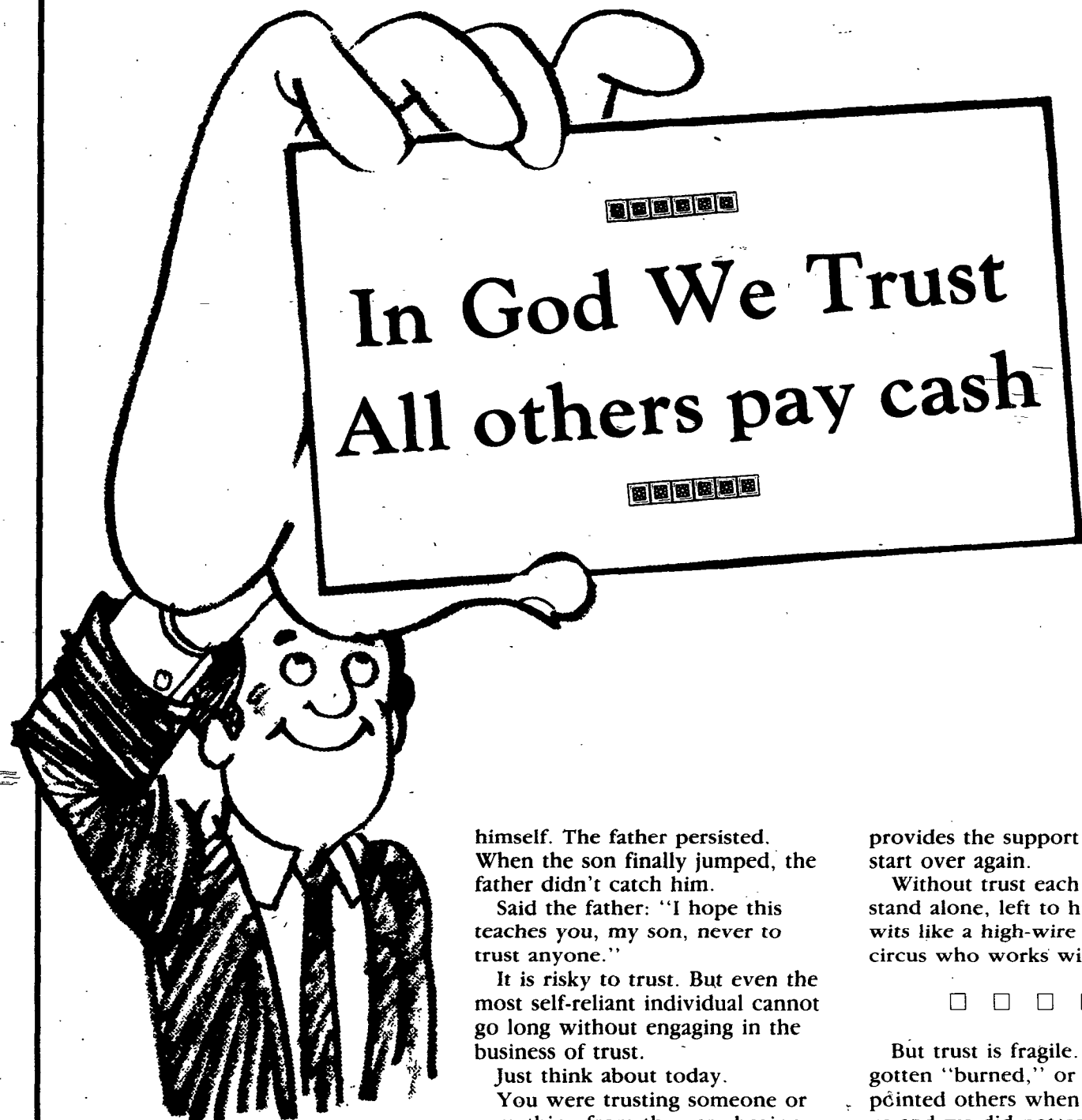


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Faith Today



By Theodore Hengesbach
NC News Service

...That's what the sign said, all right. But when I inquire, I'm told that the shopkeeper will take my check if it's drawn on a local bank and I can produce a driver's license and a credit card.

It is necessary in business to trust a customer somewhat if a sale is to be closed.

Whenever I think of the trust that must exist between people I remember a morbid "joke" told me years ago. It wasn't funny then and isn't funny now but it helps to make my point.

It seems that a father was coaxing his young son to jump from a chair into his arms. However, the son refused to do so out of fear of falling to the ground and injuring

himself. The father persisted. When the son finally jumped, the father didn't catch him.

Said the father: "I hope this teaches you, my son, never to trust anyone."

It is risky to trust. But even the most self-reliant individual cannot go long without engaging in the business of trust.

Just think about today.

You were trusting someone or something from the very beginning: the alarm clock to awaken you; the automobile driver to stop on red; the grocer not to sell spoiled food; the spouse or friend to continue caring about you even when you make a dumb mistake.

We couldn't live without trusting others and having them trust us. A happy, satisfying life is built on this network of trust that is constantly being forged among people, a network of mutual support, encouragement and help.

Trusting others is efficient; it oils life's gears. It means we don't need to go it alone, relying only on our own devices. We can relax, knowing we aren't called to be superhuman. Trust helps us recognize others have expertise in areas where we may be weak.

Relying on others is reassuring, especially on occasions when we make a mistake or experience failure. Then, trusting that another person or a community is there

provides the support we need to start over again.

Without trust each one would stand alone, left to his or her own wits like a high-wire walker in the circus who works without a net.

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But trust is fragile. Everyone has gotten "burned," or has disappointed others when they trusted us and we did not carry through.

Rebuilding trust after it's been broken is like learning how to walk all over again. You start with small steps, testing whether you can trust another in small ways first. When that trust proves well founded, it encourages us to place greater trust in the other.

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How does trust develop between individuals?

It's a problem that existed long before Moses and one that was directly addressed in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are laws for individuals who live in community. Their purpose is to link individuals into a caring bond.

I like to think of the Ten Commandments as a way to forge a community of trust.

To live in peace, a basic core of shared values is required. The first three commandments address this.

The fourth commandment points up the need for each generation to respect the past, even as it adapts the past to the demands of the present.

Trust can develop and thrive only where there is assurance that one's life, property, good name and most intimate relationships are respected. These are the objectives of the fifth through eighth commandments.

And the last two commandments attempt to root out of us the attitude that is most destructive of trust: covetousness, that is, the attitude of envy.

Envy is at the root of lying, cheating and running roughshod over others; the attitude of not caring for others but of seeing and using them as grist for one's own personal goals.

The development and maintenance of trust in the human community is as easy and as difficult as the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as we would want others to do unto us."

Actually, the picture of trust is completed when love is present. For trust is a sign that Christ's law of love is in effect and working well.

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Trust is a necessary component of life. It "oils life's gears," writes Theodore Hengesbach. He points to some well-known laws that serve as a means of developing trust in a community.