

# The Truth about the Law

*by* John Wentworth Chapin

I hear the undying screams of the children outside. The pitch never rises or falls; as one voice falls silent, another joins in. This persistent caterwauling threatens my resolve, but I am determined.

I have worked it out carefully, mulling doctrine. I know right from wrong. I'm seven; I'm not an idiot.

God is all-knowing; there is no way to escape His notice. I can't hope for a sneeze or a turned back. Even if there is a volcano in the Philippines right now, he'd pluck the memory from my mind. It's obscene. He already knows I'll do it. I am stealthy and efficient.

There are all sorts of sins, but they have one thing in common. Whether you pinch your sister or slaughter a family with an axe, you can be forgiven: just apologize. You don't even have to be contrite. Clearly, God is desperate for our entreaties. His law is unavoidable but woefully deficient. My aunt says I should be a preacher — I know the Word — but I plan to be a lawyer. Apologies mean nothing in court.

I unwrap her birthday presents on the front hall table while outside she gnaws her filthy hot dog and smears mustard on her flouncy birthday dress. As long as the cola-soaked miscreants scream, her parents will remain in the back yard, and I am safe in here with God's eye and a diminishing pile of toys shrouded in paper mystery.

