

Pilgrims should be conducted. Their first and constant aim was to establish and foster the institutions of religion, education, and freedom. To sustain religion, they found it only necessary to allow perfect freedom of opinion, and to protect all in the peaceful exercise of those forms of worship which conscience dictates to be right. They had learned by bitter experience that to take religion into the embrace of the state was only to cramp its vital powers, and convert it into a furious, persecuting demon. Education, too, they did not attempt to bring under governmental control; but only by liberal benefactions to stimulate individual efforts. And with such a religion, and such means of education, they did not doubt that the people would select those men to manage their political affairs who would defend their liberties and wisely administer the government. It is a matter of just gratulation that all who have filled the places of honor and trust once occupied by the Pilgrims in these respects have followed essentially their system of policy. On questions of political expediency they have had different opinions; but on these fundamental principles they have all been united. Indeed, no Massachusetts statesman could outlive the storm which a desertion of these principles would bring upon him. To honor and sustain religion, diffuse knowledge among the people, and preserve true liberty, — this is a policy as settled in Massachusetts as the laws of the Medes and Persians. She cannot hope for superiority by her numbers, extent of territory, or any natural advantages. But by the fostering care of a free government over her religious and literary institutions, she can qualify and send forth, as she already has done, strong men into every part of the earth to place a lever beneath the abodes of ignorance, sin, and despotism, and lift them up into the sunshine of Christianity, civilization, and freedom.