**Meeting the Meta 2015**

**1 Meta Literacy Project Report**

A year after the launching of the completed Meta New Testament, my desire is to see the Meta New Testament Project succeed. We at the Heath Church have prayed and given over 40 years, so I want to see that it has been all worthwhile. The measurements of success are:

1. that the Scriptures are read in all the Meta churches in a confident and expressive way, rather like a good story-teller or a good teacher would. This would give the audience or congregation a good experience of the Meta Scriptures being delivered in public, and so encourage others to take up the reading of the Scriptures for themselves.
2. that the Scriptures are read confidently and fluently at home, both aloud to the household and silently for personal study and devotion.

A good start has been made but there is still a long way to go. People need to be familiar and confident with the Meta alphabet, including the extra letters, and most especially the tone marks. With increasing familiarity with the Meta alphabet, people should be able to spell, and spell out, every single word in the language. The alphabet is a good alphabet, unlike the English one with all its inconsistencies and exceptions. If as children they managed to struggle with the spelling of English words, they should be able to manage as literate adults to use Meta’s ‘phonetic’ alphabet with relative ease.

Recognizing the words of Meta is vital, but is only a first step. It is poor reading to ‘count’ each word in a sentence because the reader and the listener quickly lose the meaning of the sentence. As a second step people have to recognize which words belong together as phrases (‘sensible groupings of words’) and, thirdly, to recognize how the phrases join together to make a clause or sentence. What helps in these respects is their knowledge of the equivalent passage in their English Bible. In fact, as part of the exercise of reading the Meta NT, some people feel the need to consult the English Bible to make sure they have got the sense.

The fourth step is to see how all the sentences contribute to the description of the event – for example, raising up Simon Peter’s mother-in-law from her fever – or the description of a piece of teaching – for example, 2 Peter 1:3-11. It is important to understand the whole event or the main point of teaching.

Finally, the fifth step is to catch the high point of the event: the fever left her immediately – and to express the amazement due. And to catch the steps in the presentation of teaching and to express these steps as a good teacher would as they taught. In this way, the congregation is ‘pulled’ into the event or ‘led’ in the teaching; the congregation feel involved like participants. It provides the congregation with a rich experience of Scripture, which should help them to be encouraged to read the Scriptures for themselves.

The aim is to enable people to read with ease, with meaning and understanding, and with confidence. Confidence is the sense of ‘I can do this’. People need to practise reading and spelling words and to get the sense of the words in phrases and sentences. If they are to read in public, they need to prepare themselves in this way, but also to rehearse aloud in private.

People should read their Meta Scriptures each day, for 10 minutes at least, or more. People could also meet together informally or in reading classes as regularly as possible for mutual encouragement and help. Moreover, people – mothers particularly – should let the children see them reading and read to them too. Such children will grow up knowing that their mother tongue can be read and written as well as heard and spoken.

One problem is that there is little else to read. When asked what else they would like to read, the following list emerged:

1. Scripture text cards
2. Lord’s Prayer card
3. Old Testament lives: brief accounts of the life of Abraham, etc
4. children’s versions of Gospel accounts
5. Gospel leaflets
6. Bible study notes
7. stories
8. vocational booklets, eg business management
9. cultural heritage
10. history of the Meta people
11. newspaper
12. poems, rhymes
13. public signs and posters. The Meta Students Association have experimented with such signs on their premises. Posters for hygiene, etc, could be displayed in hospitals, clinics, schools and churches.

When asked who would compose these materials, they eventually agreed that it would have to be Meta speakers themselves. In this way, people were encouraged to try and write as well as read; “Try and write!” Anything written would need to be subjected to editing. It was also emphasised that trying to write is a good way of learning to read; the more you read, the better you write; the more you write, the better you read.

When asked who will fund such publications, they were happy if someone could help, but they realized that really in the final analysis, the Meta people themselves should be responsible. An immediate need is a new printing of the dictionary, with corrections and revisions if need be.

A revitalized language committee or literacy committee is required. A number of people need to be recognized as experts in the language, who could undertake the editing and proof reading of new written materials before publication. People need to learn to type with the extra Meta letters and tone marks. People need to be encouraged to try their hand at writing for the public. Parents need to be assured that learning to read and write Meta would not hinder their children’s progress in English, but is more likely to enhance it. The teaching of Meta in schools needs to be progressed.

