

duction of religious issues into the field of political agitation and by whom it was done?

Let us look a little further into their history and composition. With these oaths, principles and secret machinery operating upon bigotry and superstition, both too apt to be latent in the human mind and breast, and easy to be excited to pernicious excesses, especially if fanned by hopes of gain or advancement, many willing brethren were found and many votaries were led up to the secret recesses by the glimmering of the dark lantern; their numbers and power continued to swell; scheming politicians now began to calculate the chances of elevation by uniting with them. These, at first timid and coy, only talked softly of the multitude of citizens of foreign birth, and of bigotry and aggressive tendencies in the Catholic Church, not doubting their existence elsewhere, but rather whispering some doubt whether they had taken deep root in America, but a doubt so faintly uttered as to be taken as equivalent to an assertion that there was none; for a diffusion and belief in this unjust and groundless charge was an essential element of strength and success, and therefore never to be questioned, except in a form which should confirm or strengthen it. They (these political schemers) inclined to think, too, it would not, or rather, might not be found, upon inquiry and examination, *thereafter to be made*, perfectly compatible with the principles of American liberty, or the spirit, or, *possibly*, the letter of the Constitution either of Maryland or of the United States, to proscribe large classes on account of religious belief or place of birth.

Other successes in local and general elections came. The politicians' doubts vanished, and thousands, before wavering and hesitating "'twixt hope and fear," took the fearful plunge and were soon professed Know-Nothings, and more became cordial *sympathizers*. The latter were necessary to full success, yet they were troublesome, inasmuch as, looking to and expecting to fill high offices, they found a remnant of something within them, (which need not be named,) which, though it did not often trouble them, still prevented them from perceiving how they could well reconcile the incompatibility of taking the oath required upon installation into office to support the Constitution, and be at the same time bound by other oaths and doctrines which required them to violate it in some of its most material and essential parts. Something had to be done for these men of *tender consciences*, and that something, when done, might relieve, or at least mitigate the sufferings of brothers who had taken the degree, but still were troubled with occasional qualms. A strong will, we are told, can always find a way, and the scheme is said to have been devised of usurping or borrowing from the Pope the