

The Hypophora Effect: When Bible, Literature and Culture Meet

Bodija Journal
Vol. 15 (2025): 1-25

Stephen Eyeowa, SJ
Hekima University College,
Nairobi, Kenya.
stephen.eyeowa@hekima.ac.ke

Abstract

Beyond its theological finesses and fame, this article explores the literary and rhetorical richness of the Bible. It underscores and explores various literary devices and stylistic techniques used in the Bible, focusing particularly on the use of hypophora. Presenting the latter as a figure of speech where the speaker asks and answers his own questions, this article suggests and outlines matters in which hypophora may become a pedagogical tool in the hands of the Gen Z population for obtaining societal transformation, in the sense that an hypophoric approach to social illness offers the shift from a mere criticism and protest culture to the development of solution-oriented actions for societal change and nation-building. At the end of the analysis, this article proposes that a hypophoric pedagogy guides the Gen Z's critique culture to proffer constructive and lasting remedies to social ills.

Keywords: Bible, Literary Devices, Hypophora, Gen Z, Social Transformation.

1. Introduction

While most people read the Bible primarily as a theological text, its literary richness is equally significant. In effect, the Bible contains numerous literary devices that favour not only a religious understanding of the biblical message but also expose the literary depth, aptitude and culture of the time of biblical composition. This paper aims to explore how a specific literary and rhetorical device, known as hypophora, serves as a powerful tool for driving societal change, particularly in African countries torn apart by incessant youth protests and agitations against corruption, poor leadership, bad governance and various social ills. The first part of the paper presents a general epistemic perspective on the Bible. The second delves into the area of literature to discuss figures of speech or literary stylistic devices in general, highlighting their roles in the Bible. The third section narrows down the biblical usage of literary devices to a single one, hypophora. The unique literary nature and function of hypophora in literary works, particularly the Bible, are central to this paper. In the fourth section, the stylistic device of hypophora is proposed as a relevant pedagogical tool to the youthful population (Gen Zs) on the African continent as a credible means of addressing social ills through critical thinking and inspired action for societal transformation. Here, the paper alludes to Thomas Aquinas as one who effectively used hypophora in his theological teachings and reasoning, offering an example of its didactic potency. The paper then ends with a conclusion.

2. The Bible and Its Nature

The Bible is one of the most well-known books, with tremendous global relevance, and it features God as its principal protagonist. The Bible permeates different cultural, linguistic and ideological backgrounds. In layman's terms, the Bible is the word of God, a spiritual and religious book that articulates God's self-revelation and His salvific actions in history. On the one hand, God is regarded as the exclusive author, such that the Bible is considered the written

words of God, conveying the ultimate guiding principles of life.¹ In this regard, the Bible explicitly defines itself:

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17).

First of all, you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Pet 1:20-21).

On the other hand, the Bible is perceived to have been composed by humans under the inspiration of God. Raymond Brown argues that the Bible holds a *sensus plenior* (fuller meaning), implying that more meaning can be found within the Bible than the original human authors intended.² Similarly, the Second Vatican Council tilts towards a divine-human composition of the Bible. In the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, the council fathers state categorically:

Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scriptures have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles (see John 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-20, 3:15-16), holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself. In composing the sacred books, God chose men, and while employed by Him, they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, (3) they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted.³

¹ Serah Fairchild, *What is the Bible?* (Updated on September 23, 2024), https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-the-bible-700735?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

² Raymond Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (Ph.D. dissertation, St. Mary's University, 1955) as quoted in Raymond Brown, *The Critical Meaning of the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 18.

³ Vatican Council II, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *De Verbum*," (November 18, 1965), §11.

Without undermining the divine origin and inspiration behind the composition of the Bible, and acknowledging God as the ultimate author, the understanding of the council fathers also leaves an opening for the Bible to be engaged from a non-faith perspective. Alluding to humanity also as the true authors of the Bible, using their powers and abilities, the council fathers implicitly acknowledge the human influence on this sacred text. Certainly, this idea is not unique to the council fathers; it is widely held in contemporary biblical scholarship. For instance, Thomas Thompson argues that biblical language is not a historical record but a high literature of stories, sermons, and songs used for philosophical and moral instruction.⁴

This divine-human complementary authorship of the Bible curbs the tendency or approach to biblical reception that is overly fanatical. It opens the Bible to a scholarly interrogation to determine the extent to which the human compositional influence (cultural and linguistic) intermingles with the divine message. In other words, the Bible presents itself as a documented record of the human experience of divine self-revelation, expressed in human language. It is in this regard that this article considers the human linguistic influence in the compositional process of the Bible, examines how this influence shapes the divine message for better comprehension, and posits the power of the message for societal transformation.