CABTAL has begun a LISTEN Project, in which trained Meta readers will record the Scriptures to be recorded on to mobile phones. The Project has begun with the training of some readers. The Project will be a vital asset as people will be able to hear the Scriptures read fluently in their own language, and will be able to follow the written text as they do so, if they wish. The greater familiarity with the Meta Scriptures, the more confidently will people be able to read the Scriptures for themselves. May the Holy Spirit so help people that the **Meta New Testament Project** will indeed succeed and be the means of great blessing in the Meta community. Paul Tench, March 2015

**2 Diary**

**Friday February 13th**

Up at 2.15am. Glynn Williams kind enough to take me to the bus station for 3.15. Arrived LHR at 6.25, bus full from Bristol. Found Turkish Airlines in T2, shown how to do self-check in with just my passport in a machine. Completed security. Went through to boarding, no time for breakfast or buying anything.

Got window seat at rear, but cloudy until Alps, saw them in all their majesty and fields white with snow, followed the Danube, then came into Istanbul over water.

Istanbul cold and grey, 4hrs in the airport, time to read up a bit on literacy. 17.55 off to Yaoundé, already dark, but saw the Bosporus, across Turkish coast, Greece – saw the lights of Corfu coast, headed across the Med to Malta and then due south. Arrived midnight Cameroon time. Met and taken to CABTAL’s Chapman centre, in bed by 1am, up again at 5.30, to be ready at 6 for escort to the coach to Bamenda. Went by VIP Moghamo Express – i.e. car with 7 others. Good driver, but then began to risks. Had front seat and could see everything! Other passengers began to complain which led to a fierce argument with the driver. Turned to prayer! I didn’t want the driver to feel harassed. Calmed down, drove more carefully.

Road between Bafoussam and Bamenda very bad, slowed progress considerably. Arrived about 3pm. Stopped in Makanene for 10 minutes en route, bought oranges to supplement my breakfast rolls and water.

No sign of my hosts. Their numbers barred on my mobile. Got a message to Rev John Fokwa using a local “call box” – a lady at a table with a phone. 100 Francs.

He and Ebenezer Fokam soon arrived. Then on our way to Mbengwi, dropped off E’s sister and then arrived at E’s house at about 4.30 – 37 hours from door to door, with only 4 hours sleep. Had a meal, then went to rest, but slept long enough to miss the evening meal. Cold shower – in and out quickly! Chatted a while, not realizing how late it was. No wonder Florence was tired, it was nearly midnight. Got off to bed as quickly as possible. Slept long and well till 7.15.

**Sunday 15th**

Breakfast about 8.30: oranges, small pancakes (delicious!) and a cup of Lipton Yellow Label tea.

Got a shock when I read my copy of the letter sent to the churches in the area. Described me as “a British specialist in the development, research, reading and writing of local languages” – BUT I’m not an expert in literacy.

Shock no. 2: Workshops from 9am – all morning – until 2pm. What am I going to do? I can’t fill all that time! I don’t want people to feel let down: I need to pray (with supplications!) because the Lord knows my inability and lack of expertise. That time of prayer came after the morning service.

Ebenezer had left early because he was the elder on duty this month. Florence drove me down for the 9am start. Church building largely empty apart from a group of women (about 50) and others scattered around the hall. Then a procession led by the minister of another group of about 50 men and women, dressed in black and white as the choir.

A lady led the proceedings, the liturgy and hymn – enjoyed singing “I hear Thy welcome voice”. I followed the liturgy in a small handbook lent to me by Ebenezer. Announcements, a welcome to me and then the programme for workshops that had horrified me. Prayer of confession (liturgy) and then came the joyful, vibrant singing of the choir and congregation, swaying and clapping which left me simply an observer, but enjoying what I observed.

3 readings: Ex 33, 2 Cor 11-12, Mark 8. Read in English and then in Meta. The English was read quite well, with occasional lapses and limitations, but the Meta was read very poorly. The lady reading seemed often to have trouble working out the words especially in the 2 Cor 12 passage. People obviously felt for her, expressed by a collective sigh of sympathy. It had obviously been a struggle.

The sermon based on Mark 8:31-38; an appeal for sacrifice/self-denial and not to be ashamed of Christ – otherwise we’ll miss heaven. Sermon was followed by singing, the Apostles Creed, and collection.

 Then there followed the six-monthly congregational review, which was my cue to leave and walk “home”! But I was glad of the opportunity to be alone and quiet before the Lord.

