Helvidius Priscus I
Boston *Independent Chronicle*, 27 December 1787 (excerpt)

The authorship of "Helvidius Priscus" is uncertain. Christopher Gore thought that Samuel Adams was the author (to Rufus King, 30 December). "Honorius" strongly implied that "Helvidius Priscus" was an old revolutionary, referring to him as "this *Nestor*," a wise old man. Adams fits both descriptions. Historian Charles Warren thought that James Warren was "Helvidius Priscus."

To the PUBLIC.

MR. WILSON observes, in his late celebrated speech, "that after a lapse of six thousand years America has now presented the first instance of a people assembled to weigh deliberately, and calmly, and to decide leisurely, and peaceably, on a form of government, by which they shall bind themselves and their posterity." Has he not here suggested the strongest reason that can be urged, for postponing the adoption of the new system? If the assertion is true, is it prudent for this extensive Continent implicitly to accept, and rapidly and irrevocably adopt, the propositions of thirty or forty men, some of whom were infants, when the principles of the late revolution animated the patriots of this country to a noble resistance, and led them to bear the bold arm to shake the sceptre of foreign dominion: And as Mr. WILSON himself observes, "Government is a science as yet in infancy; and with all its various modifications, has been the result of force, fraud or accident." May not these gentlemen be considered as yet in their pupilage, with regard to the origin, the end, and the most perfect mode of civil government? It is also well known, that some of the late Convention were the professed advocates of the British system; that others stood suspended in equilibrio, uncertain on which side to declare, until the scale of fortune balanced in favour of America; that the political manœuvres of some of them have always sunk in the vortex of private interest, and that the immense wealth of others has set them above all principle. These several classes selected, a correspondent would inquire; how many of the disinterested worthies who ventured every thing for the support of the rights of their country, and the liberties of mankind, will be left to adorn that assembly, who have ambitiously and daringly presumed (without any commission for that purpose) to annihilate the sovereignties of the thirteen United States; to establish a DRACONIAN CODE; and to bind posterity by their *secret councils*? It may perhaps be replied that one third part of the body were of this generous description. Let us candidly grant it and examine their conduct; several of them left the assembly in disgust before

the decision of the question. Others expressly reprobated the proceedings of a *conclave*, where it has been ridiculously asserted all the wisdom of America was concentered; and a RANDOLPH, MASON, and GERRY, the firmness to avow their dissent to support their opinions in the Legislatures of their several States; and submit them to the observation of the world. It is true indeed that the *ancient Doctor*, who has been always republican in principle and conduct, doubted, trembled, hesitated, wept, and signed: While the illustrious President, not called upon to decide or necessitated to give his opinion, kept the chair, but undoubtedly painfully agitated for the fate of a country he had heroically lent his arm to defend. . . .

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