3. Embracing Biblical Texts as a Literature

Written texts hold great importance, as emphasised by the Latin maxim: *verba volant, scripta manent*, translated as “spoken words fly away, written words remain.” While written texts convey a message, the manner in which it is communicated is equally important as the message itself. In effect, the attraction towards aesthetic expressions (verbal or written) is an inherent part of human nature, so that a dull, monotonous or unengaging style of

⁴ Thomas Thompson, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past* (London: Random House, 1999), 40.

writing may defeat the purpose of the exercise. On the contrary, good writing evokes a committedly charged response or performative actions because, more than simply putting words together, it is meticulously and detailly mindful of the structure, clarity, and balance of the text, making it easier to read and understand. When language flows normally, it often goes unnoticed. Hence, the use of rhetorical devices becomes an indispensable refining tool in the redaction process to better engage one's reader.

The use of rhetorical devices implies the crafting of words in exceptional or unusual ways to attain not only the informative or functional end of language but also to achieve its evocative and unanticipated meanings. In effect, language operates according to established laws so that the intention to add emphasis to words or expressions automatically implies setting the established laws aside. In this regard, phrases and sentences are reshaped and used in new ways to create a new figure. When a word or sentence takes on a "figure," a different meaning and understanding, distinct from its ordinary and natural structure, becomes evident. As such, the purpose of writing is to add greater force, more vitality, intensified feeling, and stronger emphasis.

That said, rhetorical devices play a crucial role in writing. They arouse curiosity, capture attention, build suspense, and sustain the reader's interest, enriching a text's appreciation and comprehension. This is especially true of the Bible, one of the most widely read books in the world. Beyond its overwhelming theological reputation and reception, a careful reading of the Bible shows its literary splendour. The Bible is a literary masterpiece of unparalleled significance. Its contents or messages are stylistically expressed in the form of narratives, poems, songs, sermons, lamentations, and praises, adopting several literary devices and adhering to linguistic rules. In effect, thanks to the tools of literary criticism, a biblical reader is confronted with a broad range of literary concerns, such as the compositional structure, textual character, stylistic techniques, the use of imagery and symbolism, and the aesthetic and dramatic

effects inherent in this sacred text.⁵ According to Tursunova Sarvinoz G'afurovna, literary devices are "a rich tapestry of human experience, emotion, and thought, intricately woven together through the use of language."⁶ In other words, the conscious use of literary stylistic devices in the composition of biblical texts not only establishes the Bible as a literature but also emphasises the vital role of aesthetic literary effects in literature. Consequently, the structural arrangement, tone, communicated mood, and imagination are critical for insightful interpretations of the biblical text. Thanks to the aesthetic rendition of the biblical message, readers are initiated into the science of language to create meanings and evoke emotions.⁷ Among the various literary stylistic devices or techniques evident in biblical composition,⁸ I will briefly

⁵ John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook. Revised edition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 90. See also, Georg Fischer, *Wege in die Bibel: Leitfaden zur Auslegung* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2011), 12-15; L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000), xvi-xviii; Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 140.

⁶ Tursunova Sarvinoz G'afurovna, "The Importance of Using Syntactic Stylistic Devices in Literary Texts," *American Journal of Education and Learning* 3, no 2 (2025): 987, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14942623>

⁷ Cf. Jan Mukarovsky, *Aesthetic Function, Norm And Value As Social Facts* (Michigan: Ann Arbor), 1970.

⁸ Biblical authors appear to be very vast and apt in the science of language or linguistic coinage, as their writings evidence the use of multiple figures of speech and attest to their formidable mastery of literary techniques. (For instance, Metaphor/ Symbolism which often identifies a subject with an image can be seen in passages like Psa 23:1; Matt 5:13; John 8:12). In this sense, Paul Ricoeur underscores the close connection between metaphor and symbols, giving the impression that metaphors are by nature visual (see *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1976), 207-215). The Johannine writer appears notorious in his use of metaphor among biblical writers (see Bruce J. Malina, *The Gospel of John in Sociolinguistic Perspective* (Berkley: Centre for Hermeneutical Studies; 48th Colloquy of the Centre of

enumerate two below (repetition and parallelism); the third occupies the central focus of this paper (Hypophora).

