destructive influence of the Ku Klux Klan and its injurious and unlawful activities". Another resolution was passed by the Kiwanis asking all members to choose their allegiance between the two groups, as they had learned that some of their own were also Klansmen.[43]

The city's Rotary Club took similar actions, saying the Invisible Empire had "set neighbor against neighbor, causing suspicion and distrust to fill the hearts of many" and declaring that they were "anxious to do all in [their] power to restore conditions to normal". Anaheim Lodge No. 1345 of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks had already denounced the order and forbidden members from joining the Klan in 1922, but decided to restate their firm position publicly in September 1924. Likewise, the city's Chamber of Commerce released a statement detailing their opposition to the Klan in the same month. The *Anaheim Gazette* celebrated this collective response and observed that: "Civic societies and clubs, organized for the purpose of the upbuilding of the city, are discovering that their efforts are in vain so long as factional rights are engendered and distrust, suspicion and boycotts exist."[44]

Anaheim Post No. 72 of the American Legion has been identified by historians as a veterans' organization that was particularly rife with Klansmen.[45] Contrary to most of the other voluntary associations in town, the Legion did not release an anti-Klan proclamation to the press in September. Instead the members passed a resolution asking Anaheim residents to allay the disharmony that afflicted their community, and that:

> all words and actions that may cause others unhappiness be restrained and [to] ask the people of Anaheim to join with us in this effort to forever quiet the spirit of unrest and turmoil, and that attitude which paralyses the friendly handclasp and still the cheery … 'good morning'

While the Klan was never mentioned in the Legion's declaration, newspaper accounts interpreted this statement to mean they were asking others to "muzzle anti-Klan talk" and that this hooded fraternity had influenced the Legion to take this action. They suggested that the presence of Klan city councillor A.A. Slaback at the vote where this resolution was passed as evidence of wrongdoing, since he was neither a member of the Legion nor had the qualifications to join. When asked about the statement and the relationship between the two orders, J.W. Hebson, an officer of Anaheim Post No. 72, responded, saying:

> There may be members of the klan in the American Legion, but I am not aware of their identity. The resolution last night was adopted with only two negative votes, while about 75 or 100 voted in favor of it.[46]

Hebson was in fact a Klansman, and would have known perfectly well how many of the Legion's members were also enlisted in the klavern. This once again demonstrates how Klansmen attempted to discreetly manipulate other voluntary associations without openly revealing their affiliations.

The Anaheim American Legion's plea had been sent to the city's other civic clubs, including the Lions, who responded to the calls for peace, saying "we should be doing less than our duty if we aided and abetted by our silence a movement which we feel is mistaken". The Lions club welcomed the Legion's calls for peace and harmony, but they affirmed their conviction:

> that the trouble which is to be avoided was not present in our community until the organizing of the Ku Klux Klan in our midst, but that since this coming of the [Klan], distrust, fear, suspicion, injury and religious prejudice have become general among former friends and neighbors.[47]

Like other residents of the city, the members of the Lions had understood the American Legion's calls for peace as an attempt to muffle the anti-Klan rhetoric among the community. In this small town, the issue of the Klan had become so contentious that anything less than a clear denunciation was interpreted as a sign of tacit approval. Acting in response to this tension, clubs and residents were almost forcibly dragged into the fray, stating their allegiances for or against the Ku Klux Klan. This wave of denunciations from the city's civic clubs stands in stark contrast to the relative silence in Dallas from similar institutions.

Like the American Legion, historians have also pointed to the local Masonic lodge as a hub of Klan activities in Anaheim, although much of this seems to have been based on hearsay. One journalist, investigating the origin of the movement in the area, even wrote: "No one can say exactly when the first Orange County man joined the Invisible Empire, but one account tells of an encyclopaedia salesman visiting all the Masonic Lodge members during the early Twenties, sounding them out for the Klan." While there may not be any corroborating evidence for this rumour, it certainly fits into the *modus operandi* of the Klan's kleagle core. Christopher N. Cocoltchos and other researchers have also alluded to the Klan's significant presence in Anaheim Lodge No. 207. When trying to ascertain the fraternal memberships of the city's Klansmen and their opponents, Cocoltchos was only able to investigate the local Elks lodge because: "Very little information was available on membership in other such groups like the Odd Fellows, Masons, and Moose, because of the reluctance of the organization[s] to let non-members inspect their records."[48] However, Anaheim Lodge No. 207 has recently allowed access to some of the material that has survived from that period. Included among these documents is the Tyler's register, wherein each member would sign their name when attending a meeting. Alongside this, a comprehensive list of Orange County's Klansmen was discovered by historian Stanley Coben in the Library of Congress, and its veracity was subsequently confirmed by other researchers. This list and the Anaheim Tyler's register allow us to confirm the theories of large shared membership between the city's klavern and Masonic lodge.[49]

A random sample of names was taken from the Tyler's register of every meeting of Anaheim Lodge No. 217 during 1924. This sample was compared with the 1920 census and other sources to ascertain whether these members were residents in Orange County and to determine their nationality. Freemasons who were ineligible to join the Klan, such as any non-Americans, were excluded from the sample. The resulting sample was composed of 91 members of Anaheim Lodge No. 207, including most of the officers of that body. By consulting the list of Orange County Klansmen it was determined that 41 of these Freemasons were also Klansmen, a proportion of 45 per cent (see Figure 6.2). Among these

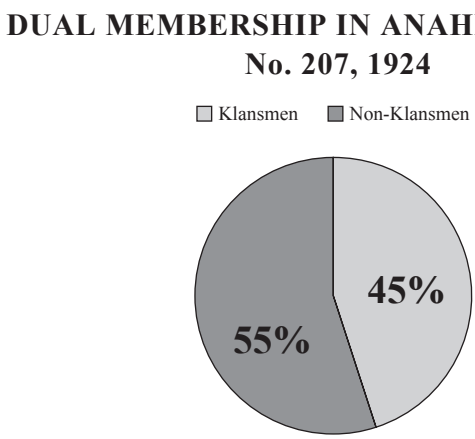

Figure 6.2 Dual Membership in Anaheim Lodge No. 207, 1924.[51]

Klanish Freemasons were the majority of the officers of the fraternity, including the Master, Senior Warden and Junior Warden, the three most senior positions in a lodge. Also counted among these initiates of the Craft and the Invisible Empire were Mayor E.H. Metcalf, A.A. Slaback, Dean W. Hassom and Emory E. Knipe, the Klan city councilmen elected in April. It seems that the rumour that the Anaheim Klan had infiltrated the local Masonic lodge is true, and that historians were right to suggest that this was one of the hubs of Klan recruitment.

However, it would be inaccurate to portray the lodge as a hotbed of Klan activity. While the Tyler's register has survived, the minutes of the meetings have not and there is no way of determining whether the Klan was frequently discussed in Anaheim Lodge No. 207. Nonetheless, this lodge actually released a statement similar to that put out by the Kiwanis or the Elks, condemning the Invisible Empire and their divisive effect on the city's neighbourly atmosphere.[50] The Tyler's register of the lodge shows that the meeting at which this statement was approved was heavily attended, suggesting the importance of this matter for many of the members of Anaheim Lodge No. 207.

Anaheim Lodge No. 207's denunciation of the Invisible Empire seems to stand at odds with the membership of some of the chapter's brethren in that order. Without the minutes of the meetings we can only speculate as to whether there was any conflict within the lodge, but there is no evidence of any clashes within this lodge in the local press or in the archives of the Grand Lodge of California. As discussed in the previous chapter, Grand Master Arthur S. Crites was quite concerned about the growing popularity of the Klan in California's Masonic lodges and had been collecting information regarding their numbers and influence that year (1924). While his records indicate that there were some incidents in lodges across the state, there was no reference whatsoever to Anaheim Lodge No. 207 in his reports on the Invisible Empire. With such a high

proportion of its members having additional involvement in the rival fraternity, and the likelihood that others may have tacitly supported the movement, the pro-Klan forces within the lodge could have easily controlled affairs. This seems particularly true when we consider the fact that the lodge's officers were also Klansmen. It seems almost contradictory that these men would allow their lodge to even consider passing an anti-Klan resolution.

However, we need to consider the fact that these Anaheimers with dual membership may have wanted to keep their affiliations separate, and valued the harmony of the Masonic lodge. As in Dallas, these Klansmen probably wished not to draw attention to their militant beliefs and risk exposure. Militant Freemasons joined the Invisible Empire out of their desire to be a part of an aggressively Protestant and active movement. Many had abandoned attempts to reform Freemasonry into such an organization, preferring to join the more flexible Klan brotherhood that could address their concerns. Yet they did not choose one over the other, and many continued their membership in both orders despite the objections of some of their brethren. For these Freemasons, the essence of the two fraternities did not conflict, and they appear to have preferred not to expose their affiliations to their less militant brethren. In the specific case of Anaheim Lodge No. 207, the pro-Klan members seem to have preferred to allow their lodge to pass an anti-Klan resolution rather than to disrupt the fraternal atmosphere of the organization and risk being expelled from the Craft.

The anti-Klan faction within Anaheim Lodge No. 207 seems to have been motivated by the rising opposition within the city against this order. It is no coincidence that the town's civic clubs and fraternities all made their position regarding the Klan apparent in such a short space of time. In fact, the Elks explained that they had released their anti-Klan statement specifically due to the "fact that a determined move to redeem the city from the domination of this un-American organization".[52] These clubs felt obliged to make their position clear. One article from the *Anaheim Bulletin* encapsulated this heightened tension surrounding the Klan, declaring the community was at a "crossroads" and would have to choose between "Klanheim" or Anaheim. As in Dallas and other locations across America, in order to attract interest and applicants the Anaheim Klan had tried to appear more powerful and numerous than their actual strength conveyed using ominous displays and secretive campaigns. The Klan had boasted in their local paper, the *Plain Dealer*, that in Anaheim alone they had 1,400 members. The rosters of the Orange County Klan reveal they actually numbered closer to 400 Klansmen.[53] This strategy of exaggerating their numbers may have encouraged some to join, but they also alarmed those who recognized the dangers posed by the Klan and inadvertently strengthened their opposition.

The recall vote of February 1925 was ultimately won by Anaheim's anti-Klan faction, and a new city council was elected. "The corpse of the Ku Klux Klan is now lying at the feet of the indignant people of Anaheim, who rose in their righteous wrath and smote it hip and thigh" announced the *Gazette*. This article celebrated the defeat of the Invisible Empire and proclaimed:

> Anaheim, during the past eight months, has been a joke among its sister cities in the Southland. The cloud that has obscured the sun for the past eight months has passed away; the shadow that covered us with a blanket of disgrace has been dissipated.…[54]

The Invisible Empire's brief yet intense campaign in Anaheim quickly subsided after the election. Having risen to power on a platform of effective municipal management and law enforcement, the Klan attracted supporters from many sections of town, including local Freemasons. Despite a relatively small number of violent incidents, the very presence of the Invisible Empire and the potential danger they represented was enough to upset and antagonize the established community and its leaders. The Invisible Empire's alarming presence and their disturbing reputation as a vigilante movement and a danger to orderly government had unnerved many and energized their opponents. The city's reaction to the Klan was very different from the situation in Dallas. Civic clubs and fraternities were almost forcibly dragged into the scuffle, and surprisingly enough Anaheim Lodge No. 207 remained firmly in the anti-Klan camp, regardless of the private beliefs and affiliations of some of its own members.

Comparing Anaheim and Dallas

The Second Ku Klux Klan's ability to market and sell itself is perhaps one of the most underrated features of this organization. The cadre of kleagles that visited both Dallas and Anaheim implemented a very similar recruitment strategy that garnered them a notable following. One of the paramount objectives of a budding klavern was to ensure the support of local leaders and men with any sort of influence in the city. This inevitably led many kleagles to attempt to recruit from the local Masonic lodges, and judging by the results of this research, they found a relative amount of success in both Anaheim and Dallas respectively.

In the case of Dallas, despite the *New York World*'s claims that the city's Freemasons had abandoned the order once they had realized its true purposes, the local klavern still contained a significant number of these men with dual membership well after its initial arrival. In Anaheim, residents and historians had long suspected that the local Masonic lodge was filled with Klansmen. Anaheim Lodge No. 207 certainly did contain many prominent Klansmen, but they were not a majority and they did not openly direct the affairs in the lodge. The anti-Klan statement released by this chapter of the Masonic brotherhood establishes that this was not by any means an outpost of the Invisible Empire that was dominated by Klansmen. Likewise, the lodges in Dallas cannot be considered to have been overrun with Klansmen, and, in reality, contained many fervent foes of that order that belonged to the Dallas County Citizens League. In both communities, the presence of Klansmen within the local Masonic lodge did not generate the conflict between brothers that was reported in other parts of the country and which was such a cause for concern for Freemasonry's leaders. This was also probably the result of a deliberate Klan strategy to conceal their strength in the

Masonic lodges of Dallas and Anaheim and to avoid reprisals from anti-Klan officers who led the Grand Lodges of Texas and California.

These two communities, although entirely different, demonstrate a crucial point, namely that the Klan was able to infiltrate local institutions if left unexposed and unopposed. The Propagation Department and this fraternity's leadership campaigned across the country to recruit initiates into their order, building an impressive front to make their order seem appealing. In Anaheim and Dallas, people joined the order because they saw a new and energetic movement that could deliver change to their societies. This Klan façade had the opposite effect on others. The fraternity's secrecy, their confrontational and divisive ideology, and their displays of strength made many feel unsettled. This uncertainty made many observers in both Anaheim and Dallas apprehensive about the Ku Klux Klan, while others went further and rallied together to combat what they perceived to be as an imminent danger. In Anaheim, however, opponents were far more vehement and energized. They regarded the order as an authoritarian threat to their community and were determined to stamp it out. In this community, even the social clubs and the fraternities felt obliged to come out firmly against the order. The Invisible Empire in both Anaheim and Dallas, as well as the rest of the country, was primarily a political movement, but one whose bizarre ceremonies and customs and controversial appearance made it remarkable both to contemporary observers and to modern historians. The relationship between the Klan and the Craft was strongly influenced by this order's provocative appearance.

Perhaps one of the most striking observations that can be made about the Klan's growth in Dallas and Anaheim is how differently these two communities reacted to the order. Residents of Anaheim initiated an intensive drive against the order that engulfed this small community and dictated political affairs. Citizens were not allowed to stay on the sidelines and were compelled to make their loyalties clear. Klansmen and their critics clashed in this small Californian town, though the Invisible Empire was not as overtly violent as in other states. The Klan's record of violence in Dallas, on the other hand, was appalling. The city's klavern was responsible for a number of brutal attacks over the years, and yet the opposition to this order was not as fervent as in Anaheim. This is because a community's reaction to this aggressive fraternity was not dictated simply by their direct experience of the movement or its record of violence. It was also fundamentally shaped by Americans' perception of the movement and their portrayal in the local and national media. Whereas most of Anaheim's citizens saw the Klan as a threat to democracy, Dallas residents did not seem so concerned with the growth of the fraternity despite its violent outbursts. In fact, many Dallas citizens seemed to regard the Klan as a welcome antidote to the recent wave of lawlessness, a patriotic fraternity that would defend white Protestant America. Perhaps, as Southerners, Dallas residents were more inclined to look upon a revival of the Reconstruction Klan with favour. These different perceptions of the Klan warrant further examination as they shaped how Freemasons themselves viewed and responded to the Invisible Empire and will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

There is no proof that lodges in either Dallas or Anaheim experienced any severe disruption due to the presence of the Klan. Quite the opposite is the case in fact, since sources show that members and opponents of the Invisible Empire sat together in the lodge and followed the Masonic doctrine of fraternal harmony. The issue of the Klan seems to have been put aside among Dallas and Anaheim Freemasons, and was only occasionally discussed. Any disputes or conflict were kept private and deliberated upon within the confines of the lodge. On a national scale, the situation is radically different. Grand Masters from New York, Florida and other Masonic jurisdictions made their struggle with the Ku Klux Klan a very public affair. The next chapter will try to offer a theory as to why it was that Freemasons reacted so differently to the rise of the Invisible Empire, and why this response did not seem entirely influenced by local factors, by observing the individual reactions of various Masonic Grand Masters.

