

13th January 2026

Rest

**“Between the mysteries of death and life
Thou standest, loving, guiding – not explaining;
We ask, and Thou art silent – yet we gaze,
And our charmed hearts forget their drear complaining;
No crushing fate, no stony destiny!
Thou Lamb that hast been slain, we rest in Thee.”**

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Life's Mystery*

I'm not going to say much about the quotation above, from the 19th century American abolitionist and writer, Harriet Beecher Stowe, most famous as the author of the anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It's not that I don't have thoughts, or that her words don't encourage deep reflections in me. But, despite the "thees and thous" in the language of her day, I fear that any spin of mine might get in the way of your own response to her words. Take your time. Read them over. And ponder awhile ...

I went back to her book, *Life's Mystery*, after I'd received a number of responses to my recent piece on "mystery", and how we have to try, as best we can, to live with the mysteries of life, and not be weighed down trying to find answers for, or meaning in, everything. To find rest from our explaining and complaining is, surely, a good place to be.

One friend posed two questions for me on Epiphany Sunday – when we traditionally remember the Wise Men bringing gifts to Jesus at Bethlehem – in this form. "Are you preaching on Epiphany? And, if so, are you going to explain what happened to the gold, frankincense and myrrh after Mary and Joseph left Bethlehem with Jesus?" The answers were "yes" (I was, indeed, preaching on January 4th) and "no", I have no idea what happened to the Wise Men's gifts ... It's a mystery I can live with.

But another friend was on a different tack, and quoted some words from the 19th century American Presbyterian minister, Ichabod Spencer:

*Whoever believes in a God at all, believes in an infinite mystery;
and if the existence of God is such an infinite mystery, we can very
well expect and afford to have many of His ways mysterious to us.*

To believe in "in infinite mystery" and accept God's mysterious ways, is a place where I'm more than happy to find my rest for now.

A prayer for today

*I stand today, between the mysteries of life and death, and choose not to give myself
to explaining or complaining, but to find rest in the loving and guiding I know.*