

A Theological Diagnosis of the Quiet Drift

Deborah Osayie Abashiya

Abstract

This article examines how hardship – exerted by unstable economies, corrupt politics, social media identities, and relentless personal hardship, modernism, hollow and exploitative gospels are quietly undermining the faith of young Nigerian Christian. The article concluded by recommending ways to adopt in bridging the quiet drift.

Key words: Quiet Drift, Hardship, Modernism, Gospel and Theological Diagnosis.

The Quiet Drift

If you listen carefully not just to what is said but to the silences – you will notice that young Nigerian Christians are leaving the faith. Not dramatically, not with fiery TikTok deconstruction threads or angry blog posts. No, ours is a quieter exodus. It happens between Sundays, in WhatsApp groups, in late-night phone calls, and, more often, in the private corners of the heart. They do not slam the door; they simply stop showing up. This drift is not usually rebellion. It is resignation. A shrug, not a fist. And perhaps that is what makes it more dangerous. Few are loudly denying Christ; many are quietly forgetting Him. Yet, we in the church are often slow to perceive this. We diagnose the drift as laziness, worldliness, or poor discipleship. We blame smartphones and YouTube preachers. But beneath the surface, something more is going on. Many young Nigerians no longer see how Christianity speaks to the actual world they inhabit – the world of unstable economies, corrupt politics, social media identities, and relentless personal hardship. This is not a new temptation. As Hebrews 2:1 warns, “We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.” The writer knew that drifting rarely looks like rebellion. It is often slow, imperceptible, like a boat carried off by an unseen current.

Ironically, Nigerian Christianity has faced such currents before. The gospel that first arrived on our shores had to contend with the spirits of the ancestors, sacred rituals, and the deep communal life of our traditional societies. Yet it

prevailed — not by erasing culture, but by reinterpreting it under the Lordship of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Today, we face another cultural collision. But the challenge is not merely external. The modern world has shifted under our feet, and in many ways, so has our Christianity. The result? A generation that does not reject Christ outright but quietly wonders whether He is still relevant — or even real. And who can blame them? When the gospel they hear sounds like little more than an expensive self-help program, when the cross is replaced by slogans, and when church becomes a stage rather than a family, drifting away often feels like the most honest thing to do.

Hardship: The Seedbed of Disillusionment

It would be easy — and convenient to assume that young Nigerians are simply seduced by Global trends or Netflix specials. But if you listen closely, you will hear a deeper sigh. Many are not distracted — they are exhausted. The apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:22, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” Nigeria, too, groans. Poverty, joblessness, unstable currency, and the quiet humiliation of unfulfilled dreams press heavily on young shoulders. Certificates gather dust. Parents wait for remittances. Rent is overdue. Inflation eats through salaries like termites. And so, when the church says, “Breakthrough is coming,” is it any wonder that people listen? The prosperity gospel is not foreign to this environment — it is familiar. It promises what the banks cannot, what the government will not, and what education has failed to deliver: financial breakthrough, divine promotion, and supernatural turnaround. For a generation struggling beneath unbearable economic hardship, this theology does not feel like false teaching — it feels like hope. And yet, this is precisely where the quiet poison enters.

In the Old Testament, Israel repeatedly fell into syncretism — mixing Yahweh-worship with Baal, combining true religion with economic and political desperation (Jeremiah 2:13). Today, the temptation is no longer to bow to carved idols but to sanctify the gods of the market. Christianity in Nigeria has not abandoned worship — it has merely baptized capitalism and superstition. The altar has become a spiritual ATM. The tithe is no longer joyful obedience but a transactional investment. Give ₦100,000 and expect ₦1,000,000. Testimonies sound more like corporate annual reports than humble confessions of grace. This is not Christianity. This is Baalism with a choir. And yet, it is everywhere — from the pulpit to the Instagram reel. The irony is tragic. The church is called to be the community where Christ's words in Luke 12:15 echo clearly: “Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Yet, we have taught our young people that the surest mark of God's favour is material success.

But what happens when the promised harvest is delayed? When, like Job, the righteous suffer without explanation? The prosperity gospel leaves them no theology of endurance, no room for groaning, no understanding of the cross. Instead, they are told, “You didn't sow enough seed” or “You lacked faith.” And so, quietly and bitterly, many leave — not just the church but Christ Himself.