Ebenezer and Florence eventually came back at about 3.30 and then we had lunch. Florence then left for a women’s meeting. Ebenezer and I sat outside in the shade of trees to drink malt “beer” and chat. Various visitors arrived and were catered for, including a young couple and their baby who are getting married 28 Feb!

Daughter arrived home; degree in nutrition, and so told her all about GAIN.

Evening meal at 9, Florence wanted to know all about the women’s work in Heath. She is now head of the Cameroon Christian Women’s Fellowship!

**Monday 16th**

Slept well, up at 7. QT, breakfast – orange, eggy bread/French toast. Started earnest preparation.

10.30 trip to Bali. Met their nephew Paul, daughter Meekness; also the VC, presented him with a copy of my book. Discussed possible links with Cardiff. Visited joinery, ordered a new kitchen board.

Lunch at 3: Yam chunks, sweetened bitter leaf, avocado

Carried on preparation. Rain came, light (ie electricity) went. Time to pray! Worked on outside on veranda.

**Tuesday 17th**

Up at 6, still dark, for an early start. Breakfast at 7.30, left soon after 8. Still no electricity. Read about Jesus cleansing a leper in Mk 1 – absolutely astounding that his body was cleared of leprosy right there and then. If you are willing, you can make me clean – If you are willing, you can make me able.

Picked up Rev Fokwo and Rev Atoh.

Drove in a 4W pickup because of the state of the roads – soon saw why! Road was very rough, deep gullies, bare stone and rock, loose laterite. Half of a bridge had collapsed, just room enough left for a vehicle to cross. Rough, unbelievably rough, at places, reducing the pickup to a crawl. Reached Acha about 9.30 for a 9 o’clock start, but the participants didn’t arrive until about 10. 24 in all.

Began informally with singing, with drums and other local instruments. Then John Fokwo took over. Got 2 people to read the day’s daily reading and questioned them about their difficulties. All this was conducted in Meta. Of course, I couldn’t understand what was being said, but I could understand what was being done; he was teaching them the difference between similar sounding words with similar spellings, the difference between <ə> and <ɨ>, tones, <i> and <ɨ> etc. Conducted a low level Bible study to ensure an understanding of the passage. Break about 11.30

I then did my best to encourage good practice in reading in public, with prior practice and rehearsal to provide a good experience of engaging with the Scriptures in public. If the experience was good, then that encourages people to try reading for themselves: if the experience was poor because the reader was struggling, then that discourages because people get the impression that it might be too difficult for them and so they might give up trying to read themselves.

We talked about other materials to be produced in Meta and tried to emphasise self-help. Ebenezer came up and encouraged people in the task of reading. It emerged that they felt they could do with reading and writing classes; they agreed that they need to set an example for their children.

We finished about 1.30 and had lunch in the local pastor’s house; cocoyam and beef which was beautifully tender. Tried a small glass of palm wine – yes, it had the kick of wine.

Visited Acha Hospital with a quick tour around. It has seen better days and some facilities had moved. The eye clinic is now mainly for consulting and basic treatment; otherwise people have to go elsewhere.

The scenery around is very impressive with very high hills covered in savannah type scrub and deep valleys and gorges filled with forests of trees. We ascended 500m from Mbengwi to Acha.

Quite a day. Rain came as we arrived “home” at about 4.30, quite dark. Still no electricity!

**Wednesday 18th**

Up at 6, time for prayer and Mark 2. Saved hot water for a shave! Breakfast, mango pieces and small square sandwiches of tomato and cream cheese (I think). Off soon after 8.30. Picked up Revs Fokwo, Atok and Tende. They always seem to chat and laugh together in Meta in the back while I’m given the front seat so that I can see as much as possible. Dull, cloudy day, sun occasionally breaking through.

Reached Kai by 10 for a 9am start. Only the local pastor has come, a lady called Evelyne. People had been to open up the church and had then gone. Then people began to arrive in ones and twos and we were eventually 15 + the team of 5 of us.

Same programme as yesterday, with Rev Fokwo leading off with the day’s daily reading, picking up on their difficulties, especially with tone marks. They were very positive.

After a short break, it was then my turn and felt more at ease after yesterday’s first attempt and concentrated on preparation and rehearsal before the public reading of Scripture – know the words, phrasing and the sense of the whole sentence and then think of the meaning of the whole passage. Practice makes perfect; read Meta Bible every day, reading groups. Also printing other material to be read, e.g. stories, Bible study, newspapers. Onus on them to write.

