

THEAL EN SY BRONNE

In 1944 het prof. J. S. Marais in sy inleiding tot *Maynier and the First Boer Republic*, Theal se bewering dat hy daarna gestreef het om geskiedenis sonder vooroordeel te skryf, in twyfel getrek. „Succeeding historians of South African peoples”, skryf prof. Marais, „have not endorsed this . . . claim: they have questioned many of Theal’s interpretations of, or comments on, his facts. On the other hand they have tended to accept the facts themselves as reliable. It is one of the aims of this study to question Theal’s competence as a finder of the facts.” Aangesien Theal baie selde ’n aanduiding gee waar hy sy bronne gevind het, is dit ’n moeilike taak. Die navorser wat hom ten doel stel om aan te toon dat Theal onbekwaam was „as a finder of the facts”, moet voorwaar die Argivale bronne baie goed ken om dit te doen.

Wat gebeur wanneer ’n navorser geen grondige kennis van die bronne wat Theal gebruik het, besit nie, kan gesien word in ’n proefskrif met die naam *A Critical Assessment of Dr. George McCall Theal*. Die skryfster, mej. Merle Babrow, sê tereg: „Historians frequently make mistakes. They overlook or neglect important evidence, make uncritical use of unreliable sources, misinterpret documents and misunderstand issues. Theal does all these things.” Dan gaan sy verder en beweer dat Theal „also presents facts contrary to the evidence which he had, distorts his material, misrepresents the issues and repeatedly ignores a massive quantity of relevant documents with which he was familiar”. As staving van hierdie ernstige aanklag teen Theal, word dan dele van sy werk vergelyk, nie met die oorspronklike bronne waarvoor hy kantiig sy oë sou toegemaak het nie, maar met werke van skrywers soos dié van W. M. MacMillan en J. S. Marais.

Een van die figure wie se persoonlikheid Theal met voorbedagte rade sou vermink het, is dan Maynier, wat deur Theal in ’n vals, deur Marais in die regte lig gestel is. Hoe het mej. Babrow haar stelling bewys? Tog seker deur Theal se feite te toets aan oorspronklike bronne en ’n verwysing na die „massive quantity of relevant documents” wat aan Theal bekend was, maar wat hy nogtans versuim het om te gebruik? Niks daarvan nie. In hierdie aanval op Theal is daar geen spoor van selfstandige bronnestudie nie en die hele poging om Theal te beswadder, sou die aandag nie werd gewees het, indien daar geen pertinente aanvalle op bestaande skoolboeke in gemaak was nie, met die eis daarby dat die „foute” wat Theal die wêreld ingehelp het, onmiddellik verwyder moet word. Een van daardie sogenaamde foute was dat „every year thousands of South African school children are still taught that the “negrophilist” French revolutionary Maynier, drove the Boers to rebellion by taking the side of the barbarians and using their church “as barracks for the Hottentot troops”.” Hierdie laaste stelling sou dan op grond van prof. Marais se boek nie waar wees nie. Op p. 87 skryf mej. Babrow „especially that they were admitted in

the church of Graaff-Reinet is also untrue". Om dit te staaf, word verwys na voetnoot 16 van p. 127 van *Maynier and the first Boer Republic* en na voetnoot 4 van p. 113 van dieselfde skrywer se *The Cape Coloured People*. Sonder meer moet ons dan aanneem dat Theal verkeerd, en Marais reg is.

Wat gebeur egter wanneer ons die bronne self raadpleeg wat Marais in sy voetnote noem? Om die antwoord aan u eie oordeel oor te laat, haal ek hulle *in toto* aan. Die twee eerste briewe is vertalings, waarin moontlik foute kon insluip, die derde brief, wat m.i. bewys dat Theal se feite juis was, is 'n eiehandig geskrewe konsepbrief van Francis Dundas.

O.B. 33, pp. 165-177

Bo-aan staan „translation”.

The Revd. Board of Churchwardens,
Capetown.

Gentlemen,

The interest we take in the preservation of our public worship urges us to apply and to represent to you: That our community is at present destitute of a minister to officiate and preach the Holy Gospel; which privation gradually increases the existing ignorance: and which is still worse, the church erected by the community to glorify God and to be edified and instructed in it, is since a considerable time made use of rather for a den of crimes and for a receptacle and asylum of those that have committed crimes than for the true divine service.

We hoped our deliverance was nigh, when His Excellency, Governor Dundas, considered by all the well disposed as a true Father of his subjects, whose interests he takes to heart, had sent hither Major Sherlock with His Majesty's troops; but we do not to this moment perceive any alteration whatever on the subject. The Church is not only beset by His Majesty's Troops, which were it properly done would occasion no material injury, to that building, but also, alas! at present rather like a stable, nay, we dare say Brothel, than a church, and all its furniture, Bibles and other books are evidently subjected to profanation, scandal and ruin. And if at any time we are so fortunate as to have a Minister sent (like lately through His Excellency's goodness, the Revd. Mr. Vos) to officiate for some short time and to edify this community by his instruction and example, then another intervenes, like the Revd. Mr. van der Kemp, to give offence among the community, so as this was the case on the 20th December last (which you may please to learn by the said Mr. Vos) when the divine worship was so hurt that several persons of Graaff-Reinet, to avoid similar offence, have determined to go to church no more; which offence does not decrease, but rather increase.

