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## Helvidius Priscus II

### *Boston Independent Chronicle*, 10 January 1788 (excerpts)

. . . Mankind have always been lulled by sounds into a fatal security, without giving themselves the trouble of investigation. Yet it is not probable the metaphysical disquisitions of a southern doctor, will persuade the world that the majority of the late convention were so much the peculiar favourites of heaven as to receive an immediate inspiration for the model of a government, that should subjugate a country which appears to those who are really religious, and who believe in a providential direction, to have been remarkably under divine protection in the various steps that led to its independence. . . . But the men who have denied the authenticity of the decalogue, and perhaps the divine origin of the gospel, may sport with the credulity of mankind—and droll on the miraculous interpositions of heaven, under an appearance of an enthusiasm for truth, if it will operate to the completion of a favourite system, while yet the honour of the gentleman is secure from falshood, when he asserts that he believes “the finger of God was as much employed in fabricating the fœderal republic as in dictating the ten commandments; and that the divine origin of the new system is as much the object of his faith, as the division of the red sea, or the fulmination of the law from Mount Sina.” But as the gentlemen of the medical faculty have not all of them been the most remarkable advocates for divine inspiration; or the most distinguished in vindicating the sacred oracles of religion, we are glad if the learned Doctor Rush is an exception.

If he has really a sober sense of divine dispensation, it is to be regreted that a man of understanding should suffer his language to wear the guise of enthusiastic rant; But if he is one of the fashionable sceptical race, it is not strange when a darling point was to be urged, that he should indulge such epithets of impious affectation to fall from his lip, as shocks the feelings of those who revere the code of the supreme lawgiver. While the Roman usurper was ravaging Gaul, whenever it was convenient for their purposes, his commissioners consulted the Pagan oracles, and when the people were prepared by their love of pleasure, and prostration of principle, to bow to the yoke of servitude, he was pronounced from the lip of the Cybles, the destined master of the world; yet we do not find that Cæsar, though Pontifex Maximus or Curio, who was purchased by his gold, had either of them much religion, and when it became necessary for the purposes of the tyrant, a Claudius was found to get a law enacted that no regard should be paid to the denunciations of the augurs. But the augurs who profess a more perfect religion, without pretending to immediate inspiration, will venture to predict, that the characters of the respected minority in the grand convention, and the names of Findley, Smilie, and others in

Pennsylvania, and a much longer list in the Massachusetts, instead of sinking into contempt, will stand distinguished in the annals of fame, for opposing with the magnanimity of genuine patriotism, a combination of ambitious spirits, exorbitant wealth or squandered fortune, of men of licentious principles, and heated imaginations, and of a few of more conscientious opinion, who from the early rudiments of education and manners, have always had a predilection in favour of arbitrary government. But in the exultation of party, let them not again in the convivial hour, toast the memory of the heroes who sacrificed their lives in defence of the liberties of America—least the pale spectres should appear as the evil genius of Brutus, and summon them to the shades, though not to die like the Phillippian Hero, in the last glorious struggle for freedom, but in the ignoble effort to consign posterity to the manacles of slavery.

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