Notes

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50 Cocoltchos, "Invisible Government", p. 502.
51 Anaheim Lodge No. 207, "Tyler's Register – 1924", Anaheim Lodge No. 207; "List of Orange County Klansmen", "Anaheim Ku Klux Klan Collection".
52 "Elks Lodge Bars Klan Members", *Anaheim Bulletin*, 25 September 1924; "Elks Re-Affirm Opposition to Klan", *Anaheim Gazette*, 2 October 1924; "Kiwanians at Anaheim Hit Klan Members", *Santa Ana Register*, 24 September 1924.
53 Melching, "Klan in Anaheim", p. 187.
54 "Requiem Æternam Dona, eis Donime", *Anaheim Gazette*, 5 February 1925.

7 Friend or foe?

Grand Masters' responses to the Ku Klux Klan

On 12 December 1922, Grand Master Arthur S. Tompkins of the Grand Lodge of New York gave a speech before the members of Hoffman Lodge No. 412. Speaking to his fellow Freemasons, Grand Master Tompkins announced:

> I am going to speak now on a subject that I hate to talk about, I hate to think about it, I hate to read about it. I hate it and its boasted invisible empire, the Ku Klux Klan…. I hate this Klan, which works under the cover of darkness, conceals its membership from the public and dares not go out in any of its missions unless it is hidden behind a mask. I say it is un-Masonic and un-American.

Tompkins, a Justice of the Supreme Court of New York and a former U.S. Congressman, was a vocal opponent of the Ku Klux Klan and its repeated intrusions into the lodges and the affairs of the Freemasons during his tenure as Grand Master from May 1922 to May 1924.[1] The Invisible Empire's ideology of staunch 100 per cent Americanism, virulent anti-Catholicism, unabashed white supremacy and conservative moralism had found both supporters and detractors within the country's Masonic lodges. This disruption was a cause for concern for Masonic leaders like Tompkins, whose duty it was to protect the harmony and fraternal atmosphere of his jurisdiction's lodges.

Grand Master Tompkins, as the voice and head of the Grand Lodge of New York, made frequent and public denunciations of the Klan. Historically, Freemasonry's leaders rarely made such forceful statements about current political developments to the press, which suggests the urgency of this issue. Tompkins' statements were particularly unconventional; he was typically more explicit and forceful than other fraternal leaders when it came to speaking about the Invisible Empire. His most prominent declarations appeared in the *New York World* in June 1922, where he announced that: "The movement of the Ku Klux Klan is vicious, dangerous and repugnant to the ideals and traditions of the American people, and the existence of the Ku Klux Klan is wholly unjustifiable in this Nation …". He also openly questioned the good standing of any Freemason who chose to join this "anti-American organization".[2] Like many other civic leaders, Tompkins had read the disturbing accounts of extra-legal violence committed by

Klansmen and had felt compelled to warn his brethren of the dangers posed by this organization. By doing so, he joined the clamour of ministers, politicians and fraternal authorities from New York and across the country who stood against the Second Klan. Conflict between Klansmen and Freemasons at the local level was mostly muted or hidden from the outside world, but on the national stage the Craft's leaders were more public and blunt about their attitudes towards this rival fraternity.

The Grand Lodge of New York's firm stance against the Invisible Empire was echoed by several other Masonic jurisdictions, but this was by no means a unanimous response. Some Masonic leaders chose not to confront the Klan openly or to dissuade their brothers from joining this fraternity. Grand Master Julian F. Spearman affirmed before the 1921 Grand Lodge of Alabama that it would be inappropriate for him to declare himself against the Invisible Empire. Spearman explained how he:

> had neither commendation nor condemnation for this Order and thought it would be overstepping the bounds of propriety to give an expression as Grand Master; that so far as Alabama was concerned, Masonry has no connection with this order, and that I refused to permit the Grand Lodge of Alabama to become involved.[3]

Other Grand Lodges also chose not to get implicated and stayed silent on the matter. But why would a number of Masonic leaders and the bodies they represented choose not to stand firmly against such a clear threat as the Ku Klux Klan? Did some simply believe the order was not as menacing as it had been portrayed, or did they honestly think the subject was none of their business? The parasitic Invisible Empire had managed to enlist about a third of its recruits from Freemasonry's membership and had propagated the impression that the two orders were somehow tied together. Yet Masonic leaders disagreed about how to respond to this secretive and perplexing new fraternity. Some chose to actively campaign against the Klan and remove its members from their jurisdictions, while others stayed silent on the matter and allowed Klansmen to continue recruiting within their lodges. This curious divergence in opinion is not simply a matter of Masonic jurisprudence, but a puzzling and complex historical question, and one that invites further investigation.

To truly understand why Tompkins and other Masonic leaders like him felt the need to go beyond their traditional remit and engage with the world beyond the lodge we need to employ a comparative methodology. By analysing the contrasting positions of several Masonic leaders representing different jurisdictions, some of whom agreed with Tompkins and others who did not, we can gain a deeper appreciation of the factors that pushed civic leaders and individuals in 1920s America to confront or ignore the Ku Klux Klan. While the nature of the Klan's activities at a state level and the strength of this order among the Freemasons of a particular jurisdiction were certainly two factors that influenced how Grand Lodges responded to the growth of Invisible Empire, it is vital to consider

other aspects of this question. In particular, the way the Klan was perceived by the officers of the country's Grand Lodges could be the determining factor that influenced their response to the advance of this competing fraternity. These perceptions of the Invisible Empire were in turn shaped by the limited and occasionally distorted information available to the American public from media and sources that opposed or supported the Klan and its ideology. Indeed, even in states where the Invisible Empire had very few adherents and minimal record of violence, some Grand Lodges felt compelled to pass stringent measures to expel all Klansmen from their lodges. This chapter will build on some of the arguments made in the previous discussion of Dallas and Anaheim by analysing this issue from a more general perspective to understand how and why the fraternity's leaders responded to the Klan's intrusions. To this end, this chapter will focus on the administration of Masonic leaders in the states of New York, Texas, Indiana and Florida, as well as other jurisdictions who approached the issue of the KKK inconsistently. At the national level, the Invisible Empire's attempts to co-opt Freemasonry's reputation and members would not go unchallenged, creating dissension between the fraternity's more traditional and militant factions.

Grand Masters' responses to the Ku Klux Klan

The Invisible Empire's attempts to claim Masonic endorsement and their drive to recruit men tied to this fraternity had been quite successful across the country. This was not a matter that the Craft could resolve internally. Klansmen had succeeded in disseminating the impression among the American public that the two fraternities were somehow connected, and in order to challenge this idea Freemasonry's leaders were forced to publicly condemn the group and disavow any connection with them. Freemasonry usually shied away from the world outside the lodge, but in this instance they were obliged to use an unorthodox approach and engage with the public to ensure their order's name was not tarnished. Some Grand Lodges even felt it necessary to outlaw membership in the Invisible Empire and to revoke the charters of Masonic lodges that failed to comply with their edicts regarding this fraternity. They were drawn into this conflict with the Ku Klux Klan by the intrusive recruitment and public declarations of this rival fraternity's organizers. While at the local level, conflict between Klansmen and Freemasons could be addressed discreetly within the lodge and away from the outside world, on the national stage this would have to be a public matter to ensure the nation at large was aware of the distinction between the two orders. And yet, some Grand Lodges refused to be drawn into such a public debate, choosing to ignore the Klan's advances in their jurisdictions.

Grand Lodges generally expressed their disapproval of the Invisible Empire for two broad reasons. First, they initiated such action due to the Klan's repeated attempts to claim Masonic patronage and attach the prestige and heritage of this fraternity to their own order. The misuse of their brotherhood's name alone was sufficient grounds for many Grand Masters to declare themselves opposed to the Klan, and most of them expressed their uneasiness with this ploy. For example,

in September 1921, Grand Master William F. Johnson gave a speech before the Grand Lodge of Missouri, saying:

> As the impression seems to prevail in some sections, that the Masonic fraternity is directly or indirectly associated with or furthering the purpose of a secret organization [the KKK], and as I have been asked on numerous occasions what relations, if any, our Fraternity bears to such secret society or order, it is well that the seal of disapproval be positively placed by this Grand Lodge upon this secret organization.…[4]

Second, several Grand Lodges also criticized the Invisible Empire and advised Freemasons to refrain from associating with them since they considered this fraternity to be an illegally constituted vigilante force that incited racial and religious hatred. The original constitution of the fraternity, first printed in 1723, stated that: "A Mason is a peaceable Subject to the Civil Powers, wherever he resides or works, and is never to be concern'd [*sic*] in Plots and Conspiracies against the Peace and Welfare of the Nation." Many Grand Masters interpreted this to mean that organizations like the Klan were entirely un-Masonic, and that they had a duty to warn their brothers against the order. Grand Master Arthur D. Prince, for instance, wrote a letter to Massachusetts' Freemasons in 1922 announcing that the Klan's:

> avowed principles violate Masonic law at every point and it would be impossible for me to conceive of a Mason who could so far forget his teachings as to affiliate with an organization which advocates taking the law into its own hands, condemning men and women in secret trials, and imposing the punishment of the whip, the tar bucket, or unlawful banishment.[5]

Grand Master Arthur S. Tompkins objected to the Ku Klux Klan for both claiming Masonic endorsement and for being a vigilante group, and his virulent campaign against this organization did not abate during his two years in office. After his firm declarations in the *New York World*, Tompkins took further action and sent out a circular letter that was to be read in all chapters of the state. The letter explained the Grand Lodge's position in regard to the Invisible Empire, and said, in part:

> Assault; tar-and-feather applications; removal demands; death threats and the destruction of property are among the recognized weapons of the 'Invisible Empire' in its warfare against constituted authorities as reported daily in the press of the country.… [This is] proof to my mind of the un-American, un-Masonic and dangerous character of this organization.

Such a direct message was intended to make the Grand Lodge's opinion perfectly clear. The daily reports of violence committed by Klansmen that appeared in the press were sufficient evidence in Tompkins' mind to warrant such a

stringent declaration. Tompkins was in fact so convinced that the movement constituted a menace to the nation that he would repeatedly condemn the Klan when visiting Masonic lodges throughout the state, and continued to speak his mind on the matter after he had stepped down as Grand Master.[6]

Unlike other Grand Masters, Tompkins' stance against the Ku Klux Klan was not motivated primarily by this order's popularity in his own state. Grand Masters such as Andrew Randell in Texas condemned this rival fraternity because of their frequent violent attacks and their growing numbers in that state. But the Ku Klux Klan had not been welcomed in New York as it had been in other parts of the country. Historian Kenneth Jackson estimates Klan strength in the Empire State to have been a relatively weak 80,000 members, a figure that pales in comparison with strongholds like Indiana or Ohio. Nor was the Klan entrenched in social and political life as it was in other regions. Studies of the Klan in New York have revealed that it only gained notable strength in specific portions of the state like Western New York or on Long Island, and that even in these communities their power was not entirely pervasive.[7] The state's Freemasons also mostly rejected the advances of the Invisible Empire's kleagles. Whereas other Grand Masters had been forced to admit that some of their lodges were rife with Klansmen, Tompkins happily observed that:

> We know of only a few Masons who are of the Klan…. The Grand Lodge of the State of New York, its officers and the great body of Masons through the New York State are absolutely opposed to the Klan and its activities.[8]

Yet, despite the Invisible Empire's relatively minor influence in New York, Tompkins became one of the most vocal Masonic opponents of this rival fraternity across the country. This was partially due to Tompkins' own convictions and the support of his state's political class and media.

Like most others in his state, Tompkins was decidedly opposed to the spread of the KKK. Several institutions and individuals from New York had led the charge against the growth of the Invisible Empire nationwide. The *New York World*'s 1921 exposé framed and informed the national debate regarding the Klan, and prompted the Congressional Hearings into their affairs. It was also in New York that politicians implemented the "Walker Law", a radical piece of legislation that forced secret organizations like the Klan to register their membership lists with the state. Tompkins' outspoken attitude regarding the Invisible Empire was undoubtedly inspired by this atmosphere of anti-Klan sentiment and the attitudes of his fellow New Yorkers. In fact, it was reporters from the *World* who had initially approached Tompkins that made the Grand Lodge of New York's stance concerning the Klan public.

Furthermore, Tompkins' decision to stand against the Invisible Empire must have been heavily influenced by his own personal convictions. Tompkins embraced a universal conceptualization of brotherhood, and one that crossed racial and religious lines. "I have striven … to promote a better understanding, a more friendly feeling, more kindly and brotherly relations among all classes and

races and creeds," he proclaimed to his guests at his 61st birthday celebrations, "I have preached at every opportunity the gospel of tolerance and goodwill." Tompkins also had several long-standing and public friendships with numerous Catholic institutions, having attended law school at Fordham, a Catholic university. As head of the Grand Lodge of New York, he had tried to ease the historical tensions between Freemasons and the Knights of Columbus by sponsoring joint meetings and encouraging friendship between the two orders. Praising the efforts by New York's Freemasons and Knights of Columbus to fraternize with each other, he once declared that he hoped such events would "allay the bitterness and heal the wounds and close the breaches made by unfortunate and unnecessary prejudice and antagonisms in the past". Tompkins was always proud of these efforts. Such a world view immediately put him at odds with explicitly nativist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, and several leaders within that rival fraternity questioned his motives, his beliefs and his close relationship to various Catholic bodies.[9]

The Grand Lodge of New York's campaign against the Invisible Empire aroused opposition towards their interventionist policies. Tompkins even received threats against his life. Policemen from Goshen, New York, received an anonymous letter in July 1923 after Tompkins gave a speech there before a congregation of Jews and Knights of Columbus in the town. The letter read:

> Beware the K.K.K. When we go to Goshen we will go with some force of men and arms…. Beware! Take Notice! X Injury Death!… Judge Tompkins thought he was – smart to speak to the Micks and Jews in Goshen. Well we have him marked. We're going to get him.[10]

Tompkins was never physically harmed and was not intimidated by these threats. The Klan's leadership also tried to convince men like Tompkins to halt their persecution of their movement. Edward Young Clarke responded to such statements in 1922, saying that

> any Grand Master of Masonry who is a real American in the fullest sense of the word, who has complete and accurate information regarding the real facts about the Ku Klux Klan would be in absolute sympathy with the organization.[11]

In the end though, Tompkins and the Grand Lodge of New York stood firm in their commitment to eradicate the Invisible Empire from the state's Masonic lodges and opposition to their campaign was minimal.

Despite these threats, and the extended campaign by the Ku Klux Klan to allay his opposition, Tompkins was dogged in his determination to eliminate the order. Although the New York Klan was unable to infiltrate established institutions and structures of power to the same extent they had elsewhere, Tompkins still believed it was his prerogative to pre-empt the spread of this organization and the possible threat of violence and disorder. His personal beliefs clashed

sharply with the Invisible Empire's vision for a new America, as it did with that of many other New Yorkers. The Klan was also relatively weak in this state and was unable to find much support among Freemasons or ordinary citizens to fend off the denunciations of civic leaders like Tompkins. His decision to so publicly pursue and condemn the Klan was quite unorthodox for a fraternal leader and seems largely motivated by his personal beliefs and his impressions of this fraternity. He saw the Invisible Empire as a vigilante organization and as a peril to American democracy, and did not question or doubt the repeated press reports that highlighted the order's violent attacks and their threatening intentions as some other Freemasons did. In neighbouring states such as Connecticut or Massachusetts conditions were very similar, and Tompkins' Masonic counterparts in those states released nearly identical condemnations. Nonetheless, the situation was not as simple or straightforward in other states where this new fraternity was more popular. The conflict between Klansmen and Freemasons would be heightened in other parts of the country where this nativist fraternity had made more significant advances.

