

## A Refuge for Cowper

As an English major in college, I admired the works of William Cowper (1731 – 1800), an English poet and hymnodist. One of the most popular poets of his time, Cowper changed the direction of 18<sup>th</sup> century nature poetry by writing of everyday life and scenes of the English countryside.

Cowper suffered from severe manic depression, and discovered refuge in a fervent evangelical Christianity, the inspiration behind his much-loved hymns. His religious sentiment and association with John Newton, who wrote the hymn *Amazing Grace*, led to much of the poetry for which he is best remembered. After a lengthy bout with despair, severe depression, and suicide attempts, Cowper found comfort in God's providence, which led him to write *Shining Out of Darkness*:



*God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence,  
He hides a smiling face.*

As you think over the years of your life, with the advantage of 20-20 hindsight, perhaps there were instances when someone or something meant evil against you, but God turned it for good.

Thank and praise Him for it – and for His continual providence in your life.

– Beecher Hunter