The Hollowing of the Faith: From Cross to Self-Help

At the center of Christianity is the scandal of the cross. The Apostle Paul declares without hesitation, “We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles” (1 Corinthians 1:23). Yet today, the gospel that many young Nigerians encounter is neither stumbling block nor folly – it is familiar, predictable, and oddly flattering. It promises not a crucified Savior but a motivational coach. Not a narrow path, but five easy steps to your destiny. The prosperity gospel, in its subtler forms, is not the only culprit. Much of modern Nigerian Christianity has quietly emptied itself of the gospel's offense. The cross has been replaced with crown-centered sermons. The call to repentance has been softened into a call to self-improvement. Worship, once the heartfelt cry of a people delivered by grace, has become a tool to “attract favour” or “provoke God's blessings”. This is the hollowing. The young Christian, already weary from hardship, enters church expecting the bread of life and instead receives inspirational TED Talks with Bible verses sprinkled on top. “God has a wonderful plan for your life” sounds suspiciously like the curated dreams on Instagram – except now with divine backing. Yet Christ Himself said the opposite: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). This is the heart of the crisis. Christianity is no longer presented as the way of the cross – a call to die and rise with Christ – but as the fastest route to self-actualization. But self-actualization is precisely the false anthropology that modernity is already preaching. The young Nigerian scrolling through Instagram is told: “Define yourself, express yourself, make your own truth.” Too often, churches merely echo the same message in Christianese: “Discover your destiny, unleash your greatness.”

But this gospel is thin. It cannot bear the weight of hardship. It cannot explain why the righteous suffer or why dreams sometimes die. It leaves no room for Paul's shocking confession, “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content” (Philippians 4:11). It is ill-equipped for the dark days when the heavens are silent, and God seems far. Worse still, this hollow faith isolates believers. True Christianity births a new community – a people who “bear one another's burdens” (Galatians 6:2), who gather not merely to network, but to embody the love of Christ. Yet, the prosperity gospel individualizes faith. It is about “my breakthrough,” “my destiny,” “my harvest.” It leaves young Nigerians, already disillusioned by modernity's loneliness, even more alone. And so, many quietly drift – not only because they are seduced by the world but because what they find in the church feels like more of the same.

Theological Diagnosis: Sin, Idolatry, and Ecclesial Amnesia

The root of the quiet drift is not merely cultural or economic – it is theological. The crisis is not just hardship, nor is it just modernity. It is sin. It is idolatry. It is the church forgetting who she is and what she has been called to proclaim. Scripture is clear that God's people have always been prone to exchanging the living God for idols. “My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). This is exactly what is

happening. In the face of hardship, we have made peace with a gospel of convenience. We have fashioned for ourselves broken cisterns — spiritual formulas, tithes-as-investments, motivational slogans — hoping they will hold water. But they do not.

The idols of today are less obvious than ancestral shrines, but no less deadly. They are the idols of wealth, status, individual fulfillment, and upward mobility. This is why the prosperity gospel resonates. It tells a weary young Nigerian, “If you sow, you will reap.” But Scripture warns us of another law — the law of sinful humanity: “Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction” (1 Timothy 6:9). It is not that God is indifferent to our needs — far from it (Matthew 6:31-33) — but that He refuses to be reduced to a means of financial security.

In seeking to make the faith appealing, we have become like Israel of old, demanding a golden calf to lead us (Exodus 32:1-6). We have replaced the cross with the promise of crowns. We have domesticated the gospel until it is no longer able to offend, challenge, or save. This is not only a matter of idolatry but of forgetfulness — ecclesial amnesia. The early Nigerian church, for all its limitations, knew that Christianity was not about individual success but about forming a people. “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (1 Peter 2:9). It was about belonging. It was about community, holiness, and eschatological hope.

But today, young Nigerians are catechized every Sunday not into the mystery of the Body of Christ, but into personal ambition dressed up as faith. The church, in many places, no longer knows how to disciple — only how to inspire. The saints are presented not as those who endured, suffered, and triumphed in Christ, but as entrepreneurs who “unlocked” divine blessings.

Yet the greatest loss is eschatological. We have become strangers to the hope of Christ’s return. The apostle Paul wrote, “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Corinthians 15:19). But the modern church has taught young people to expect their best life now. Without the horizon of resurrection and the renewal of all things, Christianity collapses into little more than a coping strategy — one easily abandoned when hardship intensifies. This is the deeper diagnosis. Sin, idolatry, and theological forgetfulness have left the church ill-prepared to minister to young Nigerians. And when the storms of modernity and economic hardship hit, it is no wonder they drift.

