



C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE

WILLIAM COWPER (1731 – 1800)

LOVE CONSTRAINING TO OBEDIENCE

No strength of nature can suffice
To serve the Lord aright:
And what she has she misapplies,
For want of clearer light.

How long beneath the Law I lay
In bondage and distress;
I toiled the precept to obey,
But toiled without success.

Then, to abstain from outward sin
Was more than I could do;
Now, if I feel its power within,
I feel I hate it too.

Then all my servile works were done
A righteousness to raise;
Now, freely chosen in the Son,
I freely choose His ways.

'What shall I do,' was then the word,
'That I may worthier grow?'
'What shall I render to the Lord?'
Is my inquiry now.

To see the law by Christ fulfilled
And hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.

Davie Donald, *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse*
(Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 195-196.





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WILLIAM COWPER POET



William Cowper wrote poems and hymns in England. His earlier poems pointed to everyday life and country scenery. After many struggles with doubt and emotional upheaval, he wrote poetry about his faith in Christ. A friend of John Newton, Cowper's lyrics have brought encouragement to many who look to the gospel for truth and strength.