

# An Historical Reflection on Missionary Methodologies of Christianity on Ara Kingdom in Yoruba Land

By

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## Abstract

*An historical reflection on missionary methodologies and impacts of Christianity on Ara kingdom in Yorubaland is a research into the history and religions of Ara. It investigated the evangelistic methods employed in establishing Christianity in Ara. Impacts of Christianity on Ara kingdom were also considered. The researcher was motivated by the assertion that Ara towns and villages are Christian community. The problem this work addressed is the methodologies employed by early Christian missionaries to established Christian faith in Ara, and the aftermath impact of Christianity on Ara community. It aimed to establish the evangelistic methods adopted by early Christian missionaries to impact Ara kingdom, and to highlight such impacts. Historical and descriptive approaches were adopted for the work. It was based mainly on field work and the materials for discussion were collected in Ara town and environs through interview. However, some literary library and internet documents were employed. It has been established that Christianity in Ara was planted through diverse methodologies. These are: charity/almsgiving, hospitality/familiarity, revival, witnessing, morning cry, prayer and bible study. These methods have in no measure effectively and positively impacted the town religiously, educationally, medically, socially and economically. Hence, it is imperative to say that Christians need to be aware and mindful of the fact that methods employed in propagating the gospel matters in impacting a particular community. Therefore, it is recommended that Christian missionaries and missiologists should learn from the discoveries of this research.*

**Keywords:** *Impact, Christianity, Methodology, Missiologists*

## Introduction

Christianity gained access into Yoruba land in September 1842 when Church Missionary Society (CMS) entered Nigeria through Badagry (Ayandele, 1991 & Babalola, 1992). The leader of that mission enterprise was Henry Townsend. Thomas Birch Freeman, the Missionary of Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) came in December the same year and joined Henry Townsend in January of 1843. Some other missionaries later arrived in Yoruba land to expedite mission work. Their first attempt to proceed to Abeokuta from Badagry was forestalled by the sudden death of Sodeke. Although, before his death he received Thomas Birch Freeman, the half-Negro half-English Wesleyan missionary who went to Abeokuta on a reconnoitering visit in December 1842, and “Sodeke lost no time in impressing upon him (T.

B. Freeman) Egba's desire for the white man's friendship". Therefore, between 1843 and 1846 Christian stations were established in Badagry and Abeokuta (Ayandele, 1991). Ayandele, (1991) further stressed that the arrival of missionaries at Abeokuta was an event of considerable importance, which enabled the missionary enterprise to proceed apace and from there Christianity spread throughout Yoruba land and Lagos Protectorate. The arrival of Church Missionary Society in 1843 with their opportunities in Abeokuta fostered the spread of Christianity across all nooks and crannies of Yorubaland, including Ara. This work "an historical reflection on missionary methodologies and impacts of Christianity on Ara kingdom in Yorubaland" is a research into the history and religions of Ara. It investigated the evangelistic methods employed in establishing Christianity in Ara. Impacts of Christianity on Ara kingdom were also considered. The researcher was motivated by the assertion that Ara towns and villages are Christian community. The problem this work addressed is the methodologies employed by early Christian missionaries to established Christian faith in Ara, and the aftermath impact of Christianity on Ara community. It aimed to establish the evangelistic methods adopted by early Christian missionaries to impact Ara kingdom, and to highlight such impacts. Historical and descriptive approaches were adopted for the work. It was based mainly on field work and the materials for discussion were collected in Ara town and environs through interview. However, some literary library and internet documents were employed.

Therefore, findings of the research are discussed below with four main headings: culture, religion, occupation, and festivals of Ara kingdom; the advent of Christianity in Ara; evangelistical/missiological methodologies; and impact of Christianity in Ara.

### **Culture, Religion, Occupation and Festivals of Ara Kingdom**

Ara is an ancient Yoruba town which lies in location surrounded by major settlements and towns such as Ejigbo, Awo, Ojo, Iragberi, Ilobu, Ifon-Osun, and Ede. Specifically, it lies between two major politically and culturally known towns, Ede and Ejigbo, along the new highway of the two towns. Precisely, it is 14km from Ede and 8km from Ejigbo. Ara includes eight communities as well as twenty-six farming centers with their Baales (village traditional ruler of different ranks) (Okunade, 2005). It is located in Egbedore local government area of Osun state, Nigeria.

