Though the father of modern rationalism certainly cannot be blamed for the move away from Christianity, it is difficult not to acknowledge that he created the climate in which, in the modern era, such an estrangement became possible. It did not happen right away, but gradually.

In fact, about 90 years after Descartes, all that was fundamentally Christian in the tradition of European thought had already been pushed aside. This was the time of the Enlightenment in France, when pure rationalism held sway. The French Revolution, during the Reign of Terror, knocked down the altars dedicated to Christ, tossed crucifixes into the streets, introduced the cult of the goddess Reason. On the basis of this, there was a proclamation of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. The spiritual patrimony and in particular, the moral patrimony of Christianity were thus torn from their evangelical foundation.

In order to restore Christianity to its full vitality, it is essential that these return to that foundation. Nevertheless, the process of turning away from the God of the Fathers, from the God of Jesus Christ, from the Gospel, and from the Eucharist did not bring about a rupture with a God who exists outside of us but with a God who is immanent within us. Nonetheless, the climate fostered by the rise of rationalism and the subsequent events of the 18th century created the conditions necessary for such a break to occur.
HOODED AMERICANISM
The History of the Ku Klux Klan
With a New Epilogue by the Author

DAVID M. CHALMERS

QUADRANGLE PAPERBACKS
Quadrangle Books / Chicago
It is difficult to say when the Klan reached the peak of its power. By the time of its election successes of 1924, it was already on a greased slide downward in the Southwestern states of Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas which had been its first bastions of power. Its Louisiana realm was a shambles, California was long since past its early exuberant pinnacle, and Oregon was already out of its grasp. Klan power in Georgia had leveled off and the citizens of Atlanta were not completely unhappy to see the imperial potentates fold their robes and ship their valises off to Washington. In Kansas, William Allen White and the state charter board were cramping the Klan’s regal style. While there was much power and many members still to be reaped in the Midwest and elsewhere within the Empire, the great spectacular spurts of growth that marked its progress in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, were over. The Hoosier realm was divided in uneasy balance between the Stephenson and Evans forces, and internal disruption was gnawing away at many state realms and local chapters.

The Klan had never seriously considered creating its own political party, and in the light of the history of third parties in America this was not an unwise decision. Despite temporary liaisons with the Republicans in Texas, Oklahoma, and Georgia during the 1924 elections, the Southern Klans were mainly composed of Democrats. Apart from occasional maneuvers in Oregon, Iowa, Ohio, and Maine, the Invisible Empire was Republican in the North and West.

The Northern Klansmen were unhappy enough already over Southern rule and were hardly inclined to abandon their traditional political allegiance for the opposing faith or for a new untried venture. Most Southern Klansmen were no more willing. The Klan did facilitate some interparty movement, particularly from the Democratic to the Republican ranks among the Oklahoma and southern Indiana Baptists, and the Invisible Empire usually had strength in
both camps. For the most part, however, the organization had enough
trouble trying to unite its cohorts behind a fellow wearer of the robe,
and it could not be counted on to deliver its vote, when it meant
crossing party lines. Throughout its history, the Klan tended to muster
its greatest strength in voting against people rather than for them.

Given the nature and rigidities of the Klan, what were its political
possibilities and future? Ambitious politicians joined it. Others com-
promised with the Klan in order to survive in areas where it was
strong. It commanded and secured congressional as well as strictly
local patronage. The Klan became tangled in the presidential hopes
of William G. McAdoo as well as in the plans of Indiana Senators
Ralston and Watson. D. C. Stephenson dreamed of using the Klan
as a means to ride a Republic elevator to the presidency. The Klan
mystery man, Gutzon Borglum, had a vision of the Klan as the in-
strument of a pro-farmer, anti-tariff, Anglo-Saxon progressivism ex-
pressing the “minds of the villagers and agrarians” without foreign
ideologies and in opposition to the alienism of New York and the
eastern cities. However, though his ideas interested Stephenson,
whose Republicanism could not allow him to consider a lower tariff,
Borglum did not represent the Klan’s mind and heart.

Since the Klan talked so urgently about its own vital effort in de-
fending an endangered nation, the future of the Klan itself depended
at least in part on its ability to achieve something nationally. Its role
was that of a pressure and veto group. In general terms, there were
three facets of the Invisible Empire apart from its unofficial func-
tion as a money-making machine for its owners. The Klan operated
as a fraternal order, as a local vigilante organization, and as a re-
sistance movement. The third role was that of defending the values
of one-hundred-per-cent Americanism and was intertwined with the
other two. Consciousness of oneself as a native-born, white, Protes-
tant American was not only the major bond of cohesion, it was a call
to action. The reality of the un-American menace and the success
of the Klan’s leadership were vital questions which inevitably drew the
Klan into the national political arena and demanded performance.
To fail of accomplishment would doom the Invisible Empire more
to invisibility than imperium.

Although the Klan enjoyed the telling of horror stories about how
Woodrow Wilson’s evil secretary, Joseph Tumulty, filled the govern-
ment with Roman Catholics, Harding and Coolidge stirred few such
fears. Nor was the Congress itself dangerous or imperiled. The Klan’s
own congressional roundup for 1923 listed:
In total, hardly a menace and more than likely a friend. Although President Coolidge was to speak out unnecessarily strongly to the American Legion in favor of toleration, diversity, and opposition to race prejudice, he had given Dunning the Savannah appointment and picked a judge in Oregon who favored the compulsory public school bill.

The Klan's leaders were jubilant over their successes in the 1924 elections. The Imperial Wizard boarded his private railway car and made a triumphant tour of his western dominions, while Southern Klansmen gathered in Atlanta for a big Thanksgiving Day parade and a dedication ceremony on top of Stone Mountain. At the beginning of the new year, Klan potentates, joined by Senator Mayfield and Tennessee's Senator Kenneth McKeller gathered in Dyersburg, to celebrate the marriage of Klan lobbyist W. F. Zumbrunn to a Tennessee girl.

In February of 1925, the Imperial Wizard hailed the elections and the passage of the new immigration-restriction law as the Klan's most recent and important triumphs. No one represented more clearly the dominant American attitude on immigration than did the Klan. As the historian Oscar Handlin has summed it up, the philosophy that underlay the laws of 1917-24 was that "the national origin of an immigrant was a reliable indication of his capacity for Americanization." The Klan simply made the dividing line absolute. Those who