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# Two Poems: The Advent Carol & The Madonna of Dohany Street

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## THE ADVENT CAROL

Perhaps it would have been better  
if they had killed the baby in the manger,  
crushed his tiny head with a rock.

Perhaps it would have been better  
if they had put a Luger to the back  
of his Jewish head and pulled the trigger.

Perhaps it would have been better  
if they had taken his black body out  
and hanged him from a tree.

If they had ripped the messiah from the manger  
and tossed her into a river  
because she was a girl.

Perhaps it would have been better  
if the Tutsi baby were sliced to pieces by machetes,  
if the Japanese newborn were incinerated by atom  
bombs.

If the Chinese baby were crushed  
under the rubble of buildings  
demolished by Japanese bombs.

Perhaps it would have been better  
if Mary had aborted.  
Hope is such an endangered child  
here in a world so impatient for crucifixions.

Perhaps we would do better  
taking hope in our hands  
and squeezing the life out of it.

Instead we adore the baby  
whom we do not understand, cannot feed,  
whom we kill.

## THE MADONNA OF DOHANY STREET

It is a quiet Sunday afternoon  
in Budapest  
on Dohany Street.

I can hear the clank and clink  
of lunch dishes being washed,  
music is playing through open windows,  
a cat sits at a window  
intense  
looking at a flock of pigeons  
on the street below.

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Brian Forry Wallace, the author of these poems, is  
professor of Political Science at Capital University.

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This lazy afternoon is full of peace  
as I sit in front of the synagogue  
in what used to be Budapest's ghetto,  
but my heart is troubled  
as I think of the Holocaust image  
I saw earlier in the day  
at the museum.

The image is a common one  
full of meaning and reverence  
for believers, and others, too  
The Madonna and Child  
signifying God entering the world of the living  
and our divine roots.

I have seen a hundred Madonnas  
with a hundred children  
hanging in museums  
or painted on cathedral walls  
but today I saw a different view  
a photograph Madonna and Child  
that has left my life  
changed.

The setting is not Nazareth  
but the Budapest ghetto.  
The Christ child is a girl.  
She has a face I recognize  
looking as she does  
just like a little girl I know  
named Abbie.

But this Madonna and Child  
is sadly different from all the others.  
The child in the picture  
is not smiling under the gaze  
of a loving mother;  
her mouth gapes open, dead,  
from a sunken, shrunken face.  
The Christ child lies, eyes open,  
in her dead mother's arms.

And there, in an instant,  
I see it all,  
together in time and place:  
annunciation, nativity, adoration, crucifixion.

And what of resurrection?

Maybe it began  
with the change  
I felt in my soul  
when I saw this picture.

May god have mercy on us all.