#### **Culture of the People of Ara Kingdom**

The culture of any people includes their beliefs, dressing mode, language and practices. The culture of Ara people is not different from that of other Yoruba communities, albeit, there is a major distinctive culture. Almost, if not all indigenes of Ara, regardless of age and status are artisans. It is normal to learn one or more handicraft or skill (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

#### **Religion of the People of Ara Kingdom**

In the beginning, the indigenous religion of the Yoruba was very visible in Ara community. Practically, all Yoruba religious rites were observed in the town. Their belief in the Supreme Being is showcased with the worship of divinities, spirits, and their ancestors. Like other Yoruba towns, among the divinities they worshipped are; *Esu, Ogun, Ifa, Sango, Oro, others are Agan, Osa Oko, and Egungun.*

They also reverence some rivers and streams; notable among them is *Aaro River*. *Aaro* festival is like *Osun* festival. *Obabon, Apaja, Oyelami (Alami)* were their deified ancestors. *Obabon*

(*Oba Onibon* – King that owns and uses gun) was first born of *Orira* and the second *Alara* Of *Ara*, *Apaja* was the second son of *Orira* and the third *Alara*, while *Oyelami* was fifth son of *Orira* and the sixth *Alara*, they all sank and never died. So, the location where they sank was made shrine, and place of worship where they make yearly sacrifices. Some of these are being worshipped till date. This is well discussed under festivals (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

There was also a mystery deity called *Mobo* (I cover it), which is known with the name of the town all over Yoruba land, '*Mobo oosa Ara*'. Since the inception of the present *Ara*, *Alami*, *Mobo*, *Aaro* and *Egungun Oba* - royal masquerade fiesta are held in high esteem, by its people. Yet, there were cults in different compounds with hard taboos to be obeyed by all the in-dwellers.

This notwithstanding, with the advent of Islam and Christianity there was a paradigm shift in the religious life of *Ara* indigenes. Unlike at present, both Christianity and Islam had very little impact as at that time they started, because the church and mosque goers were also neck deep in the worship of the gods. People got involved in masquerading, going to shrine and grove together with the traditional priests, and even contributing money for indigenous religious festivals. On the other hand, it got to a time (around early and middle of twentieth century) that traditional religion was fast gone into oblivion, when Christians and Muslims had better understanding of their religions. This was as a result of the conversion of prominent ATR adherents, death of some of them, and advent of western education. However, today resurgence of traditional religion is obvious, majorly through *Alami* and *Egungun* festivals (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

### **Occupation of the People of Ara Kingdom**

Originally, the people of *Ara*, men in particular are occupied with many traditional occupations, like farming, blacksmith, art and craft, drumming, hunting, etc. Meanwhile, their major works are farming, art and crafting, so, their economy hinges mostly on agricultural practices. Irrespective of their vocation, they still practice subsistence agriculture. Furthermore, the people of *Ara* usually practice '*esusu*', '*ajo*', '*aaro*', '*owe*' and the likes, in order to help themselves. However, the advent of non-traditional religions especially Christianity, which brought western education and modern civilization to the town had given rise to progressive social and economic transformation and growth. Thus, there many indigenes of the town both home and abroad that are enjoying white-collar jobs today. It is expedient to say at this juncture that *Ara* Kingdom has the highest number of elites and civil servants/government workers in the area as at the time of writing this paper.

### **Festivals of the People of Ara Kingdom**

Another significant aspect of the cultural heritage of the people of *Ara*, and Yoruba land at large, is the celebration of various traditional and cultural festivals. The famous and popular festival in *Ara* in the olden days was *Egungun* festivals. There are over one hundred *Egungun*. Among these were about fifty strong ones e.g. *Owolaake* (*king's masquerade*), *Adinimodo*, *Sodo*, *Badimeji Laagbo*, *Badimeji Adumari*, *Badimeji Iyawo Ogun* (all these are royal families masquerades) *Lobanka*, *Ipaye*, *Pakokomo*, *Fere*, *Keranjakun* (*Olode* Compound), *Mogi* (*Magic Masquerade*), *Lasogbaja* (*Ooye* Compound), *Layewu* (*Hunters' masquerade*) etc. There are other little ones called *Orebe*, every male child in the town must have one (Nathaniel Alao, Interview 2011). Only three – *Owolaake*, *Badimeji Adumari* and *Lasogbaja* are still exiting.