In December 1921, Grand Master Andrew L. Randell delivered his outgoing speech at the Grand Lodge of Texas, wherein he made a lengthy statement regarding the Ku Klux Klan. He expressed his and the Grand Lodge's astonishment at the Klan's growth among the state's Freemasons, whom he believed had been misled into joining with unsubstantiated claims of Masonic patronage. In his address, he also read out the circular letter he had written to Texas' lodges, which said in part:

> Any organization which, even from misguided patriotism, would inaugurate a system and inculcate ideas tending to ennoble and enthrone the masked methods of the mob cannot live and thrive under the American Constitution and the American flag. Nor can they live and thrive under the laws and landmarks of Freemasonry.

Randell took the same action Tompkins did in order to defend the state's lodges from outside interference, though the circumstances within his state were entirely different to those in New York. The Klan was substantially more popular in Texas among both Masonic brethren and the state's citizens. His comments were warmly received by the editor of the local Masonic periodical, the *Texas Freemason*, but this was by no means a united response on behalf of the state's membership. In Texas, the power and influence of the Klan forced Freemasonry's leaders in that state to publicly oppose this organization.[12]

If New York was the heartland of the anti-Klan movement in the early years of the KKK's expansion, then Texas was the exact opposite. The Lone Star State proved to be one of the most fertile hunting grounds for kleagles during the early 1920s, and it became the very first chartered Realm of the Invisible Empire. Estimates place the Klan's considerable strength in Texas somewhere in the region of 200,000 members, and the organization became embedded in the social and political life of the state. They even managed to elect one of their own, Earle

B. Mayfield, as a U.S. Senator in 1922, as well as achieving major victories in various local elections. In cities like Dallas, as outlined in Chapter 6, the Invisible Empire became entrenched in local government and law enforcement. But perhaps what is most striking about the case of Texas was the exceptionally violent behaviour of the organization in this and surrounding states in the Southwest.[13] Though these attacks were usually carried out by a small number of Klansmen from this state and condemned by most mainstream members of the organization, the Invisible Empire became notorious nationwide due to its widely publicized attacks in Texas.

The Invisible Empire's terrorist attacks are noteworthy in the case of Texas because such crimes were committed publicly and were widely reported and discussed in the press. One case in particular stands out for its severity and audacity. Beaumont Klan No. 7's night-riding vigilantism became known across the country when they openly claimed responsibility for a number of incidents in the area. The klavern admitted to whipping and tarring-and-feathering a local veteran, R.F. Scott, for taking a woman to get an illegal abortion in May 1921. They did the same to the doctor, J.S. Paul, who had performed the operation, and whom they also accused of selling whiskey and narcotics out of his practice. Both were ordered to leave town after their ordeal. Beaumont's Klansmen sent an officially sealed letter to the local newspaper in June claiming responsibility for the attack. The letter described the mock trial of Paul and Scott, as well as the details of their punishment, before stating that: "The eyes of the unknown had seen and had observed the wrong to be redressed. Dr Paul stood convicted before God and man…. The law of the Klan is JUSTICE."[14]

The extraordinarily flagrant nature of Beaumont Klan No. 7's attack and the repeated acts of violence from hooded vigilantes in this state alarmed authorities across the country. Whereas the actions of the Grand Lodge of New York had been largely preventive, Randell's denunciation of the Ku Klux Klan was meant to deal with a very real threat to Freemasonry and social order in Texas. In this case, the Klan's exceptionally violent nature in Texas determined the Grand Lodge's attitude towards this fraternity. It would also be short-sighted to ignore the significance of the timing of Grand Master Randell's declarations; the *New York World*'s exposé, the Congressional Hearings and a wave of anti-Klan statements from politicians and civic leaders across the country all occurred in the latter half of 1921. Randell sensed a real danger from Texas' Klansmen and felt compelled to stand against their growth. The Grand Lodge of Texas was even forced to restate its disapproval of the order in subsequent years as the movement continued to grow within the state. Despite Randell's strong statements against the order, the following year Grand Master David F. Johnson had to remind Texas Freemasons that the two fraternities were entirely separate and members ought to behave as brothers. He decried the fact that: "Masons who favor the Klan and those Masons who bitterly oppose it, [in] many cases have become violent enemies and at times it has threatened to break up an entire lodge in several instances." Unfortunately, he provided no further details about this matter. Johnson did, however, send a representative to Rock House Lodge

No. 417 in Hamilton in 1922 to read Grand Master Randell's previous denunciation of the Klan, since he had heard that this chapter of the order had refused to read the circular letter out loud as the Grand Lodge had instructed.[15]

Although both Randell and Johnson were clearly alarmed by the rise of the movement, they did not pursue the forceful campaigns that Masonic jurisdictions like Iowa, California and North Dakota had initiated. In these states, Grand Lodges had expelled Klansmen from the fraternity and had prohibited dual membership. Perhaps, due to the growing power of this movement in Texas, the Grand Lodge felt such a direct intervention would only aggravate the situation. Being an overt opponent of the Klan in Texas or any other state where the order had gained a substantial following was a delicate and risky decision. The Invisible Empire's strength and influence at the state level could affect how Grand Lodges responded to this new organization. In states such as Indiana the Klan's influence was so prevalent that even those Masonic officials who did oppose their order were unable to rally sufficient support within the Grand Lodge to do so publicly.

Indiana is almost unanimously recognized as the bastion of Klan power in 1920s America, overshadowing even Texas or Georgia. Using several surviving Klan membership lists from different areas in Indiana, sociologist Leonard Moore has calculated that around a quarter to a third of all eligible Hoosier men joined the Klan in Indiana during the 1920s, and in some communities membership was close to 50 per cent. The Invisible Empire's overwhelming strength in Indiana was not merely due to sheer numbers; under the calculating leadership of their King Kleagle and Grand Dragon, David Curtis Stephenson, the Klan also managed to become the dominant political and social civic movement of the period. Politicians, newspapers and businesses all jumped on the Indiana Klan bandwagon as the organization steamrolled its way to political victory and authority. In these circumstances, it is difficult to find an organization that was not tinged with the influence of the Klan. The Grand Lodge of Indiana is no exception, though this institution is understandably reluctant to have the matter of their relationship thoroughly investigated.[16]

Opposing the Klan in Indiana was a bold decision in the early 1920s; to do so could mean economic ruin or career suicide. One poignant example is the case of Reverend Clay Trusty Jr., of the Seventh Christian Church of Indianapolis. Trusty was forced to resign his position as minister when he snubbed an invitation to join the brotherhood and had refused to allow Klansmen to gather in his church. All but four or five families of his congregation were affiliated with the Klan, and after they burnt a fiery cross in his backyard to pressure him into joining, he quit. Trusty was soon replaced by a minister who was more amenable to the KKK, Gerald L.K. Smith, a fiery anti-Semitic preacher who would gain prominence in the 1930s as an associate of Huey Long. Trusty's case was not rare; an almost identical incident ensued at the nearby Englewood Christian Church.[17] Both instances illustrate the dominance of the Indiana Klan and the consequences of opposition.

The Grand Lodge of Indiana had declined to become involved with the subject of the Klan when the matter first caused controversy in 1921–1922 and

when several other Grand Masters stated their opinions regarding this order to the press and public. The first Hoosier Grand Master to mention the Ku Klux Klan in an official capacity was Charles A. Lippincott, who felt obliged to speak on the matter at the 1924 Grand Lodge. Lippincott brought up the topic since he had received a letter from James S. Vance, the general manager of the Masonic and quasi-Klan newspaper *The Fellowship Forum*. Vance had written to discern the Grand Lodge of Indiana's attitude towards Catholics, parochial schools and papal bulls, and to determine whether they had "any definite ideas regarding the consolidation of forces for the protection of Protestant Americanism in the 1924 National Election …". Lippincott responded to the letter, declining to answer these enquiries and boldly questioning the *Fellowship Forum*'s self-titled authority as "Freemasonry's Representative in the Capitol". Before the 1924 Grand Lodge of Indiana, Lippincott declared the *Forum* was a Ku Klux Klan paper. He added that their claims to represent Freemasons were "preposterous, impudent, audacious … utterly without foundation in fact".

Lippincott also expressed concern at the news he had received from various lodges in Indiana, describing rifts forming between brothers over membership in the Invisible Empire. Lippincott remarked that he had received letters explaining that:

> Masons in good standing had been boycotted and dubbed 'thirty per cent Americans' by brother Masons, because they would not join the Klan. Others declare that their lodges have not been able to do any work, and that they have been almost completely disrupted.
>
> These letters indicate that this movement has caused serious dissensions among many of our Brethren, penetrated some of our lodges to so great a degree that Masonic ties have been broken, the principles and teachings of Masonry set at naught, and the moral and fraternal influence of lodges destroyed.

Lippincott described a state of affairs within the fraternity that was alarming, to say the least. According to his own impressions, conflict between Klansmen and Freemasons in Indiana was widespread. Oddly enough, Grand Master Lippincott did not go on to denounce the order and only declared that the Grand Lodge had "not made any pronouncements either for or against the Ku Klux Klan, therefore, joining the Klan or declining to join the Klan does not constitute a Masonic offence". Lippincott then affirmed his official stance, saying: "I do not question the right of any Mason to join the Klan or to refuse to join the Klan. That is a question which every man must settle before God and his own conscience…."[18] Although this organization was clearly disrupting relations among brethren, Lippincott declined to condemn the Invisible Empire that had proven so popular in his state and chose merely to disassociate his own fraternity from it.

This official pronouncement is most bizarre when we take into account Lippincott's own personal beliefs and opinions regarding the Ku Klux Klan. In private, Lippincott was fiercely opposed to this militant fraternity. In December

1922, in his role as Deputy Grand Master, Lippincott delivered a speech at the close of an installation ceremony for new Masonic officers in lodges in his hometown of South Bend. Lippincott declared that:

> Klanism, is positively and utterly opposed both to the fundamental principles and ruling spirit of Masonry. The whole object of Masonry is to promote the worship of God and the brotherhood of man. In its high purpose it knows no creed, no sect, no race, no nationality and no color. Its object is peace, harmony and good will.

Charles Lippincott reminded attendees that it was their Masonic duty to support the government and to stand against vigilantism. He also stated that: "Members of the 'invisible empire' tear down and destroy, rather than erect or promote success," a statement fraught with meaning for the architecturally themed Freemasons.[19]

Lippincott's sentiments did not change upon becoming Grand Master either. In fact, much like Arthur Tompkins, he was friendly with Catholics and attempted to extend links with the Knights of Columbus. At one such joint event, again in South Bend, Lippincott attacked the Invisible Empire and other similar nativist groups. He declared that: "The most dangerous man in our country today, is the man who tries to stir up class and religious hatred. We should resist him, and we should try to overcome the evil he is spreading with our own good." The Klan assailed him for these meetings, calling him a "Catholic loving, weak-kneed Mason" and declaring that: "The puny, misguided efforts of the Lippincotts, Tompkinses, and a few other so-called leaders of Masonry striving to carry water on both shoulders serves no practical purpose."[20] It is clear that Lippincott was no friend of the Klan, and yet he was unwilling to declare his abhorrence in an official capacity.

It is difficult to say precisely why Charles Lippincott refused to condemn the order or to be drawn into open conflict with the Indiana Klan. Perhaps he genuinely felt the matter was beyond his mandate, but this seems unlikely due to the alarm he expressed at the distress the KKK was causing in Indiana. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Lippincott was unable to denounce the Invisible Empire because he felt that he lacked support from the Grand Lodge and that such comments would not be welcomed. Lippincott also probably feared a backlash from the dominant political force of the age in that state. In Charles Lippincott's case, timing and local circumstances were crucial, as the Klan in Indiana was reaching the peak of its power in 1924, right around the time of his declarations on the matter.

Indiana was probably not the only Masonic jurisdiction where officers felt pressure from colleagues to stay quiet on the Klan controversy. Thomas Chauncey Humphrey, a Past Grand Master from Oklahoma, had his own thoughts on this question. Reviewing the actions of Masonic bodies from other states in 1924, he observed that: "Several [Grand Lodges] condemn the K.K.K.'s [*sic*] in strong terms. Others say let them alone. It is significant,

however, that many of the lodges through the country are officered and run by the Ku Klux Klan."[21] Humphrey was suggesting that several Grand Lodges had problems condemning the Klan because its own officers belonged to the Invisible Empire or they feared upsetting their membership base. Maybe the idea that Indiana's Masonic leadership felt unable to declare themselves honestly on this topic because of pressure from Klansmen within their brotherhood is not entirely preposterous. In the case of Florida, Humphrey's suspicions were correct. In that state it was the Grand Master himself who belonged to the rival fraternity and who prevented the Grand Lodge of Florida from condemning them. Although the Florida Klan was not able to achieve the levels of popularity it had in Indiana or Texas, it was heavily entrenched in certain portions of the state. The Florida Klan only managed to enlist around 60,000 members in this conservative Southern state, but proportionately this made it quite strong. Its brief resurgence in the Sunshine State was characterized by a number of incidents of vigilante violence and a focus on white supremacy and anti-Catholicism.[22]

Charles H. Ketchum held the office of Florida Grand Master for two terms during the period 1921 to 1923. Ketchum typified the typical post-war militant Freemason. He was eager to use the influence of this powerful fraternity to effect change within his community and to fight ignorance and oppression beyond the confines of the lodge. In January 1923, as the Klan worked its way into the state, Ketchum gave a speech in Jacksonville where he pushed for a more aggressive stance from Freemasons on political matters, such as the establishment of a federal education department. He said:

> Masonry has always stood behind all measures looking to the good of the country as a whole. Masonry has always kept itself as an organization, entirely out of politics.
>
> But the time is here when we can no longer sleep. We must realize as never before that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. While we are not interested in politics, and as an Order can not and do not wish to enter politics, the time is here, Brethren, when we must exert ourselves and taken an active interest in the good government.

Ketchum's speech the previous year was in a similar vein. In 1922 he declared that it was a Freemasons' highest duty to ensure the education of America's children against outside influences, and that they be inculcated to preserve the nation and its institutions "first and above all other powers, forces or hierarchies on the face of the earth".[23] This aggressive brand of interventionist fraternalism and patriotism was exactly the sort of ideology that was being sold by the Klan and that was attracting militant Freemasons who were tired of the meek attitude of their own order.

Grand Master Ketchum also refused to condemn the Klan. He stated to newspapers in 1922 that:

> As grand master I can take no official attitude concerning this [Ku Klux Klan], any more than I could take of the Odd Fellows and the Knights of Pythias. Each individual Mason has the right to his connections and certainly as grand master I would be violating the principles of the high office which I hold, were I to try and dictate the daily life, habits and conduct of the individual members of the particular lodges of our jurisdiction.

At the following Grand Lodge, in 1923, he made similar statements before Florida's Freemasons, placing his seal of approval on dual membership in both fraternities. While Charles A. Lippincott may have delivered a similar pronouncement, refusing to comment on the matter, we know he felt a genuine revulsion for the Invisible Empire and its methods. Contrarily, Grand Master Ketchum not only identified with the Klan; he was a lively member of the order. The same year he left the office of Grand Master, he was appointed as Grand Dragon, heading the KKK in the whole state of Florida.[24] In the case of both Florida and Indiana, the influence of the Klan on Masonic leaders played a substantial role in preventing the Grand Lodge from declaring themselves to be opposed to this militant fraternity.