Just as I was finishing, the rain came down and very heavily, thundering on the tin roof. Rain stopped Paul!

Rev Fokwa took over again, despite the din on the tin, and Ebenezer contributed his piece about functionality with re-using empty bottles. Pastor Evelyne concluded and we had a small snack: bean cake each with a piece of avocado. Pastor Evelyne is not Meta, but recently married to one; she said she was keen to learn to speak Meta, so I bought her a copy of the Meta New Testament.

Rain had blotted out the scenery, but when it subsided we made our way “home”, only to find that no one was in. So they decided to have lunch in Mbengwi – at Ma Comfort’s Comfortable Bar and Restaurant. They had cocoyam in the shape of a bowl into which was poured a soup made with palm oil – which they didn’t recommend to me! Too much for my stomach and too much for my fingers and thumb! They ordered me cooked plantain with a spicy soup, which looked really awful until the chicken arrived. But just couldn’t finish it, the soup was spicier than I’m used to, the plantain rather hard, heavy on my stomach. Then dropped in on a burial service; the actual burial had taken place and what we watched was the dances: slow shuffling processions to very vigorous drumming and tin instruments and a wonderful rural xylophone made of wood. Processions wound in on themselves and finished with very energetic jumps and routines. Colourful dress, leg bells, artificial grass skirts – quite a set of performances.

**Thursday 19th**

Up soon after 6. Tasty breakfast: mango, then eggy baguette. Off to Funam with Revs Fokwa and Atoh. Arrived 9.30 for 9am start, the church was open but no one was there. A small gathering led to a start soon after 10 and eventually 24 people turned up. Sylvia Akwen was there! I gave her one of our church calendars. Same routine as before with Rev Fokwa starting from the day’s daily reading. Sylvia A read well, but so did two other older ladies, one of them especially so. She was a grandmother who had been taught by Sylvia A and was easily as good as her. Then the same routine of teaching the tones and extra letters.

After the break it was my turn, and was able to take them further than the other 2 groups: not only words, phrases and sentences and meanings but seeing the passage as representing an event – including the amazing effect on Peter’s mother-in-law – “immediately” would be emphasised by a good story teller.

Bought a lady pastor a Meta NT; she is not Meta but has learnt a lot. Lunch. Then off to Bamenda. Florence wanted to order building materials for the Christian Women’s Fellowship Centre which is being built near Mbengwi. I was able to change money through a Meta man in the market, a trusted contact.

On the way back, we picked up a lady who happened to be the MP’s mother. So we dropped her home, and lo and behold, the MP was there, a lovely lady who tries to get things done. I met her a year ago and she remembered. We were invited in, had some apple juice and we talked about Meta literacy. I got her to set everybody an example by learning to read the Meta NT and she promised to do so. Then we visited the pastor of the Mbengwi church where we worshipped on Sunday, Rev Ezekiel Foncham, who knew Klaus and Janice Spreda, although not well.

Reached the main road just in time to see what I thought was a firework display but it was the local transformer that had blown up. Bad news we thought as all the lights around went off. But surprised and delighted to see light on in the house.

After the evening meal, a nephew arrived from the USA. So I excused myself so that I could leave them to chat and me to write my diary.

**Friday 20th**

Up at 6.15 as usual. Wash and pray! Breakfast: fresh pineapple and eggy baguette. Florence drove today because Ebenezer was occupied with the nephew who arrived last night.

Out to Nyen to the church I had visited a year ago for the laying of their foundation stone. Still far from completed. Met Rev Fokwa’s wife who teaches in the primary school next to the church.

Same programme as before: Rev Fokwa first, then me, then Ebenezer provides the entertainment! Followed by lunch: cocoyam with a piece of fish and highly spiced bitter leaf.

Met Beatrice, Christine, Esther, Prudence and Sarah, all lady literacy workers trained by Janice. They were delighted to have a copy each of our church calendar.

62 came by the end, including Rev John Mojem, who conducts Scripture literacy classes. There are 4 classes who are learning to read and write in foundational literacy, and he visits them to teach Scripture literacy. They meet every week for functional literacy and he meets them in turn or in groups once a month.

Ideas for additional reading materials:

1. Scripture text cards
2. Lord’s prayer card
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4. children’s versions of Gospel accounts
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7. stories
8. vocational booklets, eg business management
9. cultural heritage
10. history of the Meta people
11. newspaper
12. poems, rhymes

How might the alphabet be adapted for texting in Meta?

