

# THE GROWTH AND USE OF SABBATH SCHOOL OFFERINGS

At first offerings were received in Sabbath School solely to pay for lessons and other local Sabbath School expenses. Although many felt it was not proper to take up such offerings on the Sabbath, Ellen White supported the plan. "Penny boxes" fastened on a church wall near the entrance were used to receive the expense offerings given by the members as they entered or left the room. A precedent cited for this plan was the offering boxes in the ancient temple treasury, into which the Jews dropped their coins as tokens of gratitude for blessings received. Later, the class offering envelope plan was adopted.

In 1885 the Oakland, California, Sabbath School contributed for the Australasian Mission all of the offerings they received in the first quarter. This was the first Sabbath School mission offering.

In 1887 Sabbath Schools raised \$10,615 in response to an appeal for funds to open the first African mission station. The Sabbath Schools also raised about \$12,000 for our first mission ship, the **Pitcairn**, launched in 1890. These were the beginnings from which a liberal world mission spirit has grown.

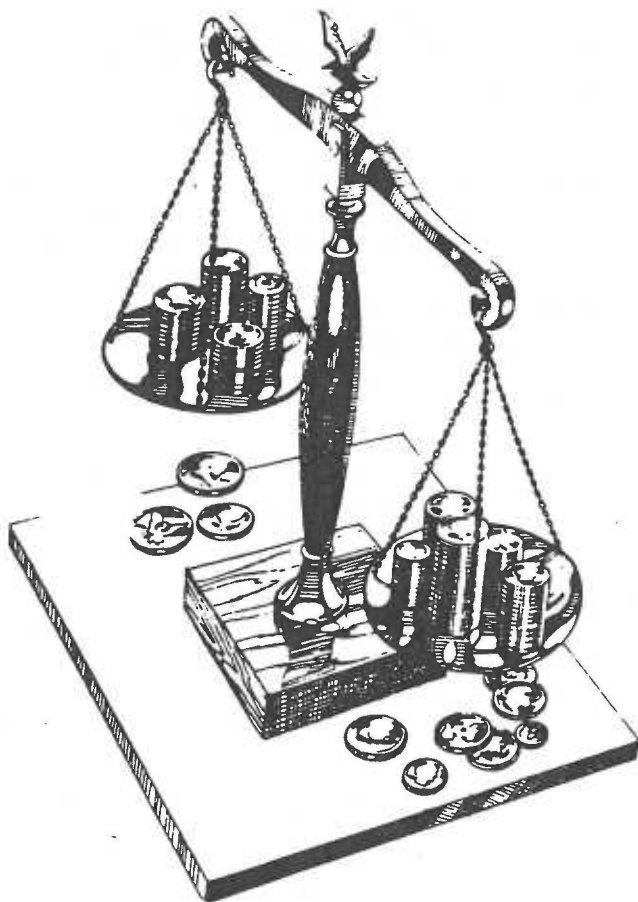
The plan of receiving regular weekly Sabbath School offerings for missions was adopted by the General Conference session of 1909. By the third quarter of 1912, all Sabbath Schools in North America were following this plan. It took our Sabbath Schools from 1885 to 1911--more than 25 years--to raise the first million dollars for missions. During the last quarter of 1987, an average of one million dollars was raised each 10.37 days. The mission offering in 1987 totaled \$35,335,678.71.

The **Review and Herald** of June 1, 1922, page 26, reported a prediction made by Elder A. G. Daniells at a camp meeting in 1903. He had recently returned from an overseas trip, and being on fire with the spirit of missions, he said with considerable fervor, "Why, brethren, the day is coming when this denomination will raise and expend a thousand dollars a day for foreign missions!" At the close of the meeting a brother remonstrated with Elder Daniells, for making such an absurd prediction. "Brother Daniells, we are all in favor of foreign missions. We are with you, but you should keep within some sort of sane limits....We will never do such a thing as that, and to tell us such things overwhelms us. Now do put on the brakes."

