Benigna van Groenekloof of Mamre (1873) first won renown when it started to be called upon in the discussion concerning the oldest text published in Afrikaans. The book is still controversial: scholars disagree not only as to the language in which it was published (Dutch, Afrikaans) or its genre (short-story, novel, anthology), but also as to the name of its author. Although the work was published anonymously, both the archive research and preliminary survey of the library holdings clearly point to the fact that the Dutch book was written by a German missionary, Herman Benno Marx. The present article not only presents his profile in more detail for the first time but also emphasises the importance of the Dutch language for the language policy of the Moravian Brothers and for their missionary and educational work. It also points to the need for a new approach to the history of the South African writing.