

Martha Laurens Ramsay, 1758 – 1811

(<https://archive.org/details/memoirsoflifeofm02rams>)

Born in Charleston, SC, Ramsay was considered to be an exemplar of Republican Motherhood. A mother and wife in a gentry family, Ramsay's journal was edited, expanded, and published in 1812 by her husband as a model for American women, especially mothers. What is seen in this short excerpt from her memoirs is a woman who was devoted to God, family, and the values of the republic; a perfect guide for Republican Motherhood.

“She was well acquainted with the plausible reasonings of modern theorists, who contend for the equality of the sexes; and few females could support their claims to that equality on better grounds than she might advance ; but she yielded all pretensions on this score, in conformity to the positive declarations of holy writ, of which the following were full to the point, and in her opinion outweighed whole volumes of human reasoning. In sorrow, thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over (bee." Gen. iii. 16.) Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church ; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." Eph. v. 22, 23. 2*. In practice, as T/ell as theory, she acknowledged the dependent, subordinate condition of her sex; and considered it as a part of the curse denounced on Eve, as being <* the first in the transgression." 1 Tim. ii. 13,14. The most self denying duties of the conjugal relations being thus established on a divine foundation (and illustrated by those peculiar doctrines of revelation on which she hung her hopes, the other dudes followed by an easy train of reasoning, and were affectionately performed. In this manner, the subject of these memoirs used her bible as a system of practical ethics, from which she acquired a knowledge of her true station, and also deduced such excellent rules of conduct in life, as might be expected from correct principles. As a parent who had brought children into a world of sin and misery, without their consent, she considered herself as bound, in common justice, to do every thing in her power for their comfort in passing through it. She thought no pains too great, no sacrifices too hard, provided her children were advanced by them. In addition to her steady attention to their education, she exerted herself to keep them constantly in good humour; gave them every indulgence compatible with their best interests; partook with them in their sports; and in various ways amused their solitary hours so as often to drop the mother in the companion and friend; took a lively interest in all their concerns and made every practical exertion for their benefit.”