Apart from *Egungun* festival, the major festival that has outlived others is *Alami* festival. The first six Kings of Ara, that is *Orira* and five out of his six sons; *Obabon*, *Apaja*, *Onilepa*, *Okege* and *Oyelami* that reigned in the former locations of Ara displayed exceptional sacred authority that is probably unparalleled in Yoruba history. A foremost exploit performed by these successive kings - *Alara* of Ara was that they never died for their corpses to be seen and buried. They sank into the ground and had no tomb after the successive completion of their life span. Immediately, after they might have sunk, the place will be turned to shrine, and the people will relocate, that was the reason for six locations (in the same vicinity) of Ara before the present one. Therefore, they were all deified, but only the last one is really and still revered (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

*Oyelami*, the sixth *Alara*, who happened to be the last of them, was deified as *Alami*, and is commemorated through an annual festival called *Alami* festival. It was said that *Oyelami* warned all other princes not to sink again, in order to stop them from relocating. On this Okunade (2005) wrote; It was at the verge of *Oba Oyelami*'s life being extinct that he instructed the Royal family members to the effect that no *Alara* after him should sink into the ground. They should rather die and be buried so that they could have tombs.

According to Rev J. A. Alao (Rtd) and Pa Oyelade (Interview 2011), there are no tombs for the first six Kings that reigned at Ara. They are *Orira*, *Obabon*, *Apaja*, *Onilepa*, *Okege*, and *Oyelami*. The subsequent *Alaras* in Old Ara who died, and had their remains buried are *Lalu* – the last born of *Orira*, who had no child, *Adumari*, *Ajadi*, *Laagbo* (*Olawo-agbo*) and *Adedijo*.

Okunade (2005) claimed that the only time he sneaked out of the house to join the King's entourage to the *Alami* grove was in 1961 and then drummers are Papas Ayanlola and Okanlawon, now late. They led the then King, *Oba Ilufoye* to and fro the grove with the song:

<i>Orisa ni baba awa</i>	Our father is an idol
<i>Oba ti ko ku</i>	A King who did not die
<i>To wole laaye</i>	Who sank alive
<i>Orisa ni baba awa</i>	Our father is an idol
<i>Alami, Alami</i>	<i>Alami, Alami</i>

*Oba Ilufoye* was the nineteenth *Alara* of Ara *Orira*, the twelfth after the king stopped to sink, the eighth after reestablishment of Ara by *Odušina*, and he was famous Yoruba (Oyo) king in his time (Kenyo, 1952 & 1964).

### Other Festivals of the People of Ara Kingdom

There are other Yoruba indigenous festivals that people of Ara kingdom usually participated in even from inception. Famous of such festivals are discussed below:

#### Osun Festival in Osogbo

The proximity of Osogbo to Ara has influence people of Ara to be involved in Osun festival. Osun is the tutelary divinities of Osogbo and she is associated with the river that bears her name. She is believed to be a fertility goddess, giving the joy of child-birth to barren women and healing the sick by means of her medicinal water (Awolalu, 1981). She is the Yoruba water spirit of love, marriage, and gold. She is one of the Orisas that form the famous seven African powers. According to legend, Osun has unlimited powers and is involved during difficult pregnancies. Osun according to Badejo (1996) is always pleasant and fun loving, but has a ferocious temper when her anger is aroused. Osun festival which is as old as Osogbo itself

started in the 18th century to commemorate and renew the part between Osun river goddess and Larooye, the founder of Osogbo. She is located in Osogbo.

Awolalu (1981) further stated that traditional offerings are made to the goddess annually to bring peace and harmony to the land and the people. The celebration of the festival includes; thanksgiving ceremonies at Osun shrine, dance and drama presentations, and arts and craft exhibitions. It also features visit to museum and historical sites at Ile-Ife. The worshipping of Osun goddess at the Osun shrine will climax the end of the festival where the 'Arugba' – the virgin girl will carry the calabash to the shrine and Kabiyesi (Ataoja of Osogbo) will host the visitors from near and far to a big feast. Osun worshippers believe that before the doctors came Osun has been their doctor and she nurses her children (the one that got from her) well even without the warmth of fire. Their belief in Osun is reflected in the names given to their children such as Osunyomi (Osun delivers me), Osungbemileke (Osun lifts me up), Osunbunmi, (Osun gives me), Osunfemi (Osun loves me), Osunseyi (Osun did this), and so forth (Ogunnde, Interview 2011).