Seventy-eight years after Elder Daniells made this enthusiastic forecast Sabbath School offerings alone reached more than ninety-six times the daily amount he had suggested. In 1987 just the Investment fund alone exceeded the amount predicted by Elder Daniells by more than eleven times--\$11,521.20 a day, a total of \$4,205,240.90 for the year.

Other offering plans were begun after the weekly Sabbath School offering was established. In 1912 the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering plan, with an overflow for special projects, was begun. In 1919 the Birthday-Thank Offering plan was introduced in the Sabbath School. The Investment Plan was adopted in 1925. All of these offerings flow together to produce the total Sabbath School mission offerings.

"To show a liberal, self-denying spirit for the success of foreign missions is a sure way to advance home missionary work; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off." --CSSW, p. 136.



# TYPES OF MISSION OFFERINGS

The plan of giving offerings in Sabbath School for the benefit of the world mission of the church has had God's approval and blessing. It has brought advancement and support to mission areas and has blessed the givers, young and old, as they have thereby developed the graces of liberality and self-sacrifice.

Giving for missions in Sabbath School is based on sound principles:

"God in His wise plans has made the advancement of His cause dependent upon the personal efforts of His people and upon their freewill offerings." -- **Testimonies**, vol. 4, p. 464.

"The very best manner in which to give expression to our love for our Redeemer is to make offerings to bring souls to the knowledge of the truth."--**Testimonies**, vol. 3, p. 413.

One of the most significant contributions the Sabbath School has made to the advancing work of God is to inform, instruct, motivate, and train its members in habits of self-denial and benevolence, and to keep before them the vision of a global responsibility in giving the gospel.

## THE SABBATH SCHOOL'S PART

For many years the General Conference world budget has depended upon the Sabbath Schools of the world to provide a large portion of the funds devoted to mission work.

In the promotion of mission offerings, various personal objectives have been suggested. Systematic liberality accounts for a good part of the offerings year by year. The Church Ministries Department works together with the Department of Stewardship and Development to encourage liberal and proportionate giving for world missions. The present suggestion is two percent of the income.

All offerings given during the Sabbath School, except the Sabbath School expense offering, are General Conference offerings, and are to be passed on in their entirety by the church treasurer to the conference for transfer to the General Conference. These offerings include the weekly offering, the Birthday-Thank Offering, Investment, and the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. They are all mission offerings. The Sabbath School expense offering is retained in the local church to meet the recurring expenses of the Sabbath School. **No offerings for any cause other than those stated above should be promoted or received during the Sabbath School.**



## Description of Offerings

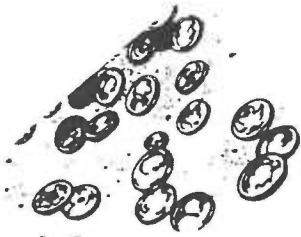
**THE TWELVE SABBATHS' OFFERINGS.** It must be kept in mind that, although the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering and other special funds may properly be given strong promotion, it is the steady stream of offerings that flows in week by week throughout the quarter that provides the support our world missions require for regular operation. All who lead or teach in the Sabbath School should cooperate in keeping this fact before the people.

**THE THIRTEENTH SABBATH SPECIAL PROJECTS OFFERING.** In 1912 the General Conference Committee designated the last Sabbath of each quarter as a day on which Sabbath School should take a special mission offering. This has been called the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. A certain portion of this offering has been designated to benefit special projects in a selected world division. This portion of this offering has been designated to benefit special projects in a selected world division. This portion was for many years called the overflow, but is now known as the Special Projects Offering. Each division receives its turn according to a schedule voted by the Annual Council of the General Conference. The Division Committee selects the projects within its territory to benefit from the Special Projects portion of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Currently 25 percent of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering is used each quarter for these special projects.

