

**THE HIGHER LAW, IN ITS
RELATIONS TO CIVIL
GOVERNMENT: WITH PARTICULAR
REFERENCE TO SLAVERY, AND THE
FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW**

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The higher law, in its relations to civil government: with particular reference to slavery, and the Fugitive slave law by William Hosmer

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WILLIAM HOSMER

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AND
THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW.

BY WILLIAM HOSMER.

"THE LORD IS OUR JUDGE, THE LORD IS OUR LAW-GIVER, THE LORD IS
OUR KING."—*Isaiah*.

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1852.

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TO
WILLIAM H. SEWARD,

LATE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK, AND NOW
SENATOR OF THE UNITED STATES :

SIR—The permission which I have, to inscribe this volume to you, is gratefully acknowledged. The title was suggested by incidents connected with yourself, and it was therefore fit that the work should go out to the world with the alliance of your name. But other reasons were not wanting: the eminent ability and patriotism with which, on all occasions, whether in the executive chair, or in the national legislature, or at the bar, you have defended the rights of humanity, entitle you to the lasting gratitude of your countrymen, and render it proper for them, in every suitable way, to express their high regard for your services.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

IT affords me no small pleasure to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. The slave, manacled and dumb, is forbidden to assert, either by word or deed, his right to the inalienable and priceless inheritance of liberty. In this sad condition, who shall more deeply sympathize with the bondman, or more strenuously advocate his claims, than the ministers of Him who came "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound?" But there is more than a work of mercy involved in this issue. The highest principles of the Christian faith have been impugned, and if ministers were inclined to stand aside, they could not, without an utter forfeiture of character. It is their business to proclaim the Higher Law, and the Higher Law as paramount to all other laws. They are heralds of the kingdom of God, and when that kingdom is contemned, they must appear in its defence, or Christ is betrayed in the house of his friends. This task is incidental to the statesman,

but not to the minister, for he is charged with this very work—he is set for the defence of the Gospel.

The reader will find here a full and consecutive development of those principles which, in another relation to the public, I have felt, and still feel, it my duty to maintain. Others may view the subject differently, but I cannot have a clear conscience and remain silent in the presence of such injustice to man, and such impiety to God. "First pure, then peaceable," should be our motto. The question is no longer diminutive and local. It fills the whole land, and compels every man to take a position on one side or the other—against slavery or against liberty. There is no longer any neutral ground.

More commonly the occurrences by which great principles are tested, are in themselves of slight importance. But in the present instance the reverse is strikingly true. The very existence of the church and of the government, is involved in the now pending question of emancipation. To all human appearance, we must either put away oppression, or yield the high religious and political advantages we now hold.

AUBURN, July 5, 1852.

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