



Republicanism in Mercy Otis Warren (1727–1814)

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In her *History*, Mercy Otis Warren defined Republicanism as a government resting on four principles: the natural equality of persons, human dignity, the right of a nation to choose its form of government, and, sovereignty residing in the people. Based on these principles are fifteen precepts: respect for the general will, taxation only through representation, protection of freedom of conscience, frequent elections, rotation of officers, due subordination and obedience of the people to their chosen leaders, economy, simple manners, pure morals, conscientious honesty, simple laws, clear separation of the three powers (executive, judicial, legislative), right to jury trial, protection of personal liberty, and private property. When the Constitution failed to meet its Republican promise, Warren wrote indictments of it in *Observation on the New Constitution* for it had omitted the principles and precepts for Republicanism.

With her influence, amendments were made: I, IV, VIII, and IX met her objections to a lack of a bill of rights, V and VII met her concerns for a jury trial, and but partially, VI and X met her concerns about the Supreme Court and Congress. Her aims for a Republic of civil liberty and human dignity, that she and other women had helped shape, had not been presented as a “republican form of government with the principles of monarchy” until the addition of the Bill of Rights or ten amendments, and so, not a government balancing rational philosophy and benevolence, individual and society. Writing to Hannah Winthrop, Warren noted that with “the pleasures of rational philosophy” she and other women engaged in Republicanism shaped the identity of the early republic, a government of “equal liberty” (as expressed in a 10 March 1776 letter to John Adams) formed not by chance but by wisdom. Having admired the women of Republican Rome, Warren chose the pseudonym, Marcia.

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