**Saturday 21st**

Up at 6.15. Poor night’s sleep – brain too active. Quick wash, no time to shave, breakfast and we were off. First to pick up the Chief of Mbengwi, the Fon, who occupied the front seat leaving me to sit with 2 ladies who – let me say – are bigger than me. It was a tight fit!

We were off to Dschang in the French speaking province of Ouest to join in the celebrations for the memory of two mothers in an extended family, one of whom hailed from Mbengwi. They had died in 1993 – 22 years ago, but it is only now that the whole family has been able to afford this massive celebration which lasts for 3 days and this was the last day.

There were hundreds there, different groups occupying different rooms in the two houses which were adjacent. I was with the Fon of Mbengwi’s party and gradually others joined us in the room including the 5 – or was it 6? – wives of the local chief of Bafu (Our chief has only 1 as is a Christian!). Very smart serving dishes set out in each room and under the awnings that were provided for other groups of friends. Apparently it is an occasion to splash out and the family had saved for a year for this big event. There were dishes of goat, pork, beef, chicken and fish and all manner of cooked vegetables. I avoided the salad – just in case! An enormous feast. We were in an army colonel’s house and the house next door belonged to a doctor.

We went to watch the dances, which were extremely colourful, extremely elegant, accompanied by extremely energetic musicians. The noise throughout the event was deafening. We were there for about 4 hours and when the Fon decided to leave, our party left.

It had taken us 4 hours to get there, including the time to change a flat tyre – an enormous rip on the inside rim below my seat! We heard a bang and stopped. The tyre was probably ripped by the sharp edge of the jagged tarmac. The roads around Bamenda are a disgrace! A young man helped and we were soon on our way again. Good job that we had all the tyre pressures, including the spare, checked at the start of the journey.

It was quite uncomfortable in the back and I kept pretty quiet as Ebenezer, Florence and their daughter Elizabeth and the Fon chatted away in Meta.

4 hours on the way back too, but this time we were accompanied by a kid all trussed up so that it couldn’t do anything but bleat, which had been given to the chief as a present. I wasn’t looking forward to 4 hours in the back seat, nor was the kid in the open luggage area in the back. However his protests grew weaker and weaker as we progressed.

Florence drove back to give Ebenezer a break and we reached Bamenda just as darkness was falling. I was looking forward to being back, but the Fon decided to visit his sister in the city. I could’ve done without that, but we eventually delivered the Fon and his kid at the palace.

It was a long and wearying day, leaving me quite frazzled, with a chesty cough. 2 paracetamols and off to bed.

**Sunday 22nd**

Slept solidly till 7, paracetamols had done their work! Breakfast of pancakes, and then off to church.

It was the annual youth rally of the Meta Presbytery. Mbengwi Presb church was full with hundreds of young people present. Plenty of singing, but also the usual form of service. Greetings to all visitors and guests; I was asked to greet the church from the front.

I told them about the connections my church has had with the Meta people for over 40 years, especially through prayer and financial support for the Spredas. I challenged them to learn to read the Meta NT, and then I gave them very briefly my testimony, for I was 18 when I truly came to faith.

The theme of the rally was Exodus (Ex 7:10). Good points in the sermon: God said:

1. I have seen
2. I have heard
3. I know
4. I have come down
5. I will deliver you, Israel
6. I will send you Moses

He went on to talk about sins: sexual immorality, temptations to go on motorbikes to unworthy places – but never to church, temptations to music and dancing with earpieces that block God’s Word. Don’t go that way! But he didn’t talk about the great Deliverer who died to save them from their sins that they may live good and righteous lives.

A letter was read from the national leader of the youth organisation on this passage, but there was not a single reference in the letter to Jesus Christ

Then the collection took place; that takes up a good quarter of an hour. It was now just after 1, having started at 10. What then happened shocked me at first. They held an auction right there and then of goods brought in as offerings; yams, cocoyam, sweet potatoes, all manner of vegetables and fruit, palm oil, a few children’s clothes, brooms, chairs, and other kitchen equipment, long stalks of sugar cane… and they were sold to the highest bidder.

Why was I so shocked? For one thing, I did not expect this – it took an hour and a half to complete. But it looked as if the church had become a vegetable market. Not the same as when Jesus drove the money changers out of the Temple, for they were thieves. But these were not thieves, but generous people. Some wouldn’t be able to bring much cash but they could bring what they had grown and what they had made. But did they have to do this in church, in a service of worship on a Sunday? I thought of Nehemiah banning all trading on the Sabbath.

