

TITHING WORLDWIDE

The October 2003 Annual Council provides information on our current denominational tithe-paying. The following quotes are from *Adventist News Network*, October 28, 2003:

“Annually, tithe brings the Adventist Church US \$1.1 billion to \$1.2 billion.”

“Since the 1970s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has seen its tithe, or members donating 10% of their earnings to the church, drop 75%, per capita, adjusted for inflation.”

“About 30% of Adventist Church members worldwide give tithe. In parts of Africa and South America as few as 10% give tithe.”

“Tithe receipted by the church has been declining for at least the last 25 years, when compared to income.”

“In the 1970s, 70%-80% of members attended church regularly and 65% tithed. Now 45%-50% of members regularly attend church and 30% tithe.”

What is the cause of this tithing problem? The faithful recognize that there are two primary causes: (1) Repeatedly, since the early 1980s, loyal believers have been pushed out of the church when they pled for a return to the church's historic teachings and practices. In sorrow they left, taking their wallets with them. (2) Those remaining in the church are frequently taught by new theology pastors that they do not need to obey Bible standards. So why continue paying tithe?

Unfortunately, our leaders do not recognize the primary causes. *Here are what they consider to be the nine causes of reduced tithe paying.* The following are comments by those in attendance at the Annual Council, as quoted by ANN:

Lacking assurance of salvation: “All our studies show that a majority don't have an assurance of salvation.”

Lack of “a disciplining program”: “The cure is a serious disciplining program.”

“Spirituality or the lack of it”: “The real issue behind the decline in tithe receipt is spirituality or the lack thereof.”

The baby boomer generation isn't tithing: “This steady decline can be explained if the tithing behavior of the various age cohorts [groups] remained relatively stable. As each of the younger cohorts aged, they made up a larger percentage of wage earners. That they tithed at a lower rate means that over time the rate of total members who tithe decreases.”

“Political unrest”: “In the last 10 years—particularly in the late 1990s—within this region, political unrest and other related events . . . had a real impact on our church members' ability to return God's tithe.”

“Currency values”: “Tithing in Europe may be due

to the increase in currency values.”

“Priorities, technical things, and Sun Accounts”: “It's a matter of priorities . . . Nowadays technical things tend to take up the finances—IT and Sun Accounts.”

Lack of “self-esteem” by the members: “Self-support says, I can do it. It promotes self-esteem and removes a dependence syndrome.”

Financial problems: “Countries in the region are going through a tough economic phase . . . Our currencies are softening each day and the cost of living is rising higher and higher.”

So now you know why the church has tithing problems. Obedience to God's law or our historic standards was not mentioned once.

GENERAL CONFERENCE TREASURER'S REPORT

Robert Lemon, General Conference Treasurer, presented his annual report to the Annual Council. He said there was “a decline in world mission offerings, which fell from \$48 to \$46.4 million in the past year.” This occurred in spite of an increase in church membership.

“[Steven] Rose [GC Undertreasurer] noted that this year's actual expenses will exceed the GC's 2003 world budget by \$3.1 million.”

“The Annual Council, the highest administrative body between GC Sessions, voted the church's first deficit budget in recent years. The 2004 world budget listed expenses at \$118,222,507 with income of \$115,083,730.”

“If we don't turn things around in a year or two, we may have to look at major restructuring.”

“Associate treasurer Don Robinson also commented, ‘It is possible to make cuts, but there is nothing more destabilizing to an organization than to lay off and then take back employees.’”

“Former GC treasurer Robert Rawson expressed concerns over accounts receivable from the institutions [money owed to the conferences, unions, General Conference by its educational, publishing, etc., institutions], which he categorized as a ‘precipitous increase.’ ‘It is increasingly more difficult to collect accounts receivable from other church entities,’ he said, adding that ‘There is a growing tendency to put the church last.’”

—*So even church entities are not paying their bills to the church!*

“In a related financial matter, Adventist Risk Management [GC insurance company] president, Robert L. Swezey, presented a brief report entitled ‘*Does the Adventist Church Get Sued?*’ He stated that ARM deals with 450 current lawsuits on average, with 150 new per year.” (*All quotations on this page are from Adventist News Network, October 2003.*)