One major stylistic device frequently used in the biblical corpus is repetition. In effect, Marcin Majewski argues that repetition is not only a fundamental phenomenon of biblical poetics but also the determinant of poetry in the Hebrew Bible.⁹ While the use of repetition encourages the easy memorisation and transmission of the biblical text, it also has a persuasive effect in that the reiteration or reoccurrence of words, syllables, sounds, accents, phrases, sentences or ideas emphasises the importance of a particular message among several others. In other words, the biblical use of repetition appears in at least three varieties: thematic, lexical and structural.¹⁰ As such, beyond a mere aesthetic textual colouration, the use of repetition in biblical composition plays more of a functional role in the dissemination of the biblical message and experience. In the words of N. R Leroux,

Repetition, then, is an attempt to make manifest an experience,
for the purpose of evoking audience response to that experience;

Hermeneutical Studies, 1985); Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King. Dynamics of metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 87). Unlike a metaphor, a simile compares, using the particle “like” to emphasise the similarity between the subject and the image used. Psa 1:3 compares the righteous person to a tree planted by the running water, whose leaves never fade. Biblical authors also use hyperbole as a means of deliberate exaggeration of a situation or an event for the purpose of emphasis – 1 Sam 25:37; 2 Chron 1:15; Matt 5:29; John 21:25 (cf. Ethelbert W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 1968). Other figures of speech or literary techniques used in the Bible include: Anastrophe, Ellipsis, Asyndeton, Polysyndeton, Parataxis, Hypotaxis, Parenthesis, Inclusio, Oxymoron, Polypoton, Irony, Pars pro toto, and Acrostics.

⁹ Cf. Marcin Majewski, “Repetition and not Parallelism as the Determinant of Poetry in the Hebrew Bible: A Case Study of Biblical Story of Creation (Gen 1),” *The Person and the Challenges* 11, no. 2 (2020): 211. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15633/pch.3758>.

¹⁰ See Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, vols 1 & II* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press), 1964.

if the experience is inherently interesting and intense, an author may in places resort to repetition to inculcate – nay, to enact – those qualities. The reader whose own experience coalesces to some degree with the experience being described will have no trouble feeling the intensity; the repetition will not be repetitious.¹¹

Furthermore, the use of repetition in the Bible follows several stylistic patterns or forms. In other words, the biblical authors employed a variety of repetition-based devices to emphasise the central message(s) they intend to communicate. Some of these biblically adopted figures of repetition include: anaphora (repetition of the beginning of successive clauses or strophes – Pss 103:1-2.20-21; 150:1-5), epiphora (repetition of the end of successive clauses or strophes – Pss 115:9-11; 118:1-4.10-12), anadiplosis (repetition at the boundary between two clauses, i.e. the same word, sound, phrase or idea that ends the first clause or strophe opens the second clause – Pss 116:16; 121:1-2), epanalepsis (repetition at the beginning and end of a clause – Pss 27:14; 47:7) and chiasm (reversal of word order or idea in parallel structures, i.e. a repetition of ideas or reversed order – Prov 6:17-19). Therefore, the use of repetition in biblical texts is due to authorial vocabulary poverty, but to paraphrase Robert Alter,¹² biblical repetition is a choiceful, deliberate, and conscious “stammering” of experience or idea.

Another frequently used literary technique in the Bible is parallelism. Although it may not be confined only to the biblical poetic sphere, but also features in narrative (prose) texts, parallelism is often considered the most prominent feature or the soul of biblical poetry.¹³ Biblical Hebrew poetic texts, especially within the sapiential

¹¹ Neil R. Leroux, “Repetition, Progression, and Persuasion In Scripture,” *Neotestamentica* 29, no. 1 (1995): 9.

¹² Robert Alter, “How Convention helps us read,” *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 117.

¹³ The notion that parallelism is strictly a unique feature of biblical poetry has generated a lot of controversy and is still hotly contested in biblical scholarship. For more discussion on the matter, see James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT Press, 1984); Robert Alter,

(Psalms, Job, Song of Songs, Proverbs) and prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Micah), show evidence of parallelism in their grammatical (similar or antithetical syntax in successive lines) or semantic structures (similar, rephrased, antithetical or progressive idea is evident in successive lines). In effect, parallelism functions more effectively within the context of relationships, whereby a word, phrase, concept or idea stands in opposition or contrast, equivalence or correspondence to another (cf. Amos 5:24).