Then they sold pieces of cake and all those on the platform were invited first and as they helped themselves, they put money into a basket in the name of Jesus!

I was glad when Florence suggested we left at 3pm, having been there for 5 hours. We had been invited to the Fokwa’s for lunch and that’s a very good reason to leave!

Their house was quite drab and dingy both outside and inside. But there was a warm welcome with yam, white cabbage and chicken. We had a lovely conversation about what I had observed, and they accepted my point of view but they defended some aspects of their practice.

But the chesty cough came back and I coughed and spluttered my way through the meal much to my embarrassment. I was assured that this will happen to other people as the new season of rain began. The dust makes me sneeze and I developed a tickly cough and chestiness. I am forever taking sips of water, because my throat gets so dry and sore. I had found a couple of Beecham’s cold tablets and they saw me through the morning but the effects had by then worn off.

I was glad to leave with the prospect of resting in bed, but sad to leave such a lovely couple so quickly. Before we left, Pastor David Tende arrived and a CABTAL family Joseph Nkwela, who had worked with the Hedingers among the Bakossi people.

I rested for an hour and a half and got up to write my diary, but Ebenezer joined me on the veranda and we enjoyed a good hour’s fellowship. We are very much on the same wavelength. If you go to God with a teaspoon in faith, He will fill it; if you go with a cup, He will fill that, and then bigger and bigger containers. And on the other hand, God might say, “Bring me a teaspoon and I will fill it.” We are to learn what God is willing to give; there is no point asking for a cup, if you only have faith for a teaspoonful. (I was reminded of J.O. Frazer’s little booklet *The Prayer of Faith*). The effort of talking eventually brought on a bout of coughing and spluttering, so I knew I needed to rest again!

**Monday 23rd**

Fitful night’s sleep despite the paracetamols! Tiny pancakes with banana for breakfast – very tasty.

Off at 9.10 for a 9am start. Arrived to an empty hall belonging to MECUDA (Meta Cultural and Development Association). At 10 we were 4 team members plus two literacy workers, but as the meeting got started, more arrived, including the Fon of Bessi Tibatoh who is an articulate man with a heart to promote Meta literacy; also Rev Fokam Moses who had come all the way from Acha; and Regina Tarke, the literacy supervisor. There was an energetic exchange of views, mostly in Meta, just occasionally in English. When it was my turn to speak, I was assured that they had come to some conclusions, but I have to wait and see what they are.

Regina gave me a vote of thanks and when she mentioned the gowns that the ladies had made in the functional literacy classes; then reference to gowns in Richard Tah’s quarterly report about Meta literacy became clear. Finished with the 5 pastors closing in prayer.

I was given a gift for Janice from the lady literacy workers. Trip to Bamenda – ticket and shopping, washed my hair three times to get rid of the dust – thought I was returning to my original sandy blonde hair colour!

**Draft Report**

My desire is to see the Meta New Testament Project succeed. We have prayed and given over 40 years, so I want to see that it has been all worthwhile. The measurements of success are:

1. That the Scriptures are read in all the Meta churches in a confident expressive way, rather like a good story-teller or a good teacher. This would give the audience or congregation a good experience of the Meta Scriptures being delivered in public, and so encourage others to take up the reading of the Scriptures for themselves.
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A good start has been made but there is still a long way to go. People need to be familiar and confident with the Meta alphabet, including the extra letters, and most especially the tone marks. With increasing familiarity with the Meta alphabet, people would be able to spell, and spell out, every single word in the language. The alphabet is a good alphabet unlike the English one with all its inconsistencies and exceptions. If as children they managed to struggle with the spelling of English words, they should be able to manage as literate adults to use Meta’s ‘phonetic’ alphabet with relative ease.

Recognizing the words of Meta is vital, but is only a first step. It is poor reading to ‘count’ each word in a sentence because the reader and the listener quickly lose the meaning of the sentence. As a second step people have to recognize which words belong together as phrases (‘sensible groupings of words’) and, thirdly, to recognize how the phrases join together to make a clause or sentence. What helps in these respects is their knowledge of the equivalent passage in their English Bible. In fact, as part of the exercise of reading the Meta NT, some people feel the need to consult the English Bible to make sure they have got the sense.