The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s was a fluid and complex movement, focusing on a diverse range of assorted issues depending on locality, and behaving in very different ways according to the makeup of its membership and the surrounding community. So, while the Klan manifested itself as a violent enforcer of the state's moral code in Texas or Oklahoma, this brotherhood would have been an almost separate organization in Maine or Colorado, where the needs and wishes of its members would have been distinct. This seems apparent from the previous chapter's examination of Dallas and Anaheim. Likewise, the KKK evolved over time. As the organization grew, the leadership was replaced and as the years went by, the order changed. The wide spectrum of responses to the Ku Klux Klan – not only from Freemasons but from American society as a whole – is a reflection of the complexity of the movement. Each Grand Master faced his own Klan, and each chose to deal with it in their own way. Many of them chose to make their fight against the Klan public in order to challenge the common assumption that the two fraternities were tied together, while a few carried out more forceful campaigns to eradicate the Klan from their lodges.

Conflicting portrayals of the Ku Klux Klan

However, the many different manifestations of the Invisible Empire and the strength of this order within a particular state do not entirely explain why many Grand Masters felt so compelled to eradicate this rival fraternity. Despite the Klan's relatively weak position in New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa and North Dakota, Masonic Grand Lodges in these states pursued forceful campaigns to prevent any association between the two fraternities. These Grand Lodges were alarmed by what they perceived to be a possible threat to their organization, particularly considering the advances made by the Klan in other states and took preventive action. Contrarily, other Grand Lodges such as

Florida, Alabama and Indiana overlooked the Invisible Empire's many crimes and declined to condemn the organization. How could different Masonic authorities and members have such diametrically opposed views and responses to this rival fraternity? Furthermore, why did Dallas and Anaheim citizens and individual Freemasons respond so differently to the order's intrusion into their community? The Klan's reception across various American communities by Freemasons and the wider public appears to have been influenced by this group's representation and portrayal in the media, as well as by the support and condemnation of various civic leaders and institutions. Publications, speeches and reports claiming to explain what this new organization was were widely circulated throughout America by the Klan's supporters and detractors, dividing opinion on this organization and influencing how people would view and respond to its expansion. Many of these accounts presented contradictory depictions of what the KKK truly was, and some provided superficial accounts of the nature of the group that did not reflect its complexity as a varied group with millions of members. To comprehend the conflicting and somewhat confusing portrayals of the Invisible Empire in American public discourse and their influence on people's perception of the movement, it is necessary to analyse how most Americans first learned about the re-emergence of this organization.

The Second Ku Klux Klan may have been founded as early as 1915, but it was only five years later, when the organization's extension came under the management of Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler, that the fraternity began to truly grow. The expansionist schemes put in place by the Southern Publicity Association brought the Klan into contact with Americans unaware of its reformation, and, as the organization garnered members, journalists started to write on the emergence of the peculiar group. As Klansmen became more brazen, and atrocities such as those committed by members in Texas or Oklahoma became known, many newspapers began to change their tone and wrote more condemnatory pieces. Through the summer of 1921, reporters from the *New York World* began preparing a series of articles that would disclose intimate details about the Invisible Empire and reveal the order as a corrupt and violent movement. The immense popularity of this exposé encouraged other journals to follow the *World*'s lead and publicize this organization's crimes. The shocking revelations divulged by the press triggered a public outcry against the order and a national discussion regarding the merits and faults of the Ku Klux Klan.

The *World*'s 1921 exposé was a systematic campaign to warn the American public of the danger posed by the Invisible Empire. While previous journalistic efforts had broadcasted information about particular events relating to the KKK or specific crimes attributed to the vigilantes, this exposé was a dedicated, organized and thoroughly researched effort to publicize Klan secrets and outrages. Ranging from the rumours of the profits made by the fraternity's leaders to descriptions of the terrifying consequences of the initiation oath, the series covered all aspects of the controversial organization and included large photos and official documents. The exposé ran from the 6th to the 27th of September, and was based primarily on the findings of Henry P. Fry, a former kleagle from

Tennessee who had gathered documentation from within the organization before his resignation. The exposé was syndicated to 26 prominent newspapers, including the *Boston Globe*, the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, the *Seattle Times*, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, reaching a readership claimed to be in excess of 1,785,000 Americans. The *World* proudly trumpeted the success of their articles, and announced that:

> In New York, crowds of people actually awaited at the publication offices of *The World* (until after midnight) in order that they might get the first copies of the papers as they came from the presses. In other cities, where local newspapers were not printing the series, record prices were paid for copies of *The World* – some places reported *World*s bringing in 50 cents a copy.

The success of the series encouraged others to follow suit; the *World*'s nemesis, the *New York American*, even started its own exposé on the Klan that same month. The *World*'s exposé received widespread approval, and numerous newspapers emulated and praised their efforts. The *Baltimore Sun* affirmed that "in the scorching light of *The World*'s exposures the Klan will rapidly die" while the *New York Times* remarked that: "There is not the slightest chance that the Klan can survive *The World*'s attack, aided as that attack will be by the encouragement of the entire American press."[25]

The series proved so popular thanks in large part to the shocking revelations about the enigmatic Invisible Empire. The issue of 19 September was especially scandalous as it published a categorical list of 152 recorded Klan atrocities committed since 1920, which included murders, floggings, tar-and-feather parties and mutilations. This particular issue also gave salacious details on the 1919 arrest of Klan bosses Elizabeth Tyler and Edward Young Clarke, who were apprehended by the police in their sleeping garments in an Atlanta hotel. The news was particularly damning since they were both married to other partners and were caught with a bottle of illegal whiskey.[26] By exposing the violence and corruption inherent in the fraternity, the *World* hoped to destroy the movement in its infancy with its journalistic campaign.

The *World*'s articles served as a rallying cry against the order. Having informed American society about the "true" nature of the KKK, prominent citizens began to demand that action be taken. Marcus Garvey, of the United Negro Improvement Association, asked that the state eliminate this group, describing the Klan as "no friends of this great country … they only seek to foment civil strife that may ultimately do harm to the peace and good will that now exists". The allegations of organized civil disorder presented by the exposé eventually forced Congress to organize an official hearing on the matter. Many of the issues investigated by this Congressional investigation stemmed directly from accusations made in the *World*'s pages. Congressman Leonidas C. Dyer of Missouri, one of the politicians pushing for this investigation, openly acknowledged this fact and stated: "I want to express to the *New York World* my great appreciation of the work it has done in bringing the facts to the attention of the public."[27]

Standard texts on the history of the Second Invisible Empire have all pointed out that this Congressional investigation had the unintended consequence of boosting Klan membership. The hearings allowed Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons to use his oratorical skills and to masterfully defend the charges put forward by the committee. When Simmons was confronted with accusations that his organization was responsible for countless outrages all over the country, he brushed these charges aside and sneered, saying "those attacking us have charged us with everything from high prices to the spread of the boll weevil".[28] The committee ultimately failed to produce any evidence of substantial wrongdoing on behalf of the Klan, and did not pass any recommendations back to Congress to approve legislation against the KKK. However, the controversy did not end there; newspapers and magazines continued to print ominous and foreboding stories about the dangers the Klan posed, and politicians and community leaders maintained their campaign against the brotherhood. Much of the American press was still quite alarmed at the continued growth of this new fraternity and the *World*'s accusations would have a substantial effect on future depictions and discussions of the Invisible Empire.

The Second Ku Klux Klan ultimately benefited from the publicity and exposure the *World'*s campaign and the Congressional hearings provided; the former disseminated information about the organization while the latter absolved them of many of the accusations made against them. As one Klan supporter would write in 1923:

> [I] have never considered and thought upon this mysterious and miraculous subject [the Klan] until the seventeen papers of the United States, including the *New York World*, began to lambast and tell every kind of yarn that be thought about these white-robed people.…"[29]

However, as this account demonstrates, further emphasis needs to be placed on the benefits that the origins of these attacks had on public perceptions of the KKK. Many Americans were distrustful of what a New York newspaper had to say on this matter, particularly after Congress had essentially acquitted the organization. One Texas reader wrote in to the *Dallas Morning News*, which had re-published the *World*'s series, and commented:

> I am sorry that [*The Dallas News*] – 'the Texas Bible' – always fair and always my favorite paper, has in this 'exposure' so easily allowed itself to be a catspaw to rake Jesuit chestnuts out of the fire. For that the old spirit of Rome breathes through it all is manifest even to a novice.[30]

This letter hints at a belief held by many Americans who would go on to either join or support the KKK. Many readers suspected that Catholic, Jewish or African-American influences were controlling the editorial policy of the *World* and others, and that many of these accusations against the Klan were unfounded. The Invisible Empire certainly believed so, and in a private meeting of the group's leadership one of their newspaper editors observed that the mainstream press:

> had made the Klan appear in the light of a martyr in the eyes of an American public…. Protestant Gentile Americans smelt a rat. They wondered what was back of all this opposition led by newspapers notoriously controlled by Jewish and Catholic influences. They started to investigate and concluded when all was said and done that the Klan was an American institution after all.…[31]

Catholic, Jewish and African-American civic leaders had come out strongly against the Invisible Empire and were some of the most prominent voices in the debate on the Klan during the last quarter of 1921. Many white Protestant Americans perceived this united front to be a cause to question the entire portrayal of the Klan in the media. Henry P. Fry went as far as explaining that:

> The *World*'s expose would have completely killed the Klan had it not been for the intrusion of outside influences…. These influences consisted of Catholics, Jews and negroes…. The Klan salesmen took these articles and used them as sales talks in showing their prospects how 'the Catholic, Jews and negroes are trying to run this country.'[32]

The crusade against the Klan was thus dismissed by many white Protestant Americans as libel, a campaign by Catholic, Jewish or African-American powers they believed had undue influence in national politics and the media, who had colluded to undermine a patriotic movement. This suspicion about a coordinated plot allowed white Protestant Americans who supported the Klan's stated ideals to continue backing the organization in the face of copious evidence of violence and graft within the fraternity.

These beliefs about the false and exaggerated portrayal of the Klan in the mainstream press were given further credence by the fraternity's exhaustive attempts to present itself as both a friendly and patriotic brotherhood. The Invisible Empire did not sell itself publicly on the basis of violence, nor of unwarranted or extraordinary racial or religious prejudice. Rather, the organization was advertised as a fraternity built on a positive programme of patriotism, reform and religious conservatism that would appeal to the American mainstream. The Propagation Department presented their order as a constructive fraternity, an influential brotherhood that was endorsed by Masonic bodies and other respectable institutions. As one *Baltimore Sun* journalist explained:

> The astute Atlanta gentlemen at the helm are far [too] clever not to have the article they market bright and beautiful…. Most of it is based on perfectly sound religious and patriotic principles. All of it has a strong moral flavor, a deep religious tone.[33]

The Ku Klux Klan had realized the importance of proper marketing. One of the order's own pamphlets, entitled *A Fundamental Klan Doctrine*, argued that the order had been purposefully misrepresented, and that their fraternity would never have survived by selling itself on hate. The author then explained "the mission of

the Klan is harmony, and the message of the Klan is love. The Klan is seeking an opportunity to co-operate in the harmonizing of all the congenial elements that are truly American".[34] Klansmen repeatedly and resolutely stressed this position in their newspapers and in their speeches, and actively fought to portray themselves not as predatory bigots, but as guardians of liberty, as a fraternity that was purposefully misrepresented and persecuted by un-American forces. The membership of respected members of the community, such as policemen, ministers and Freemasons was stressed by the Klan to rebuke such accusations, and to highlight that many had misinterpreted their fraternity. In fact, in response to the denunciations of his order by many of America's Masonic Grand Masters, Imperial Wizard Edward Young Clarke declared that these comments were "predicated on the false statement that the Ku Klux Klan is a lawless institution …".[35]

The Invisible Empire presented in the *New York World* and the rhetoric of anti-Klan Americans, and the Invisible Empire presented by Klansmen and their supporters, were diametrically opposed depictions of the same movement. To some Americans, the KKK was a criminal conspiracy that incited racial and religious hate and general mayhem, while others saw it merely as a charitable brotherhood dedicated to preserving the traditional values and norms of the nation. This obviously created a lot of confusion for those Americans who were unsure of what the Invisible Empire really was. Many writers and speakers made a career of investigating on this topic, promising to explain the "truth" behind the rise of this movement. In 1924 one New York minister felt compelled to try to clarify the matter for his congregation and the wider public, saying:

> Many persons are bewildered by the Ku Klux Klan. They do not know what to make of it…. They are still more bewildered when they seek for information. The friends of the Klan say one thing and the enemies of the Klan say another thing. The two things do not agree. Men equally intelligent and equally reliable are for and against it.[36]

Much of this confusion stemmed from the Klan's own secrecy and their elaborate façade that prevented outsiders from getting a clear idea of the true nature of this organization. The order's tendency to change the tone of their rhetoric according to different audiences, as well as the fact that many Americans knew respectable citizens who belonged to the organization also made many question how the Klan had been portrayed in the media and public rhetoric of the early 1920s.

Challenging the Klan's narrative

The perception of the Klan's pernicious influence was often a crucial factor in dictating whether a Grand Lodge declared itself as contrary to the Invisible Empire. This decision was not simply based on the Grand Master's impressions of the Ku Klux Klan, but on the impressions of the rank and file, who would demand such a declaration from their leadership. At times, the press's depiction

of the threat the Klan posed verged on the melodramatic, heightening the tension that prompted some Freemasons to demand preventive actions and caused some of their more militant brethren to reject or suspect any media reports about the order as falsehoods.

Frank Lester, head of the Grand Lodge of New Mexico in 1921 and opponent of the Klan, was encouraged by colleagues to denounce any attempts to organize chapters in the state. One fellow Freemason from Albuquerque approved of Lester's stance against the spread of the Invisible Empire and advised the Grand Master to address a letter to every lodge in the state making this ruling clear. "I agree with you that the movement is apparently un-American and un-Masonic, and no Mason should be identified with it because of his lack of information as to its character" explained the writer. Similarly, in California Grand Master Arthur S. Crites corresponded with fellow brethren who asked him to take an "unequivocal" stance regarding the KKK as other Masonic leaders across America had. "I am more convinced than ever that you should take some decided position this year in your report" urged one Californian Freemason to Crites; "I am sending you two or three clippings from the daily press which you probably have seen and which reflect the growing sentiment against the Klan."[37] Grand Masters from Masonic jurisdictions across America were pressed to clarify their views regarding this Invisible Empire that had received such negative attention from the press and widespread condemnation from other political and civic leaders.

The press of the early 1920s was largely anti-Klan, and for the most part reported on cases of Klan violence or corruption accurately. Yet, at times the rhetoric of the media regarding this group's actions and the danger they posed to American values and institutions bordered on the extreme. For instance, in a 1922 article from *The American Monthly*, one writer argued that the nation was run by two sovereign powers, explaining that: "One is the Federal Government. The other is the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan, to whose unlimitedly autocratic emperor, an ever-increasing number of supposedly American citizens yields implicit obedience." The author presented several cases of gruesome Klan vigilantism from California, Texas and Oklahoma, before warning readers that "the Ku Klux Klan is a matter for the United States Government to deal with. The Invisible Empire is far more of a danger to America right now than the German Empire ever was".[38] The issue with this sort of article and the many like it was that it did not correspond with the experiences of many Klansmen who belonged to the order and many rejected such accounts as being alarmist and even suspect.