### **Yam/Harvest Festival among the Yoruba People**

Yam festival is one of the traditional festivals participated in yearly by people of Ara, though as crops harvest celebration/thanksgiving. All the people of Nigeria, especially the Yoruba knows the important of yam. Blier (<http://www.cultureandreligion.com>) wrote that nothing is more sacred as a vegetable than the appearance of the new yam. It portends a good season, productive activities in the villages and even good child births. Molefi (2009) opined that yam festivals are very common in West African Villages. He also stressed that festivals that celebrate the yam are ceremonies dedicated to friendship, family, and the welcoming of strangers. By this festival, the people are declaring their sufficient food for everyone and that all are welcome to partake of the feast. He further emphasized the importance of yam festival in African when he wrote that;

*Great yam festivals in Africa are the places for thanksgiving and reverence for overcoming hunger. The Homowo Festival of the Ga in Ghana is really a celebration of the victory over hunger. The Iriji festival in Nigeria is also such a celebration. The people will have dancing and drumming, calling forth the powers of the yam. They will have skirts and performances that hark back to the day when the ancestors lived on the earth, and they will eat, drink and be happy that the yam has appeared (Molefi, 2009).*

In Nigeria, there are variations to yam festival. Walsh stressed that in Nigeria, where among the people the families often make an ancestral alter on the first morning of the yam festival. Among the Igbo, the men go to the farms, dig up the new yams, and bring them back for the women to cook. They must dig carefully so as not to bruise the yams, and then they make thanks in the village square so all can see what is being produced around the village. They offer the ancestors the yam, white chalk, and a chicken. The chalk means well-being, and the chicken is for slaughter. A feast then ensures, which includes many people. The yam is the king of thanksgiving. It is the ultimate vegetable for friendship and the maintenance of the society for another year (Molefi, 2009).

### **The Advent of Christianity in Ara**

It was discovered through interviews that the first indigenous Christian known and really no other before him was a young man named James *Odebunmi* who came from Iresi, where he went to learn a trade. Iresi is around seventy kilometers away from Ara. He became a Christian

in his bachelor age at Iresi while his father and step mother were devout idol worshippers at Ara. He learnt how to read, and probably write, so he was able to read the Bible and Hymn book in Yoruba language. Hence, he had a copy of the Yoruba Bible and Hymn book. The only Christian denomination belief that could be traced out around that period in this part of Yoruba land, was the Baptist denomination, therefore, the Hymnal would be a Yoruba Baptist Hymnal. More so, evidences about him revealed that he loved singing songs and was an active member of the Baptist Church, Iresi (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

According to people interviewed (2011 & 2024) James *Odebunmi* rarely visits his parents and relatives at Ara, and later his elder brother went for him at Iresi to come and stay in Ara. He was very reluctant to come and settle at Ara, because he did not want to mix up again with the adherents of indigenous religion of his family and of the whole town. As at then, every male child in a family must have a masquerade for the annual Royal fiesta. He finally came to Ara in 1896, thus, he became the only Christian in the whole town. Subsequently, 1896 became the year Christianity entered Ara town, although no convert was made and no church was built until 1910 and 1912 respectively. The young James *Odebunmi* devoted his time to personal Bible study and singing of hymns. He was said to be seen studying the Bible at the cool of the day under the trees at the front of his father's house, but he did not bother anybody with preaching for the fear of being lynched. This was as a result of ritual killing that was very rampant in the town then.

Nevertheless, in 1901, five years after his arrival at Ara, his first persecution came when he refused to participate in the Royal Masquerade fiesta of that year. He was highly victimized, oppressed, and humiliated but spared. Few years later, he experienced harassment, after his father's death, when he was mandated according to the custom of the land to marry a young lady, newly married to his father. The lady (*Awero*) who was a Muslim refused to marry him unless he renounced his Christian faith. Unfortunately, he succumbed under much pressure, and married the lady, meanwhile, he was bachelor. Hence, the trace of Christianity in the town was rendered void and ineffective for a period (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