The fourth step is to see how all the sentences contribute to the description of the event – for example, raising up Simon Peter’s mother-in-law from her fever – or the description of a piece of teaching – for example, 2 Peter 1:3-11. It is important to understand the wide event or the main point of teaching.

Finally, the fifth step is to catch the high point of the event: the fever left her immediately – and to express the amazement due. And to catch the steps in the presentation of teaching and to express these steps as a good teacher would as they taught. In this way, the congregation is ‘pulled’ into the event or ‘led’ in the teaching; the congregation feel involved like participants. It provides the congregation with a rich experience of Scripture, which should help them to be encouraged to read the Scriptures for themselves.

The aim is to enable people to read with ease, with meaning and understanding, and with confidence. Confidence is the sense of ‘I can do this’. People need to practice reading and spelling words and to get the sense of the words in phrases and sentences. If they are to read in public, they need to prepare themselves in this way, but also to rehearse aloud in private.

People should read their Meta Scriptures each day, for 10 minutes at least, or more. People could meet together informally or in reading classes as regularly as possible for mutual encouragement and help. Also people – mothers particularly – should let the children see them reading and read to them too. Such children will grow up knowing that their mother tongue can be read and written as well as heard and spoken.

One problem is that there is little else to read. When asked what else would you like to read, the following list emerged:

1. Scripture text cards
2. Lord’s prayer card
3. Old Testament lives: brief accounts of the life of Abraham, etc
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5. Gospel leaflets
6. Bible study notes
7. stories
8. vocational booklets, eg business management
9. cultural heritage
10. history of the Meta people
11. newspaper
12. poems, rhymes
13. public signs and posters. The Meta Students Association have experimented with such signs in their premises. Posters for hygiene, etc, could be displayed in hospitals, clinics, schools and churches.

When asked who would compose these materials, they eventually agreed that it would have to be Meta speakers themselves. In this way, people were encouraged to try and write as well as read; “Try and write!” Anything written would need to be subjected to editing. It was also emphasised that trying to write is a good way of learning to read; the more you read, the better you write; the more you write, the better you read.

When asked who will fund such publications, they were happy if someone could help, but they realized that really in the final analysis, the Meta people themselves should be responsible. An immediate need is a new printing of the dictionary, with corrections and revisions if need be. The use of Meta in school is another vital matter to be raised.

A revitalized language committee or literacy committee is required. A number of people need to be recognized as experts in the language, who could undertake the editing and proof reading of new written materials. People need to learn to type with the extra Meta letters. People need to be encouraged to try their hand at writing for the public. Parents need to be assured that learning to read and write Meta would not hinder their children’s progress in English, but is more likely to enhance it. The teaching of Meta in schools needs to be progressed.

**Tuesday 24th**

10 o’clock bus left at 11.30. Both front wheels were being changed when we arrived. Had seat behind the driver, but could nevertheless see a lot of Cameroon as we went. The roads around Bamenda are atrocious, a real disgrace to the area, but south of Mbouda, the road was good, and remained so to Douala.

There is a spectacular winding descent south of Dschang, wonderful, superb. Driver took some risks around blind corner esp. with a bus of 60+ passengers.

Stopped at Melong for a 15 minute break. Dropped off a few passengers on the way, eventually arriving in Douala at 6.30, hour and a half late.

Two police checks. There was a problem with the ID card of a child. Don’t know how it was resolved (or not), but some passengers were angry with the driver for proceeding. Anatole ready and waiting. Everyone welcomed me, Ann Mercy had written out her welcome to Papa Paul! Very hot and humid. 29°C (It had been 21°C in Mbengwi the night before!) Shower, meal, bed in the hope of sleep.

**Wednesday 25th**

Tried to keep relaxed, sponged myself down with a wet flannel. Slept, woke at 2.15, dry throat and then slept till 8 – couldn’t believe it! Children had gone to school, Anatole was at the garage and Claudie was soon to leave for work. Time for prayer. Anatole returned and we had breakfast at about 10am and then we just talked and talked and finished up with a time of prayer.

As far as he can tell, the two main issues that caused disagreements were related to baptism and Anatole’s allegiance to the church.

