

The Best Book About the Sabbath

by Edwin de Kock

The best book about the Sabbath is called the Bible. By reading it, many people have discovered the truth about the fourth commandment without any human aid, but guided by the Holy Spirit. That is how the Seventh-day Adventist Church began in Southern Africa, with Pieter Wessels, a wealthy Afrikaner. Another such person was my late mother, Susanna E. de Kock (born Olivier).

In 1935, she was rereading the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. Suddenly one word, which defines the only true day of rest, seemed to leap out at her: “But the *seventh* day is the Sabbath . . .” Startled into realization, she said to herself: “But Sunday is the *first* day of the week! Why, then, are we keeping it as the Sabbath?”

At the time, she was living on a farm called Springvale in the Mvenyane, about twenty-three miles from Cedarville, East Griqualand, South Africa. Her husband was the eldest son of a large family, presided over by her father-in-law, whose home was on the neighboring farm. He was a highly respected patriarch in the community and an elder of the Dutch Reformed Church. All around, on the nearby farms, lived most of his sons and daughters. It was a close-knit circle of Calvinist Afrikaners, in which tradition reigned supreme.

But the Word of God is mightier than any human tradition. Soon my mother began to speak of her discovery. Her father-in-law said: “My child, if you are right in saying that Sunday is the first day of the week, we will be lost; for we are not allowed to change the Law of God!”

Then a bereavement brought about an unusual turn of events. One of her husband’s sisters died. Because rain had made the dirt road impassible, the Dutch Reformed minister was unable to come and conduct the funeral. Pastor J. N. de Beer, accompanied by a Brother Vorster, from the nearby Cancele Mission Station, came to the rescue.

A sister-in-law told my mother: “These are peculiar people. They keep Saturday instead of Sunday!” My mother said nothing but resolved within herself: “I must see them.”

After the funeral, Pastor de Beer and his companion found time to visit and greet all the bereaved relatives, never realizing what fruitage could come of such a courtesy. Soon he entered our home and sat down.

My mother looked straight at him and asked: “Pastor de Beer, what about the Sabbath?”

Amazed at this first intimation of an interest in such things, the minister turned to his companion and said: “Brother Vorster, the Lord has sent us here!”

“Yes,” my mother replied, “I know, for I prayed.”

She accepted the rest of what his church teaches, immediately as it was revealed to her, though only after comparing the new doctrines with Scripture.

Taking her stand, she had to face much opposition from scandalized relatives. One brother-in-law, himself a church elder, troubled and persecuted her unceasingly, until my father gave him a thrashing. She was baptized in Pietermaritzburg, Natal, together with her older children. I, too, understanding the reasons for her

decision, made up my mind to become a Seventh-day Adventist and for seventy-two years have never regretted it.

This, too, I record as one of my earliest and most cherished memories: a visit from her former Dutch Reformed minister, with one of his elders, to make her reconsider her decision. As a little child I witnessed the occasion, one afternoon in the simple living-room of our farmhouse. She said to him: "If you can prove to me from God's Word that I am wrong, I will gladly return to your church, but not otherwise. There is a Bible lying on the table beside you!"

As a five-year-old, I observed him closely. He never touched the holy Book!

Over the decades and generations the influence of that personal discovery from the Bible, and her steadfastness, has extended and is still growing. First, about thirteen years later, my father followed her example and was baptized. Several of her children remained faithful to the message, followed by not a few grandchildren, one of whom is a retired denominational minister. Now, almost three quarters of a century later, great-grandchildren have been reared in God's church, and another generation is on the way.

It all began with the reading of the Bible, the best book about the Sabbath.

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