The extent of Klan violence is a complex issue, since the majority of members never engaged in direct acts of physical violence. The order's rhetoric was deliberately aggressive before white Protestant audiences, and their public displays were devised to intimidate and scare their targets. In certain sectors of the country, especially Texas, Oklahoma and the states of the Deep South, the order's terroristic activities could be compared to their Reconstruction counterpart's. Furthermore, even in states where historians have argued the order was

largely non-violent, evidence suggests that acts of terrorism were more common than previously believed. Leonard Moore for instance, in his landmark study of the powerful Indiana Klan, maintained that the hooded order in this state went "out of its way to avoid confrontations in Catholic, Jewish or black neighbourhoods". This assessment so incensed a Catholic reader who grew up in 1920s North Judson, Indiana, that he wrote an article in the *Indiana Magazine of History* challenging the account and citing his own memories of the Klan violence, such as the bombing of his local priest's home, the repeated harassment of local Catholics and the vandalism of Catholic businesses and institutions that marked his childhood.[39] For the most part though, the order was non-violent. Yet even if a large proportion of the order rejected violence as a means to defend white Protestant American values, the impact of those that did engage in acts of terrorism was significant and shaped how Americans perceived the KKK.

Within the Invisible Empire there were disagreements as to whether their order should engage in violence, and many left the order when they discovered their fellow Klansmen were taking the law into their own hands. For instance, the Exalted Cyclops of the South Bend klavern recounted being visited by an Imperial officer as part of a recruitment drive. In order to recuperate membership, Emmons recalls that this officer:

> told us that the thing that we needed was a little more southern spirit, that we were leaving our Klan [to] die out, for the want of working up enthusiasm – or something like that – and we suggested that he tell us what to do, and he said 'Well, one thing that could be done, if you would take somebody out, around this Roman Catholic city, and give them a good licking and tar and feather them and strip them and throw them out in the street, the same as I'd done in other cities.'

This chapter of the Klan rejected the idea of employing violence, declaring: "[We] wouldn't stand for anything like that," and that "[we have] never been instructed that that was Klan principles." In response, the Imperial officer called the Exalted Cyclops "weak-kneed and that I was yellow". Other parts of Emmons' testimony relate how some Klansmen would attend parades armed with guns, often looking for confrontations they could later capitalize on as evidence of the Klan's persecution. Emmons even recounts how his own Grand Dragon, W. Lee Smith, had said to him: "If you would take a bunch of Klansmen and go out in that negro section and pull off a midnight parade, and run those negroes out of town it would be a great thing for the Klan."[40] Klansmen intrinsically disagreed on whether using violence in the defence of their values was justified and most rejected the idea altogether. The order's leadership was also quick to deny any acts of violence, and they attempted to disassociate themselves from any night-riding activities. As such, when Klansmen read articles that characterized them primarily as vigilantes and lawbreakers, many could only conclude that this was a smear campaign organized by forces they deemed to be un-American.

Since the order's leadership had publicly rejected violence and dissociated themselves from acts of terrorism, many white Protestant Americans, including many militant Freemasons, simply believed that the charges of lawlessness or graft had been fabricated. Writing to *The Fellowship Forum* in 1922 one Freemason argued that: "There are yet many Masons who hate the Klan because they do not know anything about it but believe the poisonous propaganda the Roman Catholic Church have put forth in an effort to exterminate the Klan." Another reader, from New Iberia, Louisiana, wrote to the newspaper in 1924 recounting that:

> I went into the Klan and the 'Blue Lodge' at about the same time and was at once struck with the similarity in fundamentals underlying both…. There are still a few Masons here who hold that a Mason cannot assume the Klan oath and remain a Mason at heart. They are, of course, men who know the Klan from the outside. We who are in both know how unwarranted this idea is, we know how beautifully the Klan obligation dovetails in with the obligation of a Freemason.[41]

These Freemasons and others like them simply could not reconcile their experiences within the Invisible Empire with the organization that Grand Masters like Tompkins or Randell described as "un-Masonic" or "un-American". Many of them believed that these leaders had been misguided and were simply uninformed about the true nature of "their" Klan.

Masonic authorities refuted this argument explicitly, claiming that the violence and corruption inherent within the fraternity was evident to any outsider. "I know the claim is made that the Klan is not opposed to any class, race or creed, and that it is free from hate," declared Arthur Tompkins in 1923, "but its printed documents, and the declarations of its leaders and its methods and activities prove the contrary." Tompkins added:

> The true purposes of the Klan are not to be learned from its ritual or its oath, but from its underlying motives, as they have been expressed and made manifest by its leaders and by the acts and conduct of its members in many parts of our country.[42]

In their eyes this fraternity's crimes, regardless of whether they were committed by a small group of Klansman, were sufficient to condemn the entire group. Albert M. Spear, Grand Master of Maine, explained to his brethren why he was so sure that the Invisible Empire was dangerous despite his self-admitted ignorance of the topic and his limited interaction with the organization, declaring that:

> I know nothing of the constitution, by-laws, or outward profession of the institution. I feel confident, however, that I am justified in saying that I do know what the institution stands for, as manifested by the acts and conduct of its members and its agents. I could not submit proof that the French are now occupying the region of the Ruhr, in Germany; I could not submit proof

> at this moment that the United States Senate is in session at Washington; I could not submit proof that explorers are opening the tomb of Tutankhamen; but from evidence presented through the press, I have no reasonable doubt that every one of the instances to which I have referred actually exists. Now, notwithstanding what any representative of the Ku Klux Klan may say, I have no reasonable doubt, from the utterances of the press, in different parts of the country, all coinciding with reference to what the Ku Klux Klan is doing, that its representatives are guilty of premeditated, intentional and express violations of law in the commission of nearly every kind of violence or threats, [and that it] is a menace to society, and destructive of organized government.[43]

Americans depended on journalists and civic leaders to provide a reliable and accurate account of the activities of this organization. Grand Master Spear seemed certain, in large part due to the consistent reports from all over the country, of the peril the Klan posed to society. Yet, for others the evidence in this regard was insufficient. If anything, they saw such a united offensive as evidence that there was a conspiracy to destroy the Klan and the white Protestant American values they claimed to espouse. The Invisible Empire repeatedly denied any allegations of violence made against their order, and members of the group often took caution to ensure their crimes were not directly linked to their fraternity or that the police would be unable to indict them. In cases where such violence was clearly connected to the order, as in the case of the Beaumont klavern and others, the Klan's leadership took stringent measures such as the revoking of charters to ensure the wider public did not recognize that night-riding and vigilantism by groups of Klansmen were more common than many Americans had realized.

Civic leaders, like those that headed the nation's Masonic Grand Lodges, were understandably agitated and were forced to respond to the concerns of their members. In contrast to other such moral campaigns though, the Ku Klux Klan was strengthened by this persecution. Frank R. Kent of the *Baltimore Sun* elaborated on this point, saying:

> Unquestionably the thing the Klan thrives on is general and indiscriminate denunciation. The reason for this is that most of the things alleged about the Klan are so far from the Klansman's conception of what it stands for and so foreign to the kind of thing that transpires in Klan meetings, that the average Klansman, who is not a complex person at all, is filled with a sense of injustice, solidified in the support of his 'principles' and inspired to go after recruits.[44]

Grand Master Arthur S. Tompkins' campaign against the Invisible Empire was commendable, as were the efforts of several other Freemasons who stood up against this organization. Their efforts helped prevent the expansion of this organization and the further disruption of the Craft as a harmonious fraternity. Nonetheless, their attitude and that of many anti-Klan Freemasons were

influenced by a somewhat exaggerated or limited depiction in the media of what the Ku Klux Klan truly was. To its supporters, men like Grand Master – or Grand Dragon – Charles Ketchum, the organization was simply a militant fraternity, a brotherhood that was not shackled by political or religious neutrality that would allow Americans to fulfil their manly duties. They rejected the characterization of their organization as un-American or lawless. Ultimately, America's Freemasons and citizens disagreed on how to deal with the Ku Klux Klan because they disagreed on the intrinsic nature of the organization.

Freemasonry was far from the only brotherhood that was racked by these disagreements. Other popular fraternities like the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Pythias or the Elks were all confronted with similar problems.[45] Neither was this issue limited to fraternities; churches, political parties, charities, veterans' organizations and other civic groups were racked by conflict on how to deal with this thorny issue. In fact, the discord among the Grand Masters of America's many Masonic jurisdictions reflects the divisions within white Protestant American society at large, between supporters of the KKK and its detractors, its methods and its objectives. The success and fate of the Klan depended on the public's perception of their organization. The Ku Klux Klan's elaborate façade was perhaps its strongest selling point, and its discretion and reception could dictate the success or failure of the movement in a new territory. Perhaps this is why they expended so much money and time in deploying an effective public relations campaign.

Notes

1 "State's Master Mason Denounces Ku Klux", *New York Herald*, 13 December 1922; Tompkins was also Grand Master of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in 1904–05, as well as First Sachem of the Improved Order of Red Men, and Exalted Ruler of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. He also belonged to the Junior Order of United American Mechanics and the Knights of Pythias. See "Biographical File – Arthur S. Tompkins", Chancellor Robert R. Livingstone Masonic Library of the Grand Lodge of New York.
2 "Masons Inveigled by Klan Endanger Fraternal Rights", *New York World*, 19 June 1922.
3 Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco, TX, 1923), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p. 11.
4 Grand Lodge of Missouri, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Missouri* (Columbus, MO, 1921), pp. 11–12.
5 James Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Freemasons* (Philadelphia, PA, 1734); "Ku Klux Klan Has No Masonic Support", *Boston Daily Globe*, 17 June 1922.
6 Arthur S. Tompkins, "Message of the Grand Master", *Bulletin of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the State of New York*, December 1923, pp. 8–9; "Klan is Denounced as Foe of Liberty", *New York Times*, 5 July 1924; "Supreme Court Justice Tompkins in 'Constitution Day' Address at Lions' Meeting Flays Radical Elements", *The Yonkers Herald*, 16 September 1925.
7 Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915–1930* (Chicago, IL, 1967), pp. 237–239; David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd edn (Durham, NC, 1981), pp. 254–265; Shawn Lay, *Hooded Knights on the Niagara: The Ku Klux Klan in Buffalo, New York* (New York, 1995).
8 "Ku Klux Klan Denounced By Masonic Leader", *New York Times*, 25 November 1922.

9 "Klan is Denounced as Foe of Liberty", *New York Times*, 5 July 1924; "Justice Tompkins Boomed For Senate", *New York Times*, 15 July 1928; Tompkins, "Message of the Grand Master", pp. 109–111; Arthur S. Tompkins, "61st Birthday Speech", "Judge Arthur S. Tompkins Collection", Rockland Historical Society; "Head of N.Y. Masons Favors K.C.", *The Protestant*, September 1923.
10 "Letter Threatens Life of Justice Tompkins", *New York Times*, 28 July 1923; "The Cross Blazed Away on Armond Hill", *The Times Herald Record*, 26 July 1973.
11 "'Klansmen Swarm in Masons' Lodges' Is Clarke's Boast", *New York World*, 26 June 1922.
12 Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco, TX, 1921), pp. 39–48; "The Ku Klux Klan", *The Texas Freemason*, November 1921, pp. 14–15.
13 Jackson, *Klan in the City*, pp. 237–239; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, pp. 39–49; Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Norman, OK, 1995), p. 63.
14 "Beaumont Doctor Warned to Leave or Suffer Death", *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 21 July 1921; "Texas Newspapers Get Klan Command to Publish Letter", *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 18 September 1921.
15 Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco, TX, 1922), pp. 71, 94–95.
16 Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921–1928* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997), p. 7; There is only a brief discussion of the matter in the Grand Lodge's official history, see Dwight L. Smith, *Goodly Heritage: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Craft Freemasonry in Indiana* (Indianapolis, IN, 1968), pp. 224–225.
17 James H. Madison, *Indiana Through Tradition and Change: A History of the Hoosier State and Its People* (Indianapolis, IN, 1982) p. 53; Deborah Ballee Markisohn, "Ministers of the Klan: Indianapolis Clergy Involvement with the 1920s Ku Klux Klan" (Indiana University, 1992), p. 63.
18 Grand Lodge of Indiana, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Indiana* (Indianapolis, IN, 1924), pp. 13–15.
19 "Masonic Head Says Order is Klan's Enemy", *South Bend Tribune*, 30 December 1922; "Klanism Opposes Masonry, Indiana Lodge is Warned", *Washington Post*, 31 December 1922.
20 "Catholics Use Lippincott to Bait Masons", *The Fellowship Forum*, 8 March 1924; "Dr. Lippincott Bids for Roman Votes", *The Fellowship Forum*, 15 March 1924.
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8 The collapse of the Second Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan re-emerged in the 1920s as a nativist and militant fraternity, espousing a doctrine of "100% Americanism" and celebrating white masculinity and Protestant values. The order expanded dramatically in large part due to its ability to market itself effectively, counteracting its negative depiction in the press by presenting a positive public image in its speeches and in its publications that highlighted the Invisible Empire's commitment to mainstream white American values and institutions of the era. This public image was reinforced by their recruitment of prominent and respected citizens, such as ministers, officers of the law and Freemasons, middle-class men who could protect their reputation and challenge the idea that this was a lowly or lawless institution. Furthermore, the order's status as a fraternity also offered additional help by safeguarding them against charges of being exclusive or peculiar. This public image disguised their more aggressive internal rhetoric that emphasized a militant commitment to their values and even justified the use of violence or covert political manipulation as a means to overcome the un-American forces they perceived to be undermining their communities and the nation at large. Yet this public image was not unassailable. The inconsistency between the Klan's more positive stated ideals and the private actions of their members was repeatedly exposed by the mainstream press of the 1920s and the condemnations of many politicians and civic leaders. This inconsistency and the rival narratives articulated by supporters and opponents of the order defined conversations about the rise of this Second Invisible Empire, and left many Americans bewildered about the order. What exactly was the true nature of the Ku Klux Klan? What should they believe about this mysterious fraternity? Torn between the contradictory descriptions proffered by supporters and opponents of the order, many ordinary Americans were unsure about this new organization. Within the Craft, many Freemasons would have known friends and brethren from the lodge who they trusted and who were also Klansmen. However, the recurrent and disturbing news regarding the Invisible Empire and the nature of their activities were enough to confirm the initial impressions of many. The Klan appeared sufficiently dangerous to warrant a firm stance against its expansion, and Freemasonry could not afford to be associated with a fraternity that aroused such strong sentiments

Freemasonry became embroiled in this affair, since many Masonic leaders, influenced by this tense political atmosphere and the reports of Klan infiltration in their group, felt the need to address what seemed like a potential danger that threatened to escalate. These Grand Masters did not treat the Invisible Empire as just a competing fraternity that was trying to pilfer their membership, like the Scottish Rite or the Shrine. The Craft's leadership often condemned the Klan as a hazard to the nation, an impending menace that needed to be eradicated and one which Freemasons should resist for the sake of the country. Pennsylvania Grand Master Abraham M. Beitler, for instance, said: "No American can contemplate without dread the results which may follow the spread of the Klan, and no Mason believing in fair play and fundamental principles can ally himself with the Klan or fail to actively oppose it." Like a disease that threatened to spread and infect others, Beitler felt that the Klan needed to be quarantined and eliminated before it was too late. In December 1922 the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania expressly forbade all members within the state from joining the Ku Klux Klan. "No good Masons will hereafter hold membership in or be affiliated with the hooded outlaws" announced Grand Master Beitler after his measure was approved. However, Beitler admitted that this organization had not actually made much progress in the area and there were few signs that the Klan was successfully infiltrating Pennsylvanian lodges. During his farewell address, Grand Master Beitler noted: "I have been unable to ascertain that Masonry has been anywhere in this grand jurisdiction linked up with the klan."[1] His action was largely preventive and was informed by the potential threat this rival militant fraternity had made in other portions of the country.