We also bought without bothering the community a parsonage House on our account, and, had we properly the management of that Building,

the Church would be benefited by it; but in that respect also we find ourselves aggrieved, because when the aforesaid Mr. van der Kemp, on account of his spoiling the said house, was to remove from it, we let it (without the garden which yielded an additional benefit to the church) to Secretary Van Diemen at 20 Rdrs. a month; but the landdrost per order demanded its keys from the said Mr. Van Diemen and appropriated it as a mess house for the officers and would not adjust the rent, reduced by the officers to 12 Rdrs. a month; which house and especially the Garden (like all the Gardens in this village GraffReinet) is at present subjected to the utmost ruin.

We, not knowing how to conduct ourselves under these circumstances, therefore request you will attend to these matters and do what is expedient and needful; we, requesting help, assistance and instruction from you as Brethren in Jesus Christ; that all disturbances, which occasion but confusion and disrespect for the divine worship, may be removed.

We recommend you with the protection of Jehovah and subscribe ourselves respectfully,

Gentlemen,

Your most humble servants,

The members of the Board of
Church Wardens

(signed) pr. order, Jan Jacobs } Elders.
Petrus J. Pretorius }

P. Maré
Jacob F. Naude
J. G. Viljoen
Gert Coetsee
Martinus W. Pretorius
late Elder
Nicolaas Smit } Deacons

a true Translation
C. G. Höhne.
sw. Translr.

Dan volg die vertaling van die begeleidende brief:

Translation.

His Excellency

Lieut. General Francis Dundas,

Lieut. and acting Governor and

Commander in Chief of the Cape of Good Hope and its dependencies.

Honourable Sir!

We, the Board of Clergy and Churchwardens of the Reformed Community, have the honour respectfully to lay before your Excellency, a

certain letter which we received from the Board of Churchwardens at Graaff Reinet, and humbly to request, that, should the complaints stated in the said letter be true, it may please your excellency to redress the grievances which cannot tend but to great prejudice of the divine worship, which, they state to us, is already declining and therefore requires every support in that district.

Begging leave to recommend our Church and Community into your Excellency's Protection, we subscribe ourselves most respectfully
Honourable Sir,

Cape of Good Hope,
March 10th. 1802

a true Translation.
C. G. Höhne.
sw. Translr.

Your Excellency's
most obedient Servants
(signed) Chr. Fleck
J. P. Serrurier,
C. H. Haupt.
A. Berrangé
M. Pentz
J. Volsteedt
Js. Jurgen
Js. Vos

Op p. 172 staan in Dundas se handskrif 'n konsep antwoord:
March 12. 1802

A letter to be written to the Board of Church Wardens in answer to theirs of the 10th inst. informing them that the Lieut. Governor is as much concerned as the Elders and Deacons of Graafrenette can possibly be at the indispensable necessity for the church there, being made use of for the present, as a Barrack; this however cannot be disposed with, there being no other means of lodging the troops stationed at the Drosdy of Graaffrenette, where the rebellious and outrageous conduct of some¹ of the Inhabitants (who attacked their Magistrates) made it necessary to send a detachment for the preservation of good order and the safety of the well-disposed —

The Lieut. Governor is sensible that much mischief may have been done by the Hottentots and is doing every thing consistent with justice and humanity to prevent the further continuence of their deprivations; the bad conduct of the savages being however to be attributed to the ill-example shewn them by the Boors of Graafrenette who have never failed to endeavour to counteract the benevolent disposition of Government to promote the general good and prosperity of the country.

It may be necessary to add that Major Sherlock has informed the Lieut. General that the Church is constantly swept and cleaned every Sunday morning early, previous to the celebration of Divine Service, and that notwithstanding the intense heat the Troops constantly encamp on

1. Eers het hier gestaan „the”. Dit is deur Dundas in „some” verander.

the Sabbath. The Books (.....)² belonging to the Church are properly taken care of. Fons. Dundas.

Indien Dundas se brief vir 'n ander uitleg vatbaar is, as wat Theal daaraan gegee het, sal ek dit graag wil verneem. Ook is ek gretig om te weet of daar onder die massa materiaal wat Theal dan doelbewus opsygestoot sou hê, miskien 'n bron is waarin ons 'n weerlegging vind van die bewering dat die boere van Graaff-Reinet ontevrede was dat hul kerk ook deur Hottentot-soldate bevuil was.

Nee, voordat ons ons geskiedenis in skoolboeke kan gaan oorskryf, is 'n baie deegliker studie van bronne nodig, as wat na Theal deur historici onderneem is.

A. J. Böeseken.

2. Een woord kon ek nie ontsyfer nie.