Anatole’s position is that the mode and timing of baptism is a secondary issue compared to the basic doctrines of the Gospel itself, that it should be possible to have unity of fellowship while recognizing differences of opinion on secondary matters like baptism. That is what he declared when he began his ministry. Others who joined later, appreciating his emphasis on the Gospel and the exposition of the Scriptures, were people who did not view opinions on baptism as a secondary issue but wanted, eventually, to restrict access to the Lord’s Supper to those who had been baptized only as believing adults and had been totally immersed. Anatole wanted to be inclusive, they exclusive. Secondly, there was a misperception about the role of UFM. We recognize, and welcome, UFM’s involvement with Anatole, because they supply an expert service to missionaries, which we could not easily do – visits, counselling, channelling funds, helping with pension arrangements, etc. However, some – and at least one elder – seemed to think of UFM as a denomination with its own agenda. This misinterpretation led to some to think that Anatole was primarily responsible to UFM and its agenda, rather than to the Eglise Evangelique Baptiste de la Grace. It seems that this elder persuaded enough church members to accept this view by visiting them quietly, one by one, and in this way building up a majority to oppose Anatole. Although he was asked to resign by this elder, Anatole explained that he too was an elder, but I think Anatole had become so weary by the opposition and the constant suspicions, that he decided to resign. (The history of controversy over their marriage does not seem to have played a role; most people had been reconciled apart from one woman who has been a constant critic of Claudie).

One lady, Agnes, who has been helping in the house remained faithful. She joins them on Sunday for family worship and goes with them to Souza on alternate Sundays to worship where a friend of A’s ministers.

What of the future?

The Barnabas Centre is still closed after one year. There are hopeful signs of a change of judgement, but they have not been realized yet. The Board only functions spasmodically. It is due to meet this afternoon, but the chairman has excused himself as sick. Solange is the secretary – she is the wife of Klebert, who broke from the church a number of years ago – Anatole is the “rapporteur” who provides updates on the Centre’s work; all the board members have either lost interest or have moved away from Douala. When the Barnabas Centre is re-opened Board membership will need to be reviewed urgently. The aims of the Centre are:

1. To preach the gospel
2. To educate Christians, and
3. To take care of the poor

Anatole longs to see these aims re-established and implemented. An immediate problem that will probably arise is the church’s perception that the Barnabas Centre belongs to them. Anatole will need great wisdom in that case.

He continues to visit St Michel but now on Thursdays. The people there refused to be led by members of the church because they did not know them. They wanted Anatole, and so the church has accepted this situation.

Anatole visits the orphanage each month for teaching and prayer. He visits Buea University each week to teach on Mondays and Tuesdays, and rents a room overnight. What he wishes to do is rent a bigger place, nearer the university where the Christian students would be able to meet for fellowship. This of course would be expensive. It is cheaper to rent a room for a month even though he only stays there for one night a week than to pay for an overnight stay in a hotel.

Would Anatole be interested in investing spare time in working as an African French-speaking Christian? Perhaps Europresse might be interested, even though they don’t operate in Cameroon at present. One urgent need is the demolition of the health and wealth prosperity Gospel. Another is a book of daily readings in French, with an African perspective.

Claudie works as a secretary in the administration division of the Douala University Mon-Fri. Davide is 16 on the 9th March, growing up into a decent young man. Ann Mercy is a little cutie, the delight of her parents.

Managed to visit Jean-Paul Ngue and family, gave them a church calendar.

**Thursday 26th**

Electricity went off at about 5.30 yesterday, leaving us without light and running water, because the water pump runs on electricity. I’d got used to no light, but no running water was different, especially when it is so hot and humid. Soaked my flannel with water still left in a water bottle and wiped myself down – no need of a towel as the skin soon dries. As usual, no light means an early night.

And perhaps a long night too. Kept a wet flannel by my bedside and the water bottle and had to wipe myself down several times. Got up at 7, and still no electricity. Got dressed, had breakfast and then had to be ready to go. The children had already gone; we took Claudie to the admin centre of Douala Univ and drove on to Buea. Anatole had some work to do, and I thought I would try and visit the linguistics dept, which took two attempts and a little wait. Delighted to meet Dr Esther Asonganyi who teaches phonetics and she seemed delighted to receive a copy of my book.

Left Buea about 2pm: one police check, all OK. Good road between Douala and Buea, but the traffic in Douala is dreadful.

Time for a cup of tea, shower and then pack!

Anatole got me to the airport in good time, but the flight was delayed by well over an hour, which meant I would miss my connection in Istanbul – which I duly did! They put me on a later flight, but it meant that I arrived at night in Heathrow, where I felt bitterly cold and caught a cold as a result! Back in Cardiff at 1 am on Saturday morning.