Millions of dollars have been obtained through the Thirteenth Sabbath Special Projects Offering, by means of which many strategic projects have been made possible. During 1989 the Special Projects Offering will go to:

1. Eastern Africa Division - March 25
2. Euro-Africa Division - June 24
3. Trans-European Division - September 30
4. Southern Asia Division - December 23

**BIRTHDAY-THANK OFFERING.** Another well-established feature of Sabbath School giving for missions is the Birthday-Thank Offering. In this way members may express in tangible form their gratitude to God for His providential care and leading. Many thousands of dollars are added each year to mission funds by means of this offering.



This offering plan has its basis in the pattern of thank offerings God approved and received from His people in Old Testament times. Inspired counsel also suggests such a plan:

"For life, health, food, and clothing, no less than for the hope of eternal life, we are indebted to the Giver of all mercies; and it is due to God to recognize His gifts, and to present our offerings of gratitude to our greatest benefactor." --**Counsels on Sabbath School Work**, p. 143.

**INVESTMENT PLAN.** In 1925 the General Conference Committee voted to recognize the Investment Plan as a source of mission funds and assigned its promotion to the Sabbath School Department. Since that time Investment has become a major source of funds for mission support. Since 1977 twenty-five percent of the total Investment funds each year are assigned for frontier outreach and/or large-city evangelism, to be divided among all the divisions. The remaining seventy-five percent of the Investment offering goes into the World Mission Fund to support the worldwide program of the church.

The General Conference Church Ministries Department suggests that two special Investment programs a year be held in our Sabbath Schools: the first in the early part of the year to launch the campaign; and the second near the close of the year to bind off and complete the effort for the year. The first program can be of an inspirational nature encouraging all to participate. The Investment leader, in cooperation with the superintendent, should endeavor to enlist the fullest possible participation in the plan. Each month an Investment feature should be included in the program. Suggestions should be made as to possible projects. Children, youth, and adults should join in this work and watch God bless their endeavors.

As mentioned earlier, Investment is **not** a part of the World Budget's combined fund. Investment is separate and very special because:

1. It is not and should not be another offering;
2. It is a personal project decided upon by each individual and shared with God.

In ancient Israel God planned and explained the tithe and offering system. This was built around rural living and farm life. The many offerings were an integral part of their daily lives and yearly cycle. The "First Fruits" included the very first in the harvest of vegetables and grains as well as the first-born of animals. The "Wave-Sheaf" was an offering connected with the worship festival. Other similar offerings were scheduled throughout the year.

Investment provides an opportunity for you to plan something for God that is connected with your daily life, an opportunity to arrange a special, money-raising project that's between you and God. Every Sabbath School member should be encouraged to gain the spiritual blessings that a proper Investment project can bring.

**EXPENSE OFFERING.** The expense for the supplies in operating the Sabbath School should be met in one of two ways. In many instances the Sabbath School expense is included in the church budget, while other churches take up an expense offering. A special envelope is provided for taking the expense offering. Incorporating the Sabbath School expense in the church budget is preferable as it reduces the number of appeals for funds. The church treasurer is the custodian of the Sabbath School expense money.

Never should any portion of the mission offerings be used to meet the expenses of the Sabbath School; nor should any portion of the Sabbath School expense money be used for gifts, socials, or picnics. Money for such purposes should be raised in other ways.

**Other offerings.** The offerings listed and explained in the preceding pages are the only recognized and approved offerings to be taken in the Sabbath School.

**DISTRIBUTION OF OFFERINGS.** The mission offerings of the Sabbath School go into the World Mission Fund to support the worldwide program of the church. These offerings are the regular weekly offering, the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, Birthday-Thank Offering, and the Investment Fund.

To allow these four offerings to be distributed according to the policies of the General Conference, it is essential that they be recorded separately and accurately by the church treasurer. The tithe and offering envelopes should likewise make provision for this division of Sabbath School mission offerings.

