PATRICK AND PERRY

Eric and his wife Samantha had three children, roughly born two years apart, and they called them Patrick, Pamela and Penelope. Erica and her husband Thomas only had one birth – that of triplet boys whom they named Perry, Peter and Paul. The children became best friends, using each other's homes as their own and playing in the nearby park. They didn't need any other friends and this continued as they attended the nearby private Baptist School. Every morning at school assembly at eight o'clock in the Main Hall, the school principal, Mister Goodfellow, opened the assembly with a prayer. It was the same every morning. "Dear Father God," he said reverently, "please be with us today in all we do, our schoolwork and our play. May the lonely find friends and the bullies cease from attacking the vulnerable, may our teachers and staff be blest by you, and may we all go out of this assembly in the strength and might of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen" And everyone said, "Amen." Then they sang a different hymn every day, said the Lord's prayer, listened to the school's news read by the head boy and head girl and went to their classrooms.

There were three groups of classes, the A Group for the brightest children. Both families were in this group. The B group consisting of children of average intelligence and the C group, who would have to work very hard or fail and repeat the year. This was a large

group and one group consisted of new scholars, and the other of those repeating the year. They occupied two classrooms. During the day, there was a half hour break when they played in the school's grounds or sat in the attractive garden chatting. The two families were energetic and active. "Let's play catch," said Pamela. "No, let's play hide and seek," chipped in Perry. "Let's do nothing!" said Penelope, "it's too hot – they said there would be a heatwave." "Why don't we go to the school café and buy ice creams?" suggested Paul who was quite tubby. "Good idea," said Peter who thought a Coke would suit him. Perry and Patrick said nothing. They were inseparable and the others thought standoffish. "They read too much," said Pamela, "and not the books we like. Why, they have just returned The History of World Wars. I met them in the library yesterday. You really must read The Wind in the Willow that I took out." In the end Paul's suggestion was taken and that day's pocket money half was spent on sweets, crisps and ice cream.

After some years when Patrick and Perry were fourteen and in their second year of high school, they both shared the history prize at the year end prize giving ceremony and were presented with a box containing all the books written by prominent leaders about World War Two. "Thank you very much, Sir," said Perry. "We shall read it with interest," added Pattrick. As a result of this, they became very

depressed. Reading accounts from survivors of the Holocaust was the last straw. Instead of seeing the bravery and determination to survive of those who suffered, they only saw their terrible suffering. “I’m not going to church again,” declared Perry, “How could a God of mercy and love let this happen?” “Neither will I,” agreed Patrick. They had apparently forgotten that that was why God had sent his only Son to die for man’s wickedness.

Their parents were most concerned as they saw the boy’s depression which caused them to lose weight, refuse food and sit around in silence. “Come with us to see A Sound of Music again,” said Pamela. “It’s always so inspiring,” added Penelope. “I’ve seen it ten times.” “More stupid of you,” said Patrick morosely. Both boys were taken to see various psychiatrists and were prescribed and given medication but to no avail. The parents went to see Reverend Green at his Rectory. He was the priest of the Anglican church near their homes. “My secretary says you wanted to see me urgently. Is something wrong? I know that Patrick and Perry have not been attending our Young People’s Fellowship for some months.” After listening to their parent’s tale of woe, Reverend Green said, “I shall organize a week of prayer for the boys. We have some blest intercederers in our church.”

The prayers of the interceders were not answered. “Keep on praying,” said Revend Green. “No answer is not a no!” And the boys became more and more depressed, especially as they reread all the horrors of the Holocaust and poured over pictures of the emaciated bodies of survivors. “I think we are atheists, said Patrick. “Yes,” agreed Perry. “There is no such person as a merciful God that Reverend Green preaches every Sunday.” And they told their parents they were atheists and would not go to church on Sundays. “We are fourteen now and have made up our minds.” Their parents were disappointed but continued going to the prayer meetings of the interceders for “God said we must persevere.” And the battle of Satan for the souls of their sons was hard. Reverend Green reminded the interceders that “if God be for us, who can be against us?” And so, they prayed more urgently.

Patrick and Perry sat in Patrick’s bedroom. It was Sunday and the family were at church. Delicious aromas of the lamb roasting in the kitchen wafted into the bedroom. “I’ve had enough,” said Patrick. “I think we should swallow a bottle of pain killers and commit suicide.” “Yes,” agreed Perry and they went and bought a bottle each. There was a young girl who had started work that morning. She was not very bright and she did not question the boy’s

purchase or call the manager. “Dumb cluck!” sneered Perry as they walked off and agreed to swallow them at midnight.

Midnight came and Perry swallowed one, then two, three and then his courage failed him. He flushed the rest down the toilet. His alarm rang at six. He switched it off. “I must phone Patrick,” he said to himself. Picking up his cell, he called him. “Hullo.” said Patrick, “I was just about to phone you.” And the following Sunday they went to church with their families and ate a hearty Sunday roast.