In 1906, one Isaac *Adewale Alao* came back to Ara from Ede where he sojourned to learn tailoring. He came intentionally to take over his grandfather's properties - land and house. He had been a Christian from his adolescence at Ede, and had married a Christian by name *Aderoju*. At their arrival they continued to worship in their house until when the people in the same compound and street took notice of them. In the course of meeting with the people with the Gospel message, Isaac *Alao* heard about the first Christian in the land - James *Odebunmi*, who had turned to Muslim, and became *Amodu Odebunmi*. With the burden for souls and love for his people, that is Ara dwellers, Isaac *Alao* preached to the people of Ara and *Amodu Odebunmi*, so *Odebunmi* accepted the faith again, and bore the name James *Odebunmi* until his death, although, his wife remained a Muslim until her death in July 1962. Thereby, three (Isaac *Alao*, his wife – *Aderoju Alao*, and James *Odebunmi*) Christians were reckoned with in the land. They continued to exhort each other from the Bible and had Bible study with people who used to gather at Isaac *Alao* tailoring shop (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

Fortunately, their efforts yield dividend when they had some converts. The first converts were Emmanuel *Latunji*; Gabriel *Opawale* of *Akogun's* Compound, who was a strong herbalist and the *Osa Oko* priest; Abraham *Ajani*, Samuel *Adigun*, Jacob *Olaniran*, Joseph *Ojo*, Solomon *Bambee*, Isaiah *Babatunde*, Ezekiel *Ishola*, *Baale Yemope*, *Oba Oni Asaolu Oyinlola* – the then *Alara* of Ara, and *Oyewole*. Thus, Christianity in Ara gathered momentum between 1906 and 1912. However, due to persecution two of these slipped back from Christianity, Joseph *Ojo* to indigenous religion, and Abraham *Ajani* to Islam (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

## **Evangelistical/Missiological Methodologies**

In the course of interview (2011 & 2024), the researcher learned that early Christians in Ara employed diverse methods and patterns to propagate the gospel and raised converts into Christianity. These methods and patterns are grouped into two, viz: 1900 – 1950 and after 1950.

### **1900 to 1950**

The methods of evangelism and discipleship which made Christian faith possible during the above period were discovered to be three. These are Charity or almsgiving, hospitality or familiarity, and Bible study (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

#### **Charity or Almsgiving**

Almost all people interviewed agreed that Pa. Isaac *Adewale Alao* used his charitable gift to evangelize. As a tailor he used to sew cap for the youths and adults, and baby cloth for new born babies irrespective of their belief or religion. Also, he normally organized free or cheap medical treatment for the sick through the help of Dr George Green. Pa Gabriel *Opawale* of *Akogun* Compound, a renowned herbalist and the chief priest of *Osa Oko* gave his life to Christ, renounced all his evil powers and ways, and joined the church through this singular act of Pa. I. A. *Alao*. When he (Pa *Opawale*) later died his death also brought glory to God because many idol worshippers joined the church as a result of befitting burial accorded him. When Pa *Opawale* died at Baptist Medical Centre, (now Bowen University Teaching Hospital) Ogbomoso with the help of Dr. George Green, the First Baptist Church, Oke Eleerin, Ogbomoso accepted to sponsor his burial programme, which they did in the way that won many souls for Christ (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

#### **Hospitality and Familiarity**

The set of converts and many more were won to the Lord through hospitality and familiarity. The progenitor of Christianity and Baptist denomination in Ara does not distance himself from the people; he used to visit everybody whenever there is need. He encouraged people to move and work together, and this enhanced communal project that yielded gain for individuals and the town at large. The researcher was told that Pa. I. A. *Alao* will visit all new born babies' home personally and with gift, he would then pray for each baby and its family. Consequently, the parents of such children that have been submerged in the clay of idolatry usually release the baby. He will therefore christen and nurture the babies into Christianity. So, many of such children grew to be Christians (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

#### **The Bible Study**

This method was employed to evangelize and disciple people in the early period of Christianity in Ara. It is the main discipleship method used by the early believer of the town. In the cool of the day the first three believers – Pa. Isaac *Alao*, Madam *Aderoju Alao*, and Pa. James *Odebunmi* used to meet at *Alao's* tailoring shop for Bible study, where they taught each other the true word of God that sustained them in the faith unto their death. Whenever they gathered, people will come around to listen, and gradually many were influenced by the Holy Spirit to join the gathering of believers. Bible study continued until there were enough people to form a group and started a church thereafter.

