

Our Retirement Funds now have a \$1.4 billion liability —

Changes in the Church Pension Fund

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— But the Liability Will Only Increase

All denominational workers in the North American Division (NAD) are involved in a sustentation (pension) fund which is collapsing. This is because, over the years, the NAD has gradually accumulated a \$1.4 billion unfunded liability in that fund.

Specifically, this unfunded liability means that, in addition to church retirement moneys right now in the fund, an additional \$1.4 billion is needed (plus interest) to meet the obligations that have already been earned by the workers to date; that is, right now. This “\$1.4 billion plus interest” is equivalent to \$100 million per year at 7.5 percent (5 percent real return and 2.5 percent allowance for inflation). That is the amount needed for ongoing yearly retirement worker payout.

Several factors have combined, to produce this immense hole in the fund:

- Not placing enough in the fund.
- Less tithe money coming in from church members.

Within the next few years, it is estimated that, if something drastic is not done, this pension liability will grow worse—and totally collapse.

The problem here is that, within 12 years, there will be an extreme imbalance of too many older workers retiring and not enough younger workers still on salary.

In late 1993 and early 1996 we did two earlier studies on this (*General Conference Retirement Fund in Trouble [WM-500]* and *Our Church Retirement Fund Crisis-1-2 [WM-668-669]*). Finally, in late 1997, the North American Division voted to correct the situation. **Unfortunately, their solution will not solve the liability problem. Instead, in coming decades the pension fund will go even worse into the red.**

Let us examine this problem, as well as recently proposed solutions.

- One solution is to ask the church members, in the division, to bail out the retirement fund. In order to do this, each member would have to contribute

\$1,600. This would eliminate, for now, our division-wide debt to the sustentation fund. But it would rapidly build up again in forthcoming years.

- Another solution is for the church in North America to grow faster. Well, we cannot say that the General Conference has not been trying to do that! Since the late 1980s, they have urged local conference presidents to establish Celebration churches, in the hope of rapidly bringing the world into church membership. But that plan has repeatedly backfired. Members, already on the books, who are being secularized by attendance at one of such quasi-Pentecostal churches, lose their concern for the church and its financial support. They, along with anyone else who wanders in the door on Sabbath morning, are more prone to leaving Adventism entirely. A recently completed study attests to the fact (*Celebration Leads to Separation [WM-833]*).

So more growth is needed; but, unfortunately, church growth is slowing down. When church leaders decided to defend the modernists in the church and oppose the faithful who were pleading for a return to our historic standards and beliefs, many of the most faithful in the church were crowded out, and the desolated churches lost their fervor to carry on active evangelism.

- The retirement fund problem would be solved if North American Adventists were giving \$650 million a year in tithe. However, the 1996 NAD tithe only amounted to \$507.4 million. As a result, only \$52 million of the needed \$65.8 million went into the retirement fund. Investment income paid the balance. So the situation is becoming precarious.

- If an organization is growing fast enough, there is no need to have a retirement fund at all. If there is 7 percent growth per year, there will only be 5 retirees for every 100 workers, and a pay-as-you-go pension system would require only 2.7 percent of payroll. This was the method heavily relied on for decades by church leaders. Only three years' worth of retirement was kept on hand.

From 1863 to 1996, tithe income has doubled 16

times, from \$8,000 a year to \$929 million. (Because of 2.2 percent inflation, real growth has been 6.5 percent.) But that growth has leveled off.

(Keep in mind that, in the past in times of financial crisis, our pension fund was seriously endangered. The stock market collapse (between 1929 and 1933) produced a tithe decline of 33 percent during that period. Another very serious Wall Street crash is expected soon; when it comes it could add to our retirement fund problems.)

This retirement fund problem did not come into existence overnight. Our top leaders (primarily older men) have been aware of the growing problem for years. But they hoped that, somehow, it would go away—or at least be solved after they had entered their own fully reimbursed retirement.

But finally the situation could tolerate no further waiting. So these are the changes which are being made:

- No decrease in retirement amounts to those who have already gone on retirement.
- Educational assistance to dependents of newly retiring workers has been reduced.
- A decrease in expected retirement payments for most present workers, with the biggest pension decrease for workers just now about halfway through a 40-year service life (halfway toward retirement).
- A shift in pension-amount risk, from the church to the individual worker.
- Starting in the year 2003, the normal retirement age of 65 will gradually change, in a manner similar to the way Social Security is rolling back.
- The retirement age is now 65. In 2003, it will be 65 and two months. Each year thereafter, retirement age will increase by two months, until it becomes 67 in 2024.
- “Early retirees” are those who quit at 62. They will not receive health-care benefits until they are eligible for Medicare.
- Early retirees will also be penalized .5 percent in benefits for every month they are short of normal retirement age or 40 years of service—“whichever yields the greatest monthly benefit,” according to the new retirement policy.