In states such as Texas, Oklahoma or Indiana, Masonic leaders had genuine reasons for fearing the power of the Ku Klux Klan. While not an everyday occurrence, the vigilante attacks perpetrated by Klansmen as well as the troubling popularity of the movement within those regions made the Invisible Empire a natural concern for the Craft. The situation in Pennsylvania and much of the country was not comparable. Though it did become more popular in the western portions of Pennsylvania, the Ku Klux Klan was never a true force within this state. Nor had it achieved much success in the fraternity's lodges, a fact that Grand Master Beitler himself confirmed. In the case of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, as well as in the case of many other Masonic jurisdictions, their anxiety was motivated less by the immediate conditions in their surroundings and more from the disconcerting news they had heard from other states and from the editorials of the nation's journals. Pennsylvania's newspapers often reprinted alarming reports of alleged Klan attacks. In November 1922, the *Evening Public Ledger*, one of Philadelphia's most popular publications, reported that eight men assumed to be Klansmen from Hagerstown, Maryland had kidnapped a local man who was accused of being unfaithful to his wife. The Klansmen took him to an empty field, beat him and branded the letter "K" with acid on his forehead and on each cheek. The article also reported that several months ago, the same group had done the same to a local man of nearby Waynesboro for mistreating his mother.[2] Such disconcerting news served to remind the state's Freemasons of

the dangers posed by this movement and confirmed the claims made by opponents of this fraternity that the KKK was a danger to all civil society.

Some Masonic jurisdictions later realized that they had perhaps overreacted to the supposed menace of the Klan in their own community. At the 1922 Grand Lodge of North Dakota, Grand Master Henry E. Byorum seconded the position of other Masonic leaders, and roundly deplored the Ku Klux Klan. He called the Invisible Empire "dangerous in the extreme" and "entirely foreign to Masonry's conception of law and order and contrary to well established American principles". North Dakota's Grand Lodge took drastic action, and passed formal legislation forbidding dual membership in both orders, giving members six months to choose their allegiance. The idea proved popular, and in neighbouring Montana, Grand Master Henry C. Smith praised the strong stance of North Dakota's Freemasons and urged his own Grand Lodge to pass similar legislation. The measure was only enforced once in North Dakota, and two years later Grand Master Ralph L. Miller rescinded the ban as many within the fraternity felt it was unnecessary and that it was out of place for the Grand Lodge to dictate such matters.[3]

The 1922 Grand Lodge of North Dakota's decision to approve such a rash measure against membership in an organization that had barely made inroads into their state was partly influenced by the disturbing information from Texas. The preamble to North Dakota's edict forbidding dual membership contained a sizeable portion of the circular regarding the Texas Klan released the previous year by Grand Master Andrew Randell. This circular, discussed in the previous chapter, outlined Randell's attitude towards the Klan and described some of the horrifying acts of violence committed by this fraternity in Texas, and declared: "The Ku Klux Klan is a serious menace to Masonry both internally and externally…." Motivated by such information regarding the Texas Klan and their advances on Freemasonry in that state, it is no surprise that the North Dakota Grand Lodge approved stringent limits to dual membership to prevent the rise of the Invisible Empire in their own jurisdiction. Of course, the Grand Lodge of North Dakota misunderstood the nature and complexity of the KKK; not only did the Invisible Empire never gain a substantial following in their state, but it was not particularly violent. North Dakota's Grand Lodge soon realized that their measure was largely unnecessary and rescinded the ban in 1924 once much of the initial concern about the order had died down.

By 1925 most Grand Lodges still maintained their antipathy towards the organization, but no longer felt the need to campaign so vociferously against the Invisible Empire. Many continued to quash any rumours of a connection between the two fraternities and quietly dealt with individual lodges that were particularly rife with Klansmen, but did not publish these views openly as they had done previously. Past Grand Master John A. Erhardt gave his own assessment on the matter before the Grand Lodge of Nebraska in 1925, noting that:

> The careful perusal of the proceedings of the several Grand Lodges during the past Masonic year will demonstrate that on the question of the Ku Klux

> Klan, they are using the 'soft pedal' instead of the forcible language employed in former proceedings. To my mind this is a grievous mistake. The spirit of the Ku Klux Klan is so unmistakably foreign to the spirit of tolerance and charity that believers in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man cannot afford to retreat from our former condemnation of the 'Invisible Empire.'[4]

Freemasonry had not retreated from its condemnation of the Klan, but it had re-assessed its course of action. Many Grand Masters had realized, as others had done, that condemning the Klan or banning dual membership did not necessarily help Freemasons abandon their allegiance to the Invisible Empire. In fact, Klansmen appear to have been strengthened by this denunciation as it allowed them to further the persecution narrative that presented them as victims of anti-American forces and which helped attract other militant Freemasons. These men remained as Klansmen in Dallas, Anaheim and other such communities despite the forceful campaigns of the Masonic leadership. By 1925 then, most Grand Masters no longer felt it was necessary to make such explicit and public campaigns against the Klan.

In addition, much of the concern about the order also faded as the Invisible Empire began to lose members and the order's public image began to unravel. The decline of William Joseph Simmons' beloved fraternity allows us to peer behind the façade of this Invisible Empire, behind the marketing gimmicks of the Southern Publicity Association and through the brotherhood's strict secrecy. The sudden collapse of the KKK around 1925 is perhaps one of the most curious and debated aspects of this peculiar fraternity. Observers have attributed this decline to a number of factors, such as the various internal scandals that rocked the organization or the subsiding post-war hysteria. However, it could be argued that the Klan appeared to disappear so suddenly because the order and its officers and opponents had exaggerated their true strength and numbers.

By observing what caused the downfall of the Invisible Empire, we can analyse the order's basic structure and weaknesses, and better comprehend how the Klan managed to sustain itself. This analysis will allow us to understand how this organization employed smoke and mirrors and a voracious appetite for new members to keep their Invisible Empire going. The Klan's opponents depicted a dangerous and powerful horde of fervent fanatics, while its members defended the organization and explained it was a defensive mass movement committed to American values. Both narratives emphasized that this was an influential organization with millions of members, but neither one truly understood that most Klansmen's allegiance to the order was rather relaxed and that the Invisible Empire was not as formidable as many had believed. The eventual collapse of the Klan finally allowed Americans to realize that the order's true strength and nature had been exaggerated.

The Invisible Empire in this sense was truly invisible because it was hiding its most basic flaw. The Ku Klux Klan was not a mass movement composed solely of devoted activists intent on setting their own rule of law. Klansmen

joined the movement for a broad range of reasons. In fact, most evidence seems to suggest that members were quite casual about attending the klavern and participating in the movement. Like the Freemasons and other fraternities of the age, Klansmen had problems maintaining commitment to the order once recruits had joined and the initial excitement of "belonging" had worn off. The ledgers of Klan No. 108 of Monticello, Arkansas indicate that from September 1922 to November 1925 this klavern managed to grow from just about 50 members to about 450. However, weekly attendance at the lodge was usually never higher than 10 per cent.[5] The minutes of La Grande's klavern in Oregon demonstrate a similar problem with sporadic attendance and commitment to the fraternity. Figure 8.1 reflects the number of Klansmen present at over 60 meetings of this chapter between early October 1922 to late December 1923. Even though the Klan was a popular fraternity and had plenty of applicants in La Grande, the klavern only managed to gather most of the members for special occasions. For instance, over 200 members showed up for the klavern's chartering on 17 March 1923. The largest gathering of La Grande's klavern was their 1923 Thanksgiving meal, when most members showed up for a celebratory turkey dinner. If these two separate klaverns are representative, then we can conclude that most membership appeared to be simply nominal. It seems as if the majority of Klansmen did not actively participate in the fraternity on a daily or weekly basis.

This intermittent commitment to the order was not apparent to outsiders. Most of the Klan's public displays were organized to make the fraternity seem popular and that membership was widespread. The Propagation Department employed a number of cheap ploys to exaggerate the power of individual klaverns during public displays, including bringing in Klansmen from surrounding communities or asking members to march an arm's length away from each other to make it seem as if there were more of them. The anonymity provided by their uniforms also made the order seem more imposing; hiding under those robes

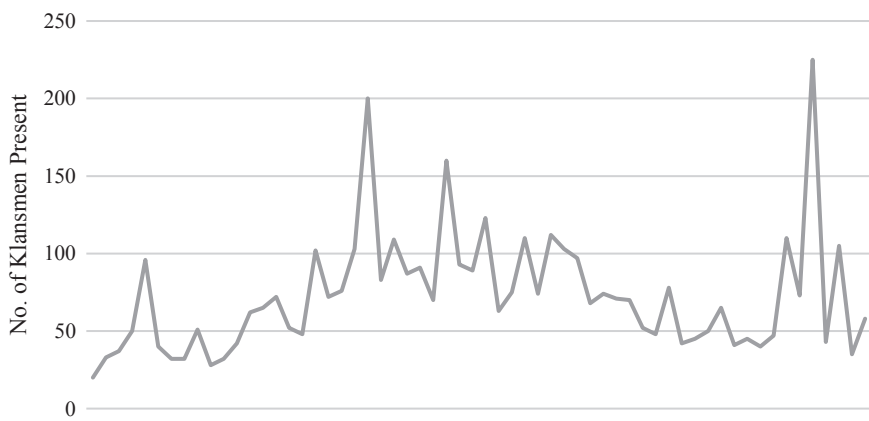

Figure 8.1 La Grande Klavern Attendance, 1922–1923.[6]

could be a local policeman, a trusted neighbour or an influential politician. Aldrich Blake, a prominent critic of the movement, described the effect that these public displays had, remarking that:

> Spectacular demonstrations and initiations were arranged to arouse the curiosity of the masses. Hoods and gowns and giant fiery crosses lent an air of mystery to the whole grotesque performance and thousands sent in their checks just to find out what in the world the whole thing was about!

Onlookers naturally believed the rumours of a potent local Klan when they saw these exciting public parades and mass-initiations, and rarely assumed that members might not all be as dedicated to the order as it appeared. One journalist highlighted how the order was marketed and presented in the public to exaggerate its numbers and influence, remarking that: "The weird Klan ritual helped create an illusion that the Klan was an invisible power dominating the community."[7] However, the large numbers of Klansmen who gathered for public initiations and rallies were an exceptional occurrence. Ordinary and private Klan meetings were not so well attended and suggest that the order struggled to keep most members interested and dedicated to the organization. The KKK did not readily advertise this lack of devotion, but it played a decisive role in the organization's downfall. After all, how could the Invisible Empire establish itself as vital factor in national life when most of their members only held a half-hearted commitment to the organization?

This disillusionment had a vital effect on the collapse of the movement, as the fraternity constantly lost members who stopped attending the klavern altogether after some time. The organization may have recruited millions of Americans to its ranks, but there was a constant stream of Klansmen abandoning the movement. The minutes of surviving Klan meetings often refer to members who had fallen behind on their dues to the organization or Klansmen who had left the movement. While it may seem that membership growth collapsed in 1925, it had been faltering for some time. The Invisible Empire had always been far weaker than most outsiders realized and plenty of klaverns dissolved before 1925. This decline had only been disguised by the constant flow of new recruits. Sociologist Jason Kaufman has observed that fraternities as a whole are quite susceptible to defections from initially enthusiastic recruits, and the Invisible Empire was not an exception.[8] Many Klan apostates expressed disappointment with what they found once they joined, while others grew bored with the organization after the initiation and abandoned the fraternity.

When asked about this high rate of withdrawals in one interview in 1926, Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans deflected the question and explained that: "No recruit to the cause has ever really been lost. Though men and women drop from the ranks they remain with us in purpose, and can be depended on fully in any crisis."[9] This remark completely avoided the issue. Many Klansmen were unhappy with the organization, whether it was because they found the group's goals to be too disparate or because they were simply bored with the everyday

proceedings of the fraternity. The Klan never advertised these losses, so while it may appear as if the fraternity enjoyed sustained growth and reached a powerful position in 1924, a number of their members had already abandoned the movement soon after joining. The order was only able to disguise these losses with a constant flow of new members, which would eventually dry up.

The internal scandals that rocked the organization affected the morale and commitment of its supporters. The very public leadership struggle between William Joseph Simmons and Hiram Wesley Evans and their respective factions in 1923 was particularly damaging for the order's national image, as was the shocking 1925 rape and murder of schoolteacher Madge Oberholtzer by former Indiana Grand Dragon D.C. Stephenson.[10] The mismanagement of the order's revenues by Edward Young Clarke and general profiteering among the Propagation Department's officers also tarnished the Klan's reputation. The organization's uninspiring leadership and the squabbles among various senior officials made many Klansmen question the viability of the movement and their own membership in the fraternity. In addition, the mounting evidence of the Klan's crimes and the night-riding activities of some of its members made it difficult for many less devoted Klansmen to continue defending their order. Cases such as the Mer Rouge murders of August 1922 provided clear evidence of the Invisible Empire's potential for violence and their subversion of constituted authority. In this small community of northern Louisiana, two opponents of the Klan had been kidnapped in broad daylight, and their dead bodies were later discovered in a local lake. The grand jury was unable to determine the perpetrators of the attack, which many attributed to the Klan's powerful influence over the courts in the county. With such clear and mounting evidence of the corruption within the order and their false commitment to their stated values, many Klansmen could no longer defend the Invisible Empire or continue belonging to this fraternity.

At a local level, financial irregularities and dictatorial officers seemed to be a quite frequent occurrence in the decline of individual klaverns, and consequently, the overall movement. One Maine klavern illustrated this problem. A member of Portland's Witham klavern detailed the disruptive role of their state's King Kleagle, F. Eugene Farnsworth, in a letter to a New Jersey Klansman. Farnsworth had set the state's goal for chartering at the deliberately and unrealistically high target of 10 per cent of Maine's population, in an effort to make more money for himself and the Propagation Department. The writer also complained of his repeated interference in the affairs of the chapter, saying:

> All information as to what is going [on] is kept from the members as much as possible, for a long period no records were kept or allowed to be read in the meetings.
>
> [Farnsworth] appointed all officers and has run matters with their aid as he pleased.
>
> Men have been taken into the klavern that were born in Canada, men with Catholic wives also, as well as some men with but a poor standing as to reputation, etc.

> A large number of members no longer attend the meetings for the reasons above given.
>
> Men have been suspended, not allowed in the Klavern and members have been warned not talk to them, and this has stood this way for about a month, with no trial in sight so far as known."[11]

The writer explained that members stopped attending and even withdrew from the Maine Klan by 1923 because of Farnsworth's authoritarian leadership and his irregular and questionable recruitment practices. He also noted that 400 members wanted to abandon the fraternity and form their own patriotic body. "There is a devil of a mess here in Maine, and the cause of it is the poor way things have been managed", lamented the Maine Klansman.[12] In fact, it was common for Klansmen who had abandoned the movement to attempt to form their own militant nativist fraternities. This indicates that it was primarily the poor leadership and running of the KKK that left many members disillusioned, rather than a change of heart about their vision for white Protestant America. These sorts of problems were prevalent across the Invisible Empire, and yet few observers really realized it was occurring until much later. Practically every klavern had its own issues, and the dissatisfaction of their members accelerated the collapse of the overall movement. The Invisible Empire may have appeared as a powerful menace to many outsiders, but its strict secrecy ensured that the constant bickering and defections among the rank-and-file stayed mostly hidden from the public.

