

*Canto Thirteen*

*In the Self of Mind*

AT LAST there came a bare indifferent sky  
Where Silence listened to the cosmic Voice,  
But answered nothing to a million calls;  
The soul's endless question met with no response.  
An abrupt conclusion ended eager hopes,  
A deep cessation in a mighty calm,  
A finis-line on the last page of thought  
And a margin and a blank of wordless peace.  
There paused the climbing hierarchy of worlds.  
He stood on a wide arc of summit Space  
Alone with an enormous Self of Mind  
Which held all life in a corner of its vasts.  
Omnipotent, immobile and aloof,  
In the world which sprang from it, it took no part:  
It gave no heed to the paeans of victory,  
It was indifferent to its own defeats,  
It heard the cry of grief and made no sign;  
Impartial fell its gaze on evil and good,  
It saw destruction come and did not move.  
An equal Cause of things, a lonely Seer  
And Master of its multitude of forms,  
It acted not but bore all thoughts and deeds,  
The witness Lord of Nature's myriad acts  
Consenting to the movements of her Force.  
His mind reflected this vast quietism.  
This witness hush is the Thinker's secret base:  
Hidden in silent depths the word is formed,  
From hidden silences the act is born  
Into the voiceful mind, the labouring world;  
In secrecy wraps the seed the Eternal sows  
Silence, the mystic birthplace of the soul.

In God's supreme withdrawn and timeless hush  
A seeing Self and potent Energy met;  
The Silence knew itself and thought took form:  
Self-made from the dual power creation rose.  
In the still self he lived and it in him;  
Its mute immemorable listening depths,  
Its vastness and its stillness were his own;  
One being with it he grew wide, powerful, free.  
Apart, unbound, he looked on all things done.  
As one who builds his own imagined scenes  
And loses not himself in what he sees,  
Spectator of a drama self-conceived,  
He looked on the world and watched its motive thoughts  
With the burden of luminous prophecy in their eyes,  
Its forces with their feet of wind and fire  
Arisen from the dumbness in his soul.  
All now he seemed to understand and know;  
Desire came not nor any gust of will,  
The great perturbed inquirer lost his task;  
Nothing was asked nor wanted any more.  
There he could stay, the Self, the Silence won:  
His soul had peace, it knew the cosmic Whole.  
Then suddenly a luminous finger fell  
On all things seen or touched or heard or felt  
And showed his mind that nothing could be known;  
That must be reached from which all knowledge comes.  
The sceptic Ray disrupted all that seems  
And smote at the very roots of thought and sense.  
In a universe of Nescience they have grown,  
Aspiring towards a superconscient Sun,  
Playing in shine and rain from heavenlier skies  
They never can win however high their reach  
Or overpass however keen their probe.  
A doubt corroded even the means to think,  
Distrust was thrown upon Mind's instruments;  
All that it takes for reality's shining coin,

Proved fact, fixed inference, deduction clear,  
Firm theory, assured significance,  
Appeared as frauds upon Time's credit bank  
Or assets valueless in Truth's treasury.  
An Ignorance on an uneasy throne  
Travestied with a fortuitous sovereignty  
A figure of knowledge garbed in dubious words  
And tinsel thought-forms brightly inadequate.  
A labourer in the dark dazzled by half-light,  
What it knew was an image in a broken glass,  
What it saw was real but its sight untrue.  
All the ideas in its vast repertory  
Were like the mutterings of a transient cloud  
That spent itself in sound and left no trace.  
A frail house hanging in uncertain air,  
The thin ingenious web round which it moves,  
Put out awhile on the tree of the universe,  
And gathered up into itself again,  
Was only a trap to catch life's insect food,  
Winged thoughts that flutter fragile in brief light  
But dead, once captured in fixed forms of mind,  
Aims puny but looming large in man's small scale,  
Flickers of imagination's brilliant gauze  
And cobweb-wrapped beliefs alive no more.  
The magic hut of built-up certitudes  
Made out of glittering dust and bright moonshine  
In which it shrines its image of the Real,  
Collapsed into the Nescience whence it rose.  
Only a gleam was there of symbol facts  
That shroud the mystery lurking in their glow,  
And falsehoods based on hidden realities  
By which they live until they fall from Time.  
Our mind is a house haunted by the slain past,  
Ideas soon mummified, ghosts of old truths,  
God's spontaneities tied with formal strings  
And packed into drawers of reason's trim bureau,