The Narrow Way and the Return

Yet, the Scriptures do not only diagnose — they offer hope. The way forward is not novel. It is the ancient path. It is the narrow way (Matthew 7:14) that Christ Himself walked, the way of the cross, not the crown. This is what must be recovered if the drift is to be reversed. The first step is theological. The church

must again proclaim the scandal and the beauty of the true gospel. “We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23–24). The prosperity gospel offers a god who helps you find your destiny. The true gospel offers a crucified and risen Lord who calls you to lose your life in order to find it (Luke 9:23–24). This message will offend. It will unsettle. It will sound weak in the eyes of modernity and foolish to the ears of those who want results. But it alone has the power to save.

Second, we must recover the church as a true community, not a religious event. Christianity is not a self-help program or a hustle strategy – it is the formation of a people. “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). Young Nigerians do not only need inspirational sermons; they need a family. The early church was marked not by wealth, but by belonging – sharing life, possessions, and sufferings (Acts 2:42–47). In an age of urban loneliness, online superficiality, and economic pressure, the church must again become a place where young people find not just teaching, but shared life.

Third, we must recover suffering as part of the Christian story, not as a sign of spiritual failure. “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29). The gospel does not promise that hardship will disappear. It promises that God is present in the hardship and that He is preparing us for “an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17). Without this, faith collapses under the weight of unrelieved sorrow.

Finally, we must recover eschatological hope. The early church endured precisely because it lived with its eyes on Christ's return. “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). Without the resurrection and the hope of the world to come, we will always be tempted to ask God for our inheritance now, like the prodigal son (Luke 15:12). But when we see that our hope is not just for today but for eternity, we can endure with joy, even in poverty and pain. The hidden path remains. It is narrow. It is hard. It is slow. But it leads to life.

In Conclusion

The church in Nigeria does not need to invent a new gospel to win back its young people. It needs only to be what it has been called to be – the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). A people of the cross. A people of hope. A people who still believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.

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French Language Studies in the Nigerian Catholic Seminary: The Benefits, Challenges and Prospects

Atile Godwyns Terbemba

Abstract

The role and importance of language in the development of any given society cannot be over-emphasized. French language, one of the two major internationally spoken languages of the world plays an important and central role in the economic, cultural and socio-political development of the individual as well as different countries of the world. Hence, the study of French language in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria has been on the rise, in nature and scope. This study attempts to bring to light the benefits of French language studies in the Catholic Seminary, examining the challenges and projecting into the prospects of studying the language. The study makes use of the historical and sociological approaches. Findings from the study reveal that despite the challenges, French language studies is very relevant and timely in the Nigerian Catholic Seminary, because of the benefits and prospects such studies could bring to the individual, the community and the country at large.

Key words: Language studies, Seminary, benefits, challenges and prospects

Introduction.

The teaching and learning of French language in Nigeria dates back to the 19th century. Through the years, the need for the teaching and learning of French language has been on the increase at all levels of education in Nigeria.

In the stride towards actualizing the dream of the Federal Government of Nigeria in the recent past in making French a second official language, there appeared to be existing a widening gap between practically realising this dream and what would be useful if institutions where French studies is undertaken.

Granted that member-states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are predominantly French-speaking, and for the fact that Nigeria, a member of ECOWAS is surrounded by French-speaking countries, the need to ensure an enhanced and sustained study of French language in all institutions of higher learning in the country becomes absolutely imperative. It is no longer news that Nigeria is a country that is limited in the North by Niger, in the North-east by Chad, in the East by Cameroon and in the West by the Republic of Benin. For the fact that all these countries are French-speaking, the study of French becomes the first step in facilitating an easy and a free communication with these neighbours.

Olayiwola (2010) retrospectively states that in 1962, the University of Ibadan commenced the teaching of the French language with very few students. And that in 1965, only one candidate graduated with a degree in French. He maintains that, in order to accelerate the studies of French, France provided scholarships for students who wanted to study French to go to France. Apart from that, cultural centres where one could easily have contact with French language were established in the country. Some French films were also sent from France aimed at motivating learners of the language.

Gradually, the number of teachers of French in the country increased, and French language was now taught in colleges of Education such as Adeyemi College of Education in Ondo State and Alvan Ikoku College of Education in Owerri, Imo state.