The Ku Klux Klan's decline and the trouble it experienced keeping members interested in the movement was not only caused by the leadership, but also by the poor quality of its membership. One magazine argued simply:

> The rapid rise of the organization would indicate to anyone acquainted with such phenomena that it will not live long. In its fundamental errors it has much in common with the old Know Nothing Party that flourished for a season. As a general rule there are two ways to kill any organization. One is for no one to join, and the other is for too many to join. The Ku Klux Klan belongs in the latter classification…. The Ku Klux Klan will doubtless fade in time, and may properly be regarded as a part of the after-war hysteria.[13]

In other words, like an invading army advancing beyond its capacity to supply itself, the Klan was simply allowing too many members to join without properly solidifying their gains. Evans himself admitted that this had been the case, and that the organization had been too eager to allow such large numbers in. In 1926 he described the heady days of "kluxing" saying there had been "a tendency to emphasize numbers rather than the quality of the recruits".[14] The order had focused on growth, but not on properly inculcating members with the order's values or developing their commitment to the movement.

This focus on expansion seems apparent with the creation of various appendant bodies. Despite the order's focus on celebrating white masculinity and its

values, like many other fraternities of the period, the Invisible Empire formed appendant bodies that offered membership to those excluded from the men's order. The creation of these bodies was done in large part to exploit new potential markets and to reinforce the Invisible Empire's voting power. However, like other fraternities such as the Freemasons, the formation of these appendant groups, particularly the Women's Ku Klux Klan and the American Krusaders, was not welcomed by all members and many recognized that this was simply another ploy to collect "klecktokens" for the Imperial Treasury. After being encouraged by his superiors to redouble his efforts to tap into the large pool of foreign-born white Protestants in his community by recruiting them into the Krusaders, Hugh Emmons, Exalted Cyclops of South Bend, Indiana, rejected the notion after complaints from the Klansmen in his klavern. He related that he had responded to such pressure, saying:

> there is hundreds of men in South Bend which could be affiliated with this organization–hundreds of them – but, I said, It is necessary for me to cut it out. The men is kicking about it. It is looked at as another kind of graft to raise money to go into the Klan.

In addition, many Klansmen seemed to begrudge the inclusion of other groups in their exclusive organization. As Craig Fox has noted,

> Ironically, with the notion of exclusivity touted as a chief attraction, the Klan became less and less exclusive at every step as it began to diversify and open its ranks to new categories of members, pulling down the barriers to entry that it had itself erected….[15]

The entry of women into the Invisible Empire was particularly resented by certain Klansmen. Though the Women's Ku Klux Klan existed as a separate entity, Klansmen, especially those with more traditional ideas of the role of women in society, expected this order to be subordinate to the men's group. However, the WKKK's members instead hoped to work alongside their fellow Klansmen and push their own agenda and priorities. The head of the WKKK, Imperial Commander Robbie Gill, rejected any notion that their order would work beneath the men's. In her speech at the 1924 Klonvokation, she declared: "I make bold to assert that it has never been the purpose of God that woman should be the slave of man." Rather, she argued, Klansmen and Klanswomen would work in conjunction with each other to protect white Protestant America and its people. And though women's labour and social connections were essential in propagating the Klan and organizing the various public displays, the idea of a women's Klan and the notion that the two groups were on an equal footing was not always welcomed. As Kathleen Blee has outlined, "An organization based on the principles of fraternalism, protection of white womanhood, and defeat of alien forces – principles that it steadfastly proclaimed as masculine – now admitted women," a development that would have fundamentally shifted

how many Klansmen regarded their own membership. Although discontent at the formation of the WKKK is difficult to detect in Klan publications considering that the official position of the Imperial leadership was to embrace the movement, it appears likely that the emergence of the Klanswoman would have caused some conservative Klansmen to question their allegiance to the order.

The Klan's recruitment model rewarded growth above all else, even at the expense of antagonizing their current members. Kleagles were paid to enlist Klansmen, Klanswomen and others, not necessarily to ensure that the organization itself realized its goals. The Invisible Empire seems like a shallow movement when observed from this point of view and was probably much weaker than historians had previously believed. Americans may have joined the movement, just as they joined the Freemasons or the Rotary Club, but not all of them became Klansmen because of their complete devotion to the organization. Perhaps this is why the Second Invisible Empire failed to achieve major legislative success. Although the movement easily whipped up support for decisive political elections, even in states like Indiana or Texas the Klan's candidates rarely passed favourable legislation. One reporter analysed the situation and concluded:

> With the king kleagle pushing the kleagles for results, with the grand goblin pushing the king kleagle, and with the Imperial office even in the pioneer days manifesting a lively and precise appreciation of the value of a dollar, things fairly hummed. Instead of expanding slowly and inexorably, as early klansmen no doubt hoped it would expand, the klan tripled itself in a day. Instead of growing it just swelled and whatever useful niche it might have filled was lost in the early overwhelming rush of mere numbers.[16]

In addition, the order's public image depended on the notion of exclusivity and respectability, and by opening the klavern doors to recruits that some would have considered unworthy, the order contributed to its own collapse.

The Ku Klux Klan was never as strong a force in politics or society as it purported to be. Its most significant political success was probably the 1922 Oregon public school bill, a measure which was eventually struck down by the Supreme Court. They achieved other minor political victories, such as in Indiana where they passed a bill requiring all students study the U.S. constitution in class, but could never seem to garner enough support to pass more substantial legislation. Imperial Wizard Evans lamented this fact in 1926, highlighting that the Klan's greatest weakness is that they were not able to "bring home to the whole membership the need of continuous work or organization programs both local and national. They are too prone to work only at times of crisis and excitement …".[17] The Klan's brief resurgence in 1928 to contest the candidacy of the "wet" Catholic Democrat candidate for President, former New York Governor Al Smith, attests to this issue. The movement was sustained by a rapacious recruitment strategy and a constant rush of new initiates that masked the fraternity's structural weaknesses and the discontent of its members. However, after a few years

most klaverns had run out of targets to recruit, even if they allowed women, children and non-American white Protestants to join, and so the initial enthusiasm and momentum of the Invisible Empire faded. The Klan "bubble" burst in 1925 when America realized the movement was not as threatening or as exciting as it appeared.

The noted African-American civil rights leader and academic W.E.B. DuBois provided his own assessment of the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in 1926, arguing that the group was not an aberration of American values but a true demonstration of the racism and fear inherent in the minds of the white Protestant population. He noted that the hooded fraternity "is doing a job which the American people, or certainly a considerable portion of them, want done; and they want it done because as a nation they have a fear of the Jew, the immigrant, the Negro". DuBois was right of course. The Klan did not reflect extremist values, but an active and rigorous defence of mainstream American concerns employing aggressive rhetoric and sometimes more forceful methods. Yet DuBois also noted the dilemma of grasping the full extent of the Invisible Empire's reach. He maintained that:

> One of the greatest difficulties in estimating the power and spread of the Ku Klux Klan is that its members are evidently sworn to lie. They are ordered to deny their membership in the Klan; they are ordered to deny their participation of its deeds; they are ordered above all to keep at least partially secret its real objects and desires.[18]

Academics since have also struggled with this issue, and to some extent have overlooked that the Klan's decline was not as sudden as it appeared. The Invisible Empire's strength and influence was drawn in part from its impressive public displays and bombastic rhetoric, but this illusion would eventually fade when the order was unable to disguise its membership losses any further.

Notes

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8 Jason Kaufman, *For the Common Good?: American Civic Life and the Golden Age of Fraternity* (New York, 2002), p. 103.
9 Hiram Wesley Evans, "The Klan's Fight for Americanism", *The North American Review* 830 (March–May 1926), p. 34.
10 See M. WIlliam Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D.C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana* (West Lafayette, IN, 1991), pp. 183–187 for more details on the Oberholtzer case.
11 "Letter from B.H. Farnsworth to Edwin P. Banta", 3 December 1923, Edwin P. Banta Papers, New York Public Library.
12 Ibid.
13 Chester T. Crowell, "The Collapse of Constitutional Government: II – Bigotry and the Klansmen", *Independent*, 6 January 1923, p. 9.
14 Evans, "The Klan's Fight for Americanism", p. 37.
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16 Max Bentley, "The Ku Klux Klan in Texas", *McClure's Magazine*, May 1924, p. 16.
17 Evans, "The Klan's Fight for Americanism", p. 50.
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Conclusion

An "Invisible" Empire?

The concept of the "Invisible Empire" had a variety of meanings for different people during the first years of the Roaring Twenties. The term was re-appropriated by William Joseph Simmons from the original 1860s order to add a touch of authenticity and colour to the Ku Klux Klan's revival under his leadership and its ritual. Simmons' organization used the title during its ceremonies and meetings as a symbol of their fraternal bond. Members of the KKK would forever be able to depend on the selfless mass of unseen brothers throughout the country that formed this Invisible Empire. Simmons claimed:

> The phrase 'Invisible Empire' means that the Ku Klux Klan undertakes to establish and maintain a nation-wide organization in the thought of our people. It plans a conquest only in the realm of the invisible where men do their thinking.[1]

Simmons was hoping to awaken the nation's patriotism and its white men. For the first Imperial Wizard and the initiates of his order, the Invisible Empire symbolized their constructive fraternity, a chivalrous and manly organization eager to protect America and its citizens through education and coordinated action. Nonetheless, the idea of the "Invisible Empire" was heavily contested and had entirely different connotations to others.

The *New Republic* commented on the ingenious terminology used by the Second Ku Klux Klan, and how unexpectedly effective jargon such as the "Invisible Empire" was proving to be. The magazine recognized that the concept of the "Invisible Empire" and the rest of the order's peculiar nomenclature were attracting many to the Klan, and wrote:

> For many years the fraternal societies of this country have been in the hands of men who thought they had imagination. The best they could do, however, was to call themselves or one another by such paltry titles as Supreme Chancellor, Great Record Keeper, Supreme Ranger, Grand Exalted Ruler or Imperial Potentate. At a bound, 'Col.' Simmons of Atlanta has surpassed every one of his timid forerunners. As the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan he has gone into the business of 'invisible empire' with a terminology

> that no modern kingdom can emulate. What is a Knight Commander of the Bath or Knight of the Garter, compared to a Grand Goblin or an Exalted Cyclops?[2]

For others then, the term "Invisible Empire" encapsulated the mystery, the appeal and the thrill of being a Klansman, of belonging to the latest and most talked about secret fraternity in the nation. Some Americans believed that the mysterious Ku Klux Klan and its hooded initiates was simply another bizarre fad or pastime of the 1920s that would eventually subside.

Many officers within the order had their own understanding of the term. To the kleagles of the Propagation Department the Invisible Empire of course stood for profit, as it allowed them to generate a huge income selling this exotic membership, acting unseen and under the guise of fraternalism. To ambitious politicians like Hiram Wesley Evans, the "Invisible Empire" was a united bloc of hidden voters who could enact change for a better America. Speaking at the State Fair of Texas in Dallas on 24 October 1923, before what is believed to be the largest gathering of Klansmen in history, Evans contended that it was their organization's patriotic duty to support immigration restriction. "We have the power, and the opportunity again to turn the Republic toward the fulfilment of her destiny," he urged. "There is yet time if we act today; tomorrow may be too late for the redemption of America."[3] The Ku Klux Klan was a means to an end for many idealist reformers within the organization like the second Imperial Wizard.

To its opponents, the very name "Invisible Empire" symbolized everything that was wrong with the Ku Klux Klan. The reviled KKK was an undemocratic organization directing the votes of its membership and swaying politics and social norms, a self-appointed vigilante force acting out of sight but in the name of the law. In October 1921, a chapter of Texas Royal Arch Masons maintained that an "invisible empire which behind masks, shrouds and secrecy assumes to perform all the functions of the State has no place in the open, free democratic institutions of the American people". Grand Master Emerson E. Nelson from Kentucky echoed this sentiment. In 1923, Nelson stated:

> We are Americans and believe in a constitutional form of government…. Therefore, we cannot subscribe to the theory that any number of men have the right to form an invisible empire and under the cover of darkness attempt to regulate their fellow men.[4]

Those on the outside saw it is an imperialist threat intent on conquering and commanding the nation, with no regard for the due process of the law or the ballot box. Its opponents regarded the name "Invisible Empire" as an accurate description and as a fitting insult.

Henry Fry, a former kleagle and the main source of information for the *New York World*'s exposé, decried this "'Invisible Empire' of hate and venom". He advocated a complete investigation of the movement, arguing that:

"The 'Invisible Empire' should be made visible. It should be held up to the light so that honest men can see its ugly structure and analyze its nefarious potentialities."[5] However, this proved to be a much more complicated task than Fry had initially envisioned. Americans simply could not agree on what the Invisible Empire really was. Outsiders struggled to get an accurate idea of what lay underneath the Klansman's mask, and the order's secrecy ensured that information regarding their mysterious fraternity and its activities was relatively limited and tightly controlled.

Historians since have attempted to follow Fry's advice and make the Klan "visible". The first historical accounts that were published recycled impressionistic assessments from newspaper accounts and failed to truly pull the mask off the Ku Klux Klan. These accounts often only awarded an academic sheen to the mischaracterization of the order. Sociologist John Moffat Mecklin's 1924 study was typical of the first generation of research on this Second Ku Klux Klan. His work described the organization as a primarily Southern rural movement, motivated by provincial hysteria and xenophobia. He defined the Invisible Empire as a violent expression of American irrationalism, writing that: "If there is one outstanding fact to be noted of the majority of the Klan members it is their intellectual mediocrity." Predictably, this crude description outraged Klansmen, who answered saying: "The work shows how little a professor of sociology may know about the operations of the Klan."[6] This analysis indicates just how easily the order could be mischaracterized and dismissed by those outside the group. Even those academics like Mecklin, who were charged with remaining objective, had trouble deciphering the Invisible Empire. Since the 1920s however, and with the benefit of hindsight, historians have used a more critical analysis and a broader source base to understand the movement. Kenneth Jackson dispelled the notion that this was a primarily rural movement, while Kathleen Blee has highlighted the key role that Klanswomen played in the growth and evolution of this group. Other historians have demonstrated that this was neither a Southern nor a consistently violent fraternity.

This study set out to address one of the most glaring features of the Ku Klux Klan to have been overlooked by the historiography: its role as a fraternity. Through this process, this account has made several points about the nature of the Ku Klux Klan and its relationship with the Freemasons. Through a detailed analysis, it has ascertained that this organization closely resembled other fraternities of the period and has assessed the value of this status to the movement's popularity. This study has also examined the reasons why Freemasons themselves felt attracted to this new militant order. It has emphasized the important contribution that the Klan's image management and public relations made to the organization's success. In this sense, the order's different departments and officials coordinated to deliver a product to the American public and highlights the importance of looking at the actions of the Klan's national leadership to understand how they contributed to the growth of the order in individual communities. This book has also confirmed a long-standing theory that kleagles deliberately sought to recruit Freemasons into their order, and often succeeded in doing so.

Contrary to previous evaluations, this study has discovered that the Ku Klux Klan and the Craft did not always get along as comfortably as many had believed. Freemasonry was wracked by deep divisions over whether to confront the Invisible Empire, and the best way to do so. There were even some occasions where the two orders cooperated, but for the most part Freemasonry tried to ignore or protest the advances of the persistent KKK. It was only the militant wing of the Craft that attempted to forge alliances with the Invisible Empire, an attempt that was routinely challenged by more established leaders within the movement and the wider membership of the fraternity.