A grave of great lost opportunities,  
Or an office for misuse of soul and life  
And all the waste man makes of heaven's gifts  
And all his squanderings of Nature's store,  
A stage for the comedy of Ignorance.  
The world seemed a long aeonic failure's scene:  
All sterile grew, no base was left secure.  
Assailed by the edge of the convicting beam  
The builder Reason lost her confidence  
In the successful sleight and turn of thought  
That makes the soul the prisoner of a phrase.  
Its highest wisdom was a brilliant guess,  
Its mighty structured science of the worlds  
A passing light on being's surfaces.  
There was nothing there but a schema drawn by sense,  
A substitute for eternal mysteries,  
A scrawl figure of reality, a plan  
And elevation by the architect Word  
Imposed upon the semblances of Time.  
Existence' self was shadowed by a doubt;  
Almost it seemed a lotus-leaf afloat  
On a nude pool of cosmic Nothingness.  
This great spectator and creator Mind  
Was only some half-seeing's delegate,  
A veil that hung between the soul and Light,  
An idol, not the living body of God.  
Even the still spirit that looks upon its works  
Was some pale front of the Unknowable;  
A shadow seemed the wide and witness Self,  
Its liberation and immobile calm  
A void recoil of being from Time-made things,  
Not the self-vision of Eternity.  
Deep peace was there, but not the nameless Force:  
Our sweet and mighty Mother was not there  
Who gathers to her bosom her children's lives,  
Her clasp that takes the world into her arms

In the fathomless rapture of the Infinite,  
The Bliss that is creation's splendid grain  
Or the white passion of God-ecstasy  
That laughs in the blaze of the boundless heart of Love.  
A greater Spirit than the Self of Mind  
Must answer to the questioning of his soul.  
For here was no firm clue and no sure road;  
High-climbing pathways ceased in the unknown;  
An artist Sight constructed the Beyond  
In contrary patterns and conflicting hues;  
A part-experience fragmented the Whole.  
He looked above, but all was blank and still:  
A sapphire firmament of abstract Thought  
Escaped into a formless Vacancy.  
He looked below, but all was dark and mute.  
A noise was heard, between, of thought and prayer,  
A strife, a labour without end or pause;  
A vain and ignorant seeking raised its voice.  
A rumour and a movement and a call,  
A foaming mass, a cry innumerable  
Rolled ever upon the ocean surge of Life  
Along the coasts of mortal Ignorance.  
On its unstable and enormous breast  
Beings and forces, forms, ideas like waves  
Jostled for figure and supremacy,  
And rose and sank and rose again in Time;  
And at the bottom of the sleepless stir,  
A Nothingness parent of the struggling worlds,  
A huge creator Death, a mystic Void,  
For ever sustaining the irrational cry,  
For ever excluding the supernal Word,  
Motionless, refusing question and response,  
Reposed beneath the voices and the march  
The dim Inconscient's dumb incertitude.  
Two firmaments of darkness and of light  
Opposed their limits to the spirit's walk;

It moved veiled in from Self's infinity  
In a world of beings and momentary events  
Where all must die to live and live to die.  
Immortal by renewed mortality,  
It wandered in the spiral of its acts  
Or ran around the cycles of its thought,  
Yet was no more than its original self  
And knew no more than when it first began.  
To be was a prison, extinction the escape.

END OF CANTO THIRTEEN