This effort aroused interest in Nigerians and the scholars in authority as well as students. With the establishment of many more colleges of Education across the country in the 1970s, the number of students of French as well as teachers/lecturers increased considerably.

The government of Nigeria provided scholarship grants to both students and teachers/lecturers to go to France and other Francophone countries as a way of motivating them and encouraging the study of French. Audio-visual materials were also provided to facilitate teaching and learning.

However, due to the recent global economic crises, the Nigerian government no longer sponsors students and lecturers abroad for studies. Students, who can, sponsor themselves to neighbouring Francophone countries and some, prefer the Nigerian French language village in Badagry, Lagos state. Today, French is studied in most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria including Catholic Seminaries.

The Catholic Seminary:

In the light of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Code of Canon Law and some Vatican documents, The Catholic Seminary is an educational institution dedicated to the formation of men who are preparing for the priesthood in the Catholic Church. The purpose of a seminary is to provide the necessary philosophical, theological, spiritual and pastoral training that future Priests need in order to serve the Church effectively. Typically, the seminary offers a curriculum that includes the study of Sacred Scripture, Church History, Moral Theology, Sacraments, Theology and Pastoral Care among many other courses. The formation process in the seminary is holistic, encompassing not only academic education but also spiritual development through prayer, liturgy and community life. Additionally, seminarians engage in practical experiences such as internships in Catholic Parishes to develop their pastoral skills.

This formation process is guided by the principles outlined in the *Program of Priestly Formation* reflecting the universal norms set forth by the Church. Therefore, the ultimate goal of the Catholic Seminary is to prepare candidates to become effective and holy Priests who can lead their communities in faith and

service, embodying the teachings of Christ and the mission of the Church (Ref: Catechism of the Catholic Church no.1536-1600; Code of Canon Law Canon 232 - 264; *Program of Priestly Formation*; Congregation for the Clergy - *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*).

The Benefits of Studying the French Language in the Catholic Seminary

The various church documents on the establishment and running of Catholic seminaries, as we have seen above, aim at providing a holistic formation for the Priesthood in the philosophical, theological, spiritual and pastoral realms. In other words, this holistic formation encompasses both academic education, spiritual development through prayer and community life.

However, even though the formation for the priesthood does not specifically talk about training using the French language, it does presuppose the priest as an agent of change or a transformer in both the spiritual and temporal activities of the people of God entrusted to his care. The Priest works in the society and for the society. It is on this note that the relevance of studying the French Language plays out. In other words, the priest requires all the necessary attributes that will enable him to function effectively wherever he finds himself. And one of such attributes is the ability to communicate and relate well with people in the immediate environment and even beyond.

Since the Priest is trained to work within or outside Nigeria, the benefit of knowledge of French language cannot be overemphasized, especially with the geographical situation of Nigeria. Among the benefits of French studies in the seminary are the following:

a. A world-view of life.

French language is an international language spoken by more than 274 million people in the world (research on most spoken languages of the world, 2020). The study of French language permits Seminarians to discover new cultures and to connect them with francophone countries, in case they may have reason to work or visit such countries.

b. Amelioration of professional opportunities

At a point, one may have the opportunity to be posted to work in a francophone environment either in diplomatic, inter-regional ecclesial cooperation, or educational capacity. The knowledge of French language can be an added advantage in the performance of one's duties.

c. Development of critical thinking and creativity

The study of foreign languages like French can help in the development of critical thinking and creativity of seminarians.

d. Building the theological formation: The study of French can enrich the theological formation of seminarians by enabling them to discover new perspectives and to better understand the cultures and traditions of francophone countries.

The study of French in Nigerian seminaries is equally important for the following reasons:

- i. **Regional and International Integration:** It makes the seminarians understand that Nigeria is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which comprises many francophone countries. French studies can therefore help to reinforce regional and international links both temporally and ecclesiastically.
- ii. **Educational Diversification:** French studies can help to diversify education by presenting supplementary options to students.
- iii. **Preparation for Globalisation**

The world is more and more globalised, and knowledge of the French language can help seminarians to better prepare to face the challenges of globalisation.

iv. **Reinforcement of external cooperation.**

The study of French can reinforce the cooperation between Nigeria and Francophone countries notably in the areas of education, culture, economy and religion.

Therefore, going by the benefits mentioned above, the study of French in the Seminaries in Nigeria comes with many benefits and a considerable measure of importance. These include opening up oneself to the wider world, providing professional opportunities, development of critical thinking and creativity and a reinforcement of cooperation with Francophone countries.