Albeit, these methods of evangelism and discipleship continued and remained with the church within the first fifty years when all or some of the foundation members were still alive and the church has not divided (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

### **After 1950**

The second Christian church surfaced in 1951 through Evangelist Prophet Samson *Oladeji Akande (Baba Abiye)* from Ede, which started with revivals and became a full church in 1954. This is the first Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in Ara. After this, was a decision to start another Baptist church by the exiting one, because the church witnessed tremendous numerical growth. It was discovered that it was around this time that the church began to experience some setback as touching impact of Christianity on indigenous religion till today. There were disputes, disagreements and crisis within the three existing church, and as church increased, crisis increased. Therefore, love for brethren, charitable activities, and familiarity reduced, so there was no or little opportunity to gather together not to talk of having Bible study. However, the people of the secondly established church in Ara i.e. CAC also used and still using some modes of evangelism and discipleship like: revivals, witnessing/morning cry, prayer group/meetings and bible study/house fellowship (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

### **Revivals**

All the churches in the town used to organize revival services – indoor and outdoor or open air revival. Almost every month there will be revival in one church or the other and open air revival ones in a while. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Ara Branch, some churches and ministries used to sponsor yearly revival to be staged at *Alara Market Square*. Meanwhile, these are not yielding increase as it ought to be, because convert seldom coming for follow-up (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

### **Witnessing and Morning Cry**

It is also discovered that some of devoted youths and some radical adults in churches devoted their time, materials, strength, and money to propagate the gospel through preaching around the town early in the morning or late in the night. They also distribute tracts, and render help to the helpless. They never care even if there is need for them to work in another man's farm free of charge in order to minister to them with the gospel. Also, some Christian groups, individuals, church societies, and evangelism department of churches used to embark on house-to-house witnessing, street evangelism, and two-by-two group evangelism on regular bases (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

### **Prayer Groups/Meetings and Vigils**

It is very obvious that this live is full of problems and challenges. Thus, all churches involves in organizing one prayer meeting or the other, either in the morning, or afternoon, or evening. Sometimes, they grouped themselves into sizable numbers based on age, sex and social status as the case may be. Conversely, it is another means of preaching gospel to both the believers in Christ and unbelievers. Most at times, in such prayer service miracle do happen, and consequently salvation will follow (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

## The Bible Study

Although not as of the early period, the Bible study is still in the church. It is not like the early period for two reasons; there are lots of resource materials that can make Bible study interesting than before, and people are not responding in coming to church especially for Bible study as of initial period. There are discipleship materials that enable one to grow fast in the Lord. For instance, in Baptist there are materials such as Welcome to the family of God, Enquirers' booklet, Six Lessons, follow the Master, serve the Master, Experiencing God, In God's Presence, and Master Life.

Other methods of impact for Christianity are house fellowship, seminars and workshops, reading Christian novels and literatures, and visitation (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

## Impact of Christianity in Ara

The report of the Interviews, 2011 & 2024 revealed that the general or major impact of Christianity in Ara is the steady collapse of idolatry. It was discovered that before the advent of Christian in Ara there are over ten solid idols, which was been adored and worshipped regularly by the people of the town. Some of these idols are *Orira*, *Obabon*, *Apaja*, *Alami*, *Sango*, *Oya*, *Esu*, *Ifa*, *Osa Oko*, *Osun*, *Agan*, *Oro*, and *Aaro*. Today, it remains only *Alami* worship. Also, before the advent of Christianity, there are many *Egungun*, among these only three – *Owolaake*, *Badimeji Adumari*, and *Lasogbaja* are still exiting. Unfortunately, all these exiting *Egunguns* are being monitored by Christians and Muslims, *Owolake* and *Badimeji* by Muslims, while *Lasogbaja* is being taking care of by a Christian (Ebenezer Baptist Church member) (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

Secondly, the impact of Christianity is felt in that there is no traditional religion worship center or temple in Ara since over fifty years ago, unlike other neighboring towns and city. Meanwhile, there are more than thirty functioning churches and about seven mosques. Also, there is no known 'iledi' - *Ogboni* court of meeting since the exiting one has been exterminated by the Christians through radical action of Pa Ezekiel *Ladapo* (with the support of Pa Isaac *Alao*) who went to their meeting and drove all the members away from the meeting court, at earlier time of Christianity. This was possible because the members of the circle were later liberated from the oath taken in the circle, and joined the church. In the same vein, there is no known or recognize *Ogboni* member in the town, unlike before when it is compulsory for all men to belong to one secret cult or the other. For you to be recognized as man you must join *Ogboni* cult, because *Ogboni* means 'Ogbeni' (man) (Pa Nathaniel *Alao*, Interview 2011).