The above policy changes were approved at the 1997 NAD year-end meeting.

As you might guess, the situation had to have reached critical proportions, in order for the brethren to enact these remarkable changes.

Consider the year 1996: In that year, 766 individuals started on retirement while only 503 went off retirement (by dying). Yet, by the year 2010, the imbalance will greatly worsen.

This is because, in the 1970s, there was a large increase in the number of new workers hired by the North American Division. By the year 2010, all those

workers will be going on retirement.

Hoping that a bandage could be applied to the problem, since 1992 conference contributions to the pension fund have increased .25 percent each year. They will maximize at 8.55 percent of tithe at the end of 1998.

(An additional 2 percent of the tithe goes to pay retiree medical expenses. By 1996, conferences were contributing 10.25 percent of tithe into the retirement fund for this purpose. You did not know that all Adventist retired workers in North America are partly supported by tithe, did you?)

But it was decided not to go above 8.55 percent. Instead, a plan is being worked out which will freeze church-paid retirement benefits, beginning in 2000.

Prior to January 2000, workers who retire will continue to be paid under the old system. But, after that date, a new retirement support plan will go into effect.

The old arrangement, officially called the “defined benefit” pension, provided 100 percent sustentation for retirees. The new policy, known as the “defined contribution” plan, will work somewhat differently.

Employers will place a certain amount of money, based on employees’ salaries, into accounts designated especially for them. The workers will then have the option of contributing a certain percentage of their salaries to their retirement fund—if they wish,—and the conference will match these personal contributions up to a certain percent.

Unfortunately, the new retirement plan will not pay off the debts of the past. Even with the new system, the unfunded pension liability will rise over the next 30 years from \$1.4 billion to \$3.2 billion. In other words, not enough corrective changes are being made to solve our denominational retirement crisis.

In this article, we have only discussed the pension problem of the North American Division, but the principles apply elsewhere in the world field.

These are serious matters, yet God will give wisdom as His workers plead for it. The leaders must be dedicated, and not seeking to advantage themselves at the expense of those who come after.

Under the retirement plans made up to this point, care has been taken that the leading men will receive a full retirement benefit. But, unless drastic modifications are made, those who retire in later years will not be adequately cared for. —*vf*

“When those who are to appropriate to the needs of the Lord’s work the means in His treasury, have unselfishly tried to gain a right understanding of the situation, they should come to the mercy-seat, asking for clear intuition and heavenly wisdom.”—*Gospel Workers*, 455.

Look what they're doing to the Bible — Inside the Inclusive Language Bibles

Did you know that “misleading masculine-oriented language” has been removed from the Bible—at least in a number of the new translations?

What God told us in the Bible wasn't good enough for the liberals. It has to be changed.

We live in a daring generation when men are determined to do such things.

In the Dark Ages, the papists burned the Bible; today, the daughters of Babylon rewrite it.

The first major gender-neutral translation of the Bible came off the presses in 1989. It was the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV). Since then, several others have followed:

- The *New Living Translation* (NLT)
- The *Contemporary English Version* (CEV)
- The *New International Version: Inclusive Language Edition* (NIVI). This version is still only available in England.

How much of the Bible have these modernists changed, and why did they do it?

As to why they did it, the answer is simple enough: The liberals wanted to produce a man/woman god,—and then abolish gender from humanity as well! As much as possible, nothing must be said about men, either alone or in a generic “mankind” sense. The Bible had to be feminized.

As to how they went about doing it, that answer is simple also: Just rewrite the Bible!

The NRSV Preface explains that the copyright holder (the Division of Education and Ministry of the National Council of Churches) required that “masculine-oriented language should be eliminated as far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture.”

In the following examples we will primarily compare the RSV with the NRSV, so that there can be no mistaking the extent to which their new translations warp the meaning.

In the new Bibles, it was all right for Mary to be a mother, but not all right for men to be fathers.

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”—*John 12:32, RSV*
is changed to

“And I . . . will draw all people to myself.”—*NRSV*

In order to eliminate *he* and *him*, passages are rewritten in the plural—although the original is in the singular. This is done because *they* and *them* are gender-neutral in English:

“Jesus answered him, ‘If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.’—*John 14:23, RSV.*

This is radically changed to:

“Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”—*NRSV.*

In John 14:23, Jesus is specifically noting that He and the Father will come to us individually! But, in order to please liberals and women preachers, the modernists have done away with that. In the Preface, the NRSV calls those the “paraphrastic renderings” required to “neutralize” (“immasculate” would be more accurate) genders.