The Ku Klux Klan rose to power by appealing to very real sentiments that pervaded the white Protestant American social psyche at the end of the First World War. Working-class men from Detroit were worried about the African-American family moving into the empty lot a few blocks down the street from their own homes. People in Oregon whispered hushed rumours about how the Knights of Columbus donated a rifle for every Catholic born in America to the local church and argued over how best to deal with the Papist menace. New York residents shuffled past the different European immigrant quarters in the city, wondering why these aliens insisted on living apart from the rest of society and imagining what they could be saying in unfamiliar tongues. Mothers from Indiana were shocked at the latest films coming out of Hollywood, and blamed Jewish directors for corrupting their sons and daughters with sexualized and subversive plots. Texans were outraged at the flagrant disregard for the Eighteenth Amendment whenever they saw someone heading to the local speakeasy and vowed to support anyone who would shut down these dens of sin. The Second Invisible Empire tapped into all these different concerns that arose in the early 1920s. Despite this, concerns about the fragility of white supremacy had existed since the Civil War, and anxieties about radicals and immigrants had been a recurring issue among the white Protestant American population for decades. As such, in addition to signalling the growing concern about the state of American society, the rise of the Invisible Empire reflected a desire to celebrate white masculinity and to idealize the defence of the race and nation as proper manly duties in the aftermath of the First World War.

The Ku Klux Klan had successfully convinced Americans that it was rallying the nation's patriotic citizens and the various Protestant denominations to fight the rising tide of immorality and the creeping power of various un-American influences. The 1920s Invisible Empire sold itself as a new and superior form of fraternalism, a militant brotherhood that would apply the lessons imparted in the klavern in daily life and in defence of their country and its people. The klavern became a refuge for many Americans, a community where an individual's ardent patriotism and reactionary opinions about the future of the nation were echoed and reinforced. The order's fraternal traditions helped to create a familial sense of union among different Klansmen. By combining ritualism, fraternalism and secrecy, Klansmen bettered themselves as individuals, bonded together as brothers, and segregated themselves as a fraternity from the "alien" world outside of the klavern. The Invisible Empire, with its ritual and regalia, provided

coherence and unity for all white Protestant American men. The Klan's new brotherhood recycled all the old tropes and ceremonies from America's most well known fraternities, but added a real sense of excitement and duty to the whole affair by committing itself to being aggressively political and tacitly allowing members to act in their community. Unlike other orders, politics and wider society were a primary focus of the Invisible Empire and permitted the movement to stand out from older and more established fraternities. In addition, the Klan relished exalting and idealizing white masculinity, reflecting broader changes in American conceptions of manhood that emphasized the value of passions and manly urges over the restraint and passivity of past generations.

This new form of fraternalism made a powerful impression upon the American public. Many welcomed the Ku Klux Klan as a modern and refreshing alternative to the antiquated fraternities of the age. Seasoned fraternalists found that this order offered them a more flexible scope of activities than did other brotherhoods. Militant Freemasons were among those who first joined the Invisible Empire, eager to try a new organization that could fulfil their political ambitions and help them achieve their dream of a more united and enlightened America. Rather than continue trying to reform their own organization, which so far had been largely unsuccessful, militant Freemasons chose to don the hoods of the Klansman to protect the institutions and values they deemed vital for the future of the nation.

Other militant fraternities sold a similar formula to that of the Invisible Empire, but none achieved such a level of success. The Ku Klux Klan managed to become such a well-known organization by trading on its image and marketing itself effectively to the public. Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler were able to take an obscure Southern fraternity and turn it into an American social phenomenon. The legends of the Reconstruction Klan, as well as Thomas Dixon's Klan trilogy and the striking success of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915), had helped to propagate a revival of interest in the group that fuelled Simmons' new fraternity. The Klan's instantly recognizable imagery was imbued with symbolism and made them a familiar organization to the public, and they managed to avoid public scrutiny by repeatedly portraying themselves as a legitimate fraternity. The order's marketing strategy was essential for its success, as was its army of kleagles who sold membership in the fraternity. The Southern Publicity Association's agents set up klaverns discreetly and spread the order through word of mouth and imposing public displays. They also carefully selected prominent citizens – ministers, politicians, law enforcement officers and others – to boost the order's reputation in local communities. Masonic lodges were also a regular target of recruitment efforts, as kleagles quickly discovered that they afforded easy access to a pool of respectable local residents who would ensure the success of their klaverns. And in the reverse direction, for many ambitious social climbers, the opportunity to join a seemingly select order composed of respected men such as the Freemasons was a tempting opportunity. Spurred on by their lucrative $4 commission, the Ku Klux Klan's salesmen enlisted eager initiates and helped spread the order into every corner of the country.

Their iconic displays and powerful imagery – the blazing fiery crosses, the untainted white regalia and the dramatic parades – were all intended to impress onlookers and attract them to the order. But this secretive and theatrical approach also cultivated suspicion and alarm among outsiders. The organization's potential for violence was confirmed in lurid detail in the pages of America's leading journals when the Klan's extra-legal violence and kangaroo courts became the focus of attention. Crusading editors and politicians made the Invisible Empire a pressing issue, and yet their characterization of the order as a national threat was heavily contested despite the mounting evidence of acts of terrorism or profiteering. For one, the order's publicists had been able to partially mitigate the effects of these revelations by casting doubt on their origins, suggesting both implicitly and explicitly that un-American powers had colluded to undermine this "100% American" movement. Jewish, Catholic and African-American interests were often at the core of such conspiratorial thinking. In addition, others believed that, if true, such acts of vigilantism or political manipulation were exceptional or warranted, considering the state of the nation and the challenges to white Protestant America and its institutions.

At times, the melodramatic tone of these accounts also helped to make such condemnations appear suspect in the eyes of many Americans, especially since many citizens had friends or even family within the order who painted a very different picture of the Invisible Empire. For example, in reference to the Mer Rouge murders, one national magazine asserted that:

> Nothing in American history quite equals the audacity and the sustained cold blooded lawlessness of the Ku Klux Klan…. The religious persecutions in the New England colonies in the early period of our history at least were conducted in open daylight, but here we learn that in Mer Rouge and Bastrop, a group of men secretly organized, with no check on their lust for power and no limit to their ignorance, arrogance and bigotry, were able to terrorize the entire community, torture human beings with Torquemada-like horrors and practically commit murder without a single individual in the community daring to raise his voice.[7]

While the Mer Rouge murders were undoubtedly a case of brutal vigilante violence, the fact of the matter is that many Klansmen and supporters of the order would have found this sort of elaborate condemnation to be deliberately sensationalistic. Particularly in regions where Klan violence was more discreet or rare, the members of the Invisible Empire found such depictions of their order to be dubious, and many were reinforced in their convictions and commitment to defending the fraternity by such accounts. As such, the Klan was not always weakened by the press's revelations and could even thrive under widespread denunciation that did not offer concrete proof.

By critically observing the Ku Klux Klan's growth and development all over America and evaluating vital trends, this study has come to several conclusions. The Ku Klux Klan was indeed a fraternity, but it was its ability to adapt to suit

the needs of its members and the changing tastes for voluntary associations of modern America that cemented its success. Furthermore, the Second Invisible Empire's adoration of the mythology of the Reconstruction Klan that glorified this paramilitary group and white masculinity made the 1920s Klan stand out among the many fraternal orders of the period. While other fraternities primarily focused on exalting nineteenth century manly values such as honesty or restraint, the Second Klan promoted more modern masculine ideals, such as aggression and militant action in the face of attacks on white supremacy or American institutions like the schoolhouse. The Propagation Department managed to defend the young fraternity from general criticism by playing the victim, and by asking what was wrong with setting up a fraternity for white, Protestant Americans. Their kleagles helped to enlist members, spreading organically through American towns and cities through friends and families and other social channels like lodge brethren. The order's deliberate recruitment of Freemasons and their appeals to the militant wing of this fraternity was quite effective, and around a third of the Invisible Empire were also members of the Craft.

In addition, as this research has demonstrated, the Ku Klux Klan's public image and its reception were vital to its growth from a small brotherhood to a mass movement. This Second Invisible Empire was a malleable organization before different audiences and people interpreted the group in different ways. Some saw this Invisible Empire as a solution to America's ills, a group that could defend the white Protestant values that had shaped the nation's foundation and development. Others saw it as an exotic new brotherhood, an exciting fraternity that allowed members to re-enact the adventures of the mysterious Reconstruction Ku Klux Klan. But for many others, the Klan was nothing more than a menace, an extremist organization that threatened social stability. Klansmen deliberately distorted the perception of their own organization to suit their needs. At times the order was presented as an active and even violent force against subversive elements in American society. Before more critical audiences, the Invisible Empire claimed it was merely a non-political fraternity. Americans were unsure of what to make of this new order, and many were confused by the conflicting depictions that the Klan itself presented.

Americans across the country did not draw their conclusions as to what this Invisible Empire was based solely on the Klan's actions in their own community. As this comparative approach has demonstrated, the order's actions in Texas or Louisiana fundamentally shaped how the Klan was perceived by Americans living as far away as North Dakota or New York. The Invisible Empire's publicists understood this, and invested time and funds to expand their lecturing and publishing departments to challenge these accounts and to question their provenance. As such, even if historians focus on the development of the Klan in an individual community, it is imperative that new research also takes into account how information about the Invisible Empire's activities across America shaped the growth of the movement in other regions.

America's reaction to the order was very much defined by the limited information that was available to an average citizen, most of which originated from the

pens and speeches of zealous Klansmen or their ardent opponents. What we see emerging in the national press and literature were two overarching and opposing narratives that dominated discussions of the order. Klansmen presented their order as a chivalrous fraternity, rejecting any accusations of wrongdoing as concoctions designed to slander and bring the order down. The order's critics, for the most part, presented the fraternity as a vigilante unit and somewhat ignored the fact that the vast majority of its members were ordinary Americans. Only the more nuanced journalists and commentators picked up on the order's complexity. For instance, describing the Klan gathering in Washington D.C. in 1925 the *American Israelite*, surely no friend of this organization, wrote that:

> The faces of the people above the white shrouds were the faces of the people that one meets with in his everyday intercourse with his fellow Americans. The rowdy element was not in evidence, but, on the contrary, the faces of the average business man, the professional man, the mechanic and the clerk. The anticipated riots and disturbances, which both the Police and Army authorities had expected and amply provided for, did not take place.

This journalist expressed his surprise at how ordinary many Klansmen were, though he did warn that the order was probably using a more subtle approach to achieve their goals.[8]

In a 1922 letter to the *New York World*, Adolphus Ragan, a resident of the city, congratulated this publication for its campaign against the dreaded order. Like Henry Fry, this writer advocated an exposure of the Invisible Empire, asserting that: "The Ku Klux Klan is really a delicate fungus growth which thrives only in darkness. It will, as you suggest, quickly wither away and die if exposed to sunlight." America eventually realized that the opposite was often the case. The Second Klan's recruitment strategy depended on the spotlight of the public press. Klan applications grew whenever some Catholic or African-American civic leader made a statement against the order. Adolphus Ragan agreed with this point. He observed that such declarations "will doubtless do far more harm than good. They will be circulated far and wide among members of the Klan for the purpose of inflaming their passions – and they will succeed". It would be a few years before most commentators and reporters grasped the true nature of the Ku Klux Klan and understood that the order thrived in the face of exaggerated denunciations. "Why should not the Catholics and Jews, as such, simply let the Ku Klux fight its windmills?" asked Ragan in his letter to the *World*. "To defend themselves is merely to imply that they need defense."[9]

The Ku Klux Klan was quite aware of their dependence on the spotlight of the media and how such conflict would inevitably attract many to their ranks. The editor of the *Imperial Night-Hawk* even outlined how:

> There were two ways open to attack the Klan from a newspaper standpoint, really three of them. The first was open and vehement attack, the second, ridicule, and the third, utter disregard.

> The first was the best way to get subscribers from among Klansmen and anti-Klansmen alike…. The second course, ridicule, would perhaps have proved the more deadly. The third course would have been more harmful [to the Klan] still, but dignified silence gets a newspaper nowhere."[10]

The Ku Klux Klan was provocative; it was a movement designed to attract attention to its underlying conservative ideals. Its controversial displays were intended to captivate audiences and provide excitement for members. The Second Klan was truly an "Invisible Empire", secretive and wary of outsiders, hiding its weaknesses and its actual strength from the alien world. Its power derived more from fear and smoke and mirrors than from their electoral successes or the whip. It was an organization that depended on the spotlight in order to keep its members committed to its cause.

Unfortunately, in contemporary American society, the Ku Klux Klan and the far-right more broadly appears to have recognized once again how provocative displays can help their cause gain strength. Often, these far-right activists have adapted their approaches to be more media friendly, and have even taken to replicating established social protest strategies from the left to gain support. Former Klan leaders such as David Duke have discarded their robes to entice new recruits, while younger and relatable activists such as Lauren Southern have become celebrities and have attempted to appeal to the mainstream. Seeking to goad counter-protesters and to replicate a victimization narrative that emphasizes how white Americans are under attack, the American far-right has generally benefited from such displays. Such confrontational and inflammatory rhetoric, often disguised with dog-whistle arguments, regularly test the limits of liberal democracy's commitment to free speech. However, as in the 1920s, it is important to challenge the far-right's narrative. Organizations like the Southern Poverty Law Centre now release advisory pamphlets to help various communities address these issues without indirectly helping the far-right. The media of course has covered these events, but again they may inadvertently be assisting them by providing a platform for such rhetoric. As Antonis A. Ellinas has summarized, the amount of air-time and the type of coverage provided have helped to broadcast such radical views, but "negative coverage can plausibly be damaging for right-wing radical parties and movements if it associates them with political violence and thoroughly scrutinizes their leaders and positions". By exposing the true nature of the far-right and the aggression inherent in such movements without exaggeration, as many did in the 1920s with regard to the Klan, the media can help to control the narrative and deny the far-right the publicity it so desperately craves.[11]

Notes

1 William Joseph Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked* (Atlanta, GA, 1923), pp. 84–86.
2 Article reprinted in "This Cesspool of a Ku Klux Klan", *New York World*, 20 September 1921.
3 Hiram Wesley Evans, *The Menace of Modern Immigration* (Atlanta, GA, 1924), p. 31.

4 "K.K.K.", *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 7 October 1921; "Editorial", *Masonic Home Journal*, 15 April 1921.
5 Henry P. Fry, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan* (Boston, MA, 1922), p. 2.
6 John Moffat Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (New York, reprinted in 2004), p. 155; "Comment from the Coast", *The Fiery Cross*, 20 June 1924.
7 "Around the Editorial Table", *Forum*, February 1923, p. 1280.
8 "The Comedy Has Become Tragedy", *The American Israelite*, 20 August 1925.
9 "A Remedy for the K.K.K.", *New York World*, 20 November 1922.
10 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, North Carolina, July 1923* (Atlanta, GA, 1923), p. 94.
11 Antonis A. Ellinas, "Media and the Radical Right", in Jens Rydgren (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right* (Oxford, 2018), p. 276.

Glossary

Ku Klux Klan terms

Exalted Cyclops Head of a local Klan chapter.
Imperial Klonvokation Biennial national gathering of Klansmen.
Imperial Palace National headquarters of the Klan.
Imperial Wizard National executive head of the Ku Klux Klan.
Invisible Empire Alternative name for the Ku Klux Klan, mostly used in rituals.
King Kleagle Chief salesman and promoter of the Klan within a state.
Klectoken Klan initiation fee, usually $10.
Klokard Lecturer of the order (Imperial Klokard refers to the national lecturer).
Kloran Ritualistic manual of the Ku Klux Klan.

Masonic terms

Blue Lodge Refers to the first three degrees of Freemasonry; an alternative name for Freemasonry.
The Craft An alternative name for Freemasonry.
Grand Lodge Refers both to the official organization of Freemasons within a jurisdiction, and to the annual gathering of Freemasons within a state.
Grand Master Head of the Grand Lodge, and chief spokesperson and authority among Freemasons within a state.
Lodge An individual chapter of Freemasons.
Master Head of individual Masonic lodge.

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