Furthermore, there was a time that there was no known traditional religion family or families, and the only one that is discovered in the course of this research was a one-time Christian. Pa *Ogunrinde (Ogunnde) Falabi* who refused to reveal the reason for taken up the ancient path of his forefathers, with his wives and children are today the only known and recognized traditional religion worshippers in Ara. Pa *Ogunnde Falabi* – the custodian of *Ifa* oracle is the only herbalist and native doctor in the town. However, many of his children are Christians. Even, some are pastors and pastor's wife; although at his demise (recently) one of his children took after him (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

Christianity brought schools to Ara and it exposes the whole community to western education. It was the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ that led the American Baptist Missionaries to introduce western education, especially at primary school level to ensure production of interpreters of gospel messages, clerks and teachers of the scriptures. On January 25, 1933

Pastor S. K. *Ebo* founded the Baptist Day School that exists till date and has produced personnel in all human endeavors, as Christians missionaries, teachers, lawyers, engineers, technicians, technologists, academics, medical doctors, nurses, seasoned administrators in civil and public services in general as well as in the organized private sector, military officers, security officers, seasoned farmers, etc. There are also artisans who are masters of their trades. Through the help of the church some of the church members' children were sent to Schools in England and Fourabay College in Sierra Leone (Rev. J. A. Alao Rtd interview). It is delightful to remark here and now the magnanimity of the Baptist Mission that allowed its schools to accommodate not only Christians but Muslims and idolaters alike. The Baptist Day School Ara trained and still trains young minds for the future, irrespective of their religion. This led to the establishment of the Young Tajudeen Primary School, Ara in 1955 by the Muslim community. The school also exists to date and has also contributed in no small measure to production of human resources as earlier stated above. It was through the effort of the First Church and some other Christians in the town that a secondary school was established with the name Baptist Secondary Modern School, Ara. The school has since been upgraded as Baptist Grammar School since the defunct of the Modern School system. In the beginning of the new millennium, as a result of tireless pursuit of some Ara indigenes most of which are Christians, the Osun State government established a Technical College with specialization in Food Science/Home Economics in Ara, with the name Government Technical School, Ara (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

The impact of Christianity is also felt in term of medical and health. A small health center was organized by the church through Pa. Isaac *Adewale Alao*, where Dr. George Green used to meet with sick people whenever he came to Ara. It was this that prompted the initiation of Ara Health Center by the government. There are currently three health centers in Ara one at *Sekoni*, others at *Ewure* and *Olobu-Ara* respectively. Also, a private hospital exists in the town.

Socially, Christianity has greatly impacted and it is still impacting Ara town. All social amenities presently present in the town can be attributed to Christians, because there was no social amenities in the town until 1944 when all the Christians in the town gathered prayerfully to uproot the demonic tree called '*Igi Ita*' situated at *Alara* Market Square. Also, in 1983 another demonic tree '*Igi Ose*' was uprooted in *Isale Bara* area of the town, after which there are tremendous changes. Electricity and pipe borne water was brought to the town immediately after that. In addition, Ejiḡbo-Ede road was laid with asphalt, and many of the indigenes who never remember to come and build house were influence to come and develop their town (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

Economically, the lives of Ara people were greatly changed. Initially, through the love preached and taught by Christians, people were able to work together communally in their farms and thus they were blessed. According to Dn. John A. *Adeosun* their farms were enlarged and yielded abundantly because they used to help themselves. This continued for many years. Many Christians from far and near used to bring their produce to Ara Market as a result of their relationship with Ara Christian. Consequently, the *Alara* Market was enlarged (Interviews, 2011 & 2024).

## **Conclusion**

Thus far, this researcher has reflected on the missionary methodologies and impacts of Christianity on Ara kingdom after a period of interacting with the people of Ara and investigating into history and religions of Ara. It has been established that Christianity in Ara was planted through diverse methodologies. These are: charity/almsgiving, hospitality/familiarity, revival, witnessing/morning cry, prayer and bible study. These methods have in no measure effectively and positively impacted the town religiously, educationally, medically, socially and economically.

Having gone through the above positions in this scholastic work, it is imperative to say that Christians need to be aware and mindful of the fact that methods employ in propagating the gospel matters in impacting a particular community. Therefore, it is recommended that Christian missionaries and missiologists should learn from the discoveries of this research.

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