Challenges of French Studies in the Nigeria Catholic Seminary

Some challenges of French studies in the Nigerian Catholic Seminary include the following:

A. Linguistic challenges:

i. **Lack of practical Application**

The French course taught in the seminary is not a core course. As such, there is no time to engage in practical aspects that are undertaken outside the classroom. This situation makes it difficult for the development of the students' oral competence.

ii. **Influence of mother tongue**

The students can be influenced by their mother tongue, which affects their pronunciation, their grammar and their vocabulary in French.

iii. **Difficulty with Grammar and syntax.**

French has a complex grammar and syntax. And this is difficult for the students to get used to it within a short period of time.

B. Pedagogical Challenges**i. Lack of resources.**

The Seminary may not have access to sufficient resources for the teaching of French, such as text books, audio-visual aids, and soft-wares.

ii. Lack of properly trained teachers.

In most cases, teachers/lecturers of French are not professionally trained teachers. Therefore, this affects the quality of what is taught to Seminarians.

iii. Teaching methods

The teaching methods may not be adopted to meet the needs of the learners which make learning of the language difficult.

C. Cultural and Social Challenges**i. Lack of motivation**

The students may not be properly motivated depending on the teaching method adopted. This can affect their desire to learn and succeed.

ii. Stereotypes and prejudices

Seminarians can have some stereotypes and prejudices concerning the language and culture of the French people. And this can affect their attitude towards French studies.

iii. Concurrence with other languages

French language can be in concurrence with other languages such as English or Latin which can affect the motivation of seminarians to French studies.

D. Institutional Challenges**i. Lack of institutional support**

The seminaries may not have the institutional support necessary to develop the French programmes.

ii. Institutional priorities

Some seminaries may not have institutional priorities and this may not favour the teaching of French.

iii. Financial Resources.

The seminaries may not have enough financial resources to develop French programmes.

Based on the above, it can be accepted that Catholic seminaries in Nigeria have numerous challenges relating to the study of French. These challenges manifest themselves linguistically and pedagogically, culturally and socially as well as institutionally.

Prospects

Despite the numerous challenges of the study of French in the Nigerian Catholic seminaries, there are prospects for a better future. These include the following:

A. Academic Perspectives**a. Development of linguistic competence.**

At this level, French studies can aid the students to develop their linguistic competence, especially in oral communication, identification of day-to-day expressions both orally and in writing.

b. Better cultural understanding.

French studies at the basic level can help the students to understand better the culture and the French society as well as the manipulative nature of the language.

c. Enhanced grades at Examination.

The interest generated on the concept of a foreign language makes students study very well during examination and score very high grades. This enhances their overall grade.

B. Professional Perspectives.**a. Enhanced Carrier in Diplomatic and International Relations.**

An understanding of the language helps the individual when appointed on ecclesiastical mission to a Francophone country.

b. Value in Commercial and Business Affairs

French language is important in commercial and business management transactions especially in Africa and in Europe.

c. Education and Research

The study of French can encourage students to pursue further research studies in education especially in linguistics, literature and French culture.

C. Personal Perspectives**i. Personal Enrichment**

French studies can lead to personal enrichment permitting the students to discover new cultures and develop their linguistic competences.

ii. Travels and Cultural Exchanges

Knowledge of French can facilitate travels and cultural exchanges especially in France and other francophone countries.

iii. Development of Critical Thinking

French language studies can help students to develop their sense of critical thinking and their capacity to analyse complex situations.

D. Institutional Perspectives.**i. Development of French Programmes**

Seminaries can develop some French programmes to respond to the needs of students and the institutions.

- ii. **Cooperation with Other Institutions.**
Seminaries can cooperate with other institutions to develop French programmes and promote cultural exchange.
- iii. **Promotion of French language and culture.**
Seminaries can promote the French language and culture especially in Africa and in other regions of the world.

Conclusion

This study on the benefit, challenges and prospects of studying the French language in the Nigerian Catholic Seminaries and other institutions of higher learning, traced the history from the 19th century to date. The study, which centred on the study of French language in Catholic Seminaries in Nigeria, diagnosed the nature, context and scope of the subject as taught in the Catholic Seminary. The work looked critically at the benefits, challenges and prospects of teaching French languages in the Catholic Seminaries.

In conclusion, the work postulates that despite the challenges faced in the teaching of French in the seminaries, the prospects are still very bright and as such it should be encouraged and promoted.

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