Here is another way they did it:

“I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”—*Revelation 3:20, RSV.*

“I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.”—*NRSV.*

The radicals will not even permit Christ to be a man!

“He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.”—*Psalms 34:20, RSV (quoted again at the time of fulfillment in John 19:36).*

But the NRSV, NLT, NCV, CEV, and NIVI will not permit such a clear prediction of Christ to be made about a “man”! See how they twisted it:

“He keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken.”—*NRSV.*

In Hebrew, it is singular *His bones*, yet the prediction is destroyed in these modernist translations. Satan laughs. There is a verse somewhere in the Bible about a curse being on the land when the people let women rule over them:

“As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.”—*Isaiah 3:12, KJV.*

In reality, women can be very wise and are often more spiritually minded than men, yet the God of heaven gave us a pattern in the Bible which we should not ignore.

Singulars are changed to plurals 1,732 times in the NRSV, in order to de-masculinize the Bible. The ancient pagans had mother-father gods, and the spiritualists had witches. The Vatican has made Mary the Queen of Heaven and Co-Redemptrix. Our modern theologians want to join the pack.

In these new versions, the emphasis on God relating to specific individuals is lost.

“God created man in His own image.”—Genesis 1:27, RSV, has been changed to “So God created humankind in his image.”—NRSV.

“Male and female he created them, and he . . . named them ‘Humankind’ when they were created.”—*Genesis 5:2, NRSV*.

The NCV, CEV, and NIVI have *human beings* here, and the NLT has *Human*.

In the NRSV Preface, the modernists give their excuse for so twisting Scripture. They say the “culture” of Bible times must be changed to our “culture” today:

“It was often appropriate to mute the patriarchalism of the culture of the biblical writers through gender-inclusive language.”—NRSV Preface.

A decided effort has been made to rid the Bible of these seven words: *father, son, brother, man, he, him, and his*. This was done thousands of times. We found no instances in which woman, she, or her was gender-neutralized.

Leading men (Acts 15:22, RSV) is changed to *leaders* (NRSV); cf. Acts 20:30.

The high priest was selected *from among men* (Hebrews 5:1, RSV) is changed to *from among mortals* (NRSV). Our women preachers will love that translation.

The fact that Christ was a man is hidden:

“As by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.”—*1 Corinthians 15:21, RSV*.

“Since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being.”—NRSV.

That mistranslation effectively eliminates the representational headship of Adam and Christ.

“The man Christ Jesus.”—*1 Timothy 2:5, RSV*.

“Christ Jesus, himself human.”—NRSV.

Here is another example:

“Blessed is the man who walks not . . . but his delight is in the law . . .”—*Psalms 1:1, RSV*.

“Happy are those who do not follow . . . but their delight is in the law . . .”—NRSV.

“In order to avoid gender-specific language in statements of a general kind, it was agreed that the plural might be substituted for the singular and the second person for the third person.”—NRSV Preface.

They changed that which the Bible said for what it did not say.

“Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”—Galatians 6:7, RSV

“You reap whatever you sow.”—NRSV.

The NLT and CEV also have *you*; the NCV and NIVI change it to the plural, *people*.

If God caused certain passages in the Bible to be written with singular nouns and pronouns, we should leave them that way.

“A man’s mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”—*Proverbs 16:9, RSV*.

“People may make plans in their minds, but the Lord decides what they will do.”—NCV [*singular to plural*].

“In your heart you may plan your course, but the Lord determines your steps.”—NIVI [*changes third-person singular to second-person singular*].

“We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.”—NLT [*changes third-person singular to first-person plural*].

“The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps.”—NRSV [*changes third-person singular to no person*].

—Most anything will do, except that which has *his* in it! But, in the process, they change the meaning and tend to impersonalize or generalize it.

Some will say that the words *he, him, his, and man* refer not to the human race, but to men only. However, that is not true, as every dictionary clearly points out. Every major dictionary continues to use these broader meanings. Newspapers and news magazines, such as *Newsweek, U.S. News, the New York Times, Chicago Tribune, etc.*, continue to use *he* in a generic sense and *man* as a name for the human race.

The latest (1994) edition of the Associated Press *Stylebook* says to “use the pronoun when an indefinite antecedent may be male or female: [example] *A reporter protects his sources*”—not his or her sources.

“Let’s face it: the English language is stuck with the generic masculine.”—*William Zinsser, On Writing Well, 5th edition, 1994*.

“A style that converts every *he* into a *they* will quickly turn to mush . . . I don’t like plurals; they weaken writing because they are less specific than the singular, less easy to visualize.”—*Ibid*.

Modern man has lost a reverence for Scripture, and his secular mind is going to destroy him. — *vf*