

**"They desire a better country" (c.1867/1868)**  
**Christina Rossetti**

Then thro' the outer darkness burdensome  
I hear again the tender voice that calls,  
'Follow me hither, follow, rise and come.'

I

I would not if I could undo my past,  
Tho' for its sake my future is a blank;  
My past for which I have myself to thank,  
I would not cast anew the lot once cast,  
Or launch a second ship for one that sank,  
Or drug with sweets the bitterness I drank,  
Or break by feasting my perpetual fast.  
I would not if I could: for much more dear  
Is one remembrance than a hundred joys,  
More than a thousand hopes in jubilee;  
Dearer the music of one tearful voice  
That unforgotten calls and calls to me,  
'Follow me here, rise up, and follow here.'

II

What seekest thou, far in the unknown land?  
In hope I follow joy gone on before;  
In hope and fear persistent more and more,  
As the dry desert lengthens out its sand.  
Whilst day and night I carry in my hand  
The golden key to ope the golden door  
Of golden home; yet mine eye weepeth sore,  
For long the journey is that makes no stand.  
And who is this that veiled doth walk with thee?  
One exile holds us both, and we are bound  
To selfsame home-joys in the land of light.  
Weeping thou walkest with him; weepth he?--  
Some sobbing weep, some weep and make no  
sound.

III

A dimness of a glory glimmers here  
Thro' veils and distance from the space remote,  
A faintest far vibration of a note  
Reaches to us and seems to bring us near;  
Causing our face to glow with braver cheer,  
Making the serried mist to stand afloat,  
Subduing languor with an antidote,  
And strengthening love almost to cast out fear:  
Till for one moment golden city walls  
Rise looming on us, golden walls of home,  
Light of our eyes until the darkness falls;