In its biblical usage, parallelism is not to be confused with repetition. Beyond a mere reiteration of words, phrases, sentences, or ideas, biblical parallelism, through its synonymous, antithetical or synthetic characteristic, injects an element of intensification, such that the second line, clause or strophe intensifies the appreciation of the first. Adele Berlin buttresses this point further, noting that in Hebrew parallelism,

The meaning of the lines is somehow related: perhaps synonymous, perhaps reflecting the converse or reverse, or perhaps extending the meaning in any one of a number of ways. Equivalence does not imply identity. The second line of a parallelism rarely repeats exactly the same words or exactly the same thought as the first; it is more likely to echo, expand or intensify the idea in the first line in any one of a number of ways.¹⁴

The Art of Biblical Poetry (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Adele Berlin, "Parallelism," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 155-162; and Fred W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Poetry, Hebrew," in *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009), 550-558; J. P. Fokkerman, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide*, trans. Ineke Smit (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001); and Fred W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). Fred W. Dobbs-Allsopp, Robert Lowth, "Parallelism and Biblical Poetry," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 21 (2021): 1-35, <https://doi.org/10.5508/jhs29586>.

¹⁴ Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2186.

4. The Hypophora Rhetorical-Literary Effect

As already established above, the biblical text is a tapestry of literary ingenuity. Perhaps the use of plethoric literary devices or techniques could be advanced as a justifying reason for why the Bible is one of the most read (if not the most read) literary *corpora* in human history. Beyond its theological distinctiveness, the literary rendition of the biblical text, thanks to the rhetorical and stylistic devices, offers readers a smooth-sailing experience to get into the world of the biblical text. Having acknowledged a variety of these techniques above, this paper now focuses in depth on a particular device (hypophora) which accomplishes the dyadic functional purpose of rhetorical and literary devices, that is, persuasion and artistic expression of concepts, thoughts, ideas or emotions.

Hypophora, otherwise known as anthypophora or antipophora, is a rhetorical device where a speaker poses a question and, without waiting for a response from the audience, goes ahead immediately to offer the answers to their own question. In other words, hypophora offers a speaker the liberty to determine the answers to their own questions without the discursive process being necessarily seen as an imposition. According to Javid Babayev, the question is often asked at the beginning of the paragraph, and then the rest of the paragraph offers a response.¹⁵ Biblical authors regularly use this rhetorical device as a means of engaging the readers and the primary or immediate audience to which their message is addressed. In effect, the use of hypophora is particularly evident in the psalmist's exhortative addresses, the synoptic gospels, and the Pauline disputative or persuasive speeches (Pss 15; 121; Matt 11:16-17; Lk 13:18-19 and Rom 3:9; 6:1-2; 8:35-39).

Despite its usage in the various sections of both the Old and New Testaments, the psalter seems to suggest an unparalleled usage of hypophora. Unique about the psalmist's use of hypophora in some instances compared to its New Testament usage is that, following

¹⁵ Javid Babayev, "Usage Sphere of Hypophora," *Reviews of Modern Science* (2023): 104.

the expression of the question by the psalmist(s) at the beginning of a chapter (Psalm), the rest of the psalter serves as a direct and detailed answer to the question posed at the beginning. In other words, whereas the initial question is not asked rhetorically or left unanswered, the entire psalm is structured around responding extensively to the psalmist's initial inquiry, reinforcing the central theme introduced by the initial inquiry. This makes the psalm a powerful example of hypophora. Such a scenario plays out in Psalms 15 and 121. While in the case of the former, the psalmist outlines the appropriate responses and virtues to qualify one to dwell in God's abode, the latter meticulously highlights the various divine interventive actions taken by God to come to the aid of the needy. In addition, two distinctive questions are asked in Psalm 24, followed by elaborate answers. The first response describes the qualities of the person who may stand in the holy place of the Lord. The answers are an invitation to embody the outlined virtues, highlighting the great benefits of doing so. The response to the second question pinpoints the attributes of God, emphasising his omnipotent nature. Therefore, the psalter presents a unique usage of hypophora in that some psalms, like those mentioned above, are by nature hypophoric in their composition.

Often used in an exhortative or disputative context, hypophora, as a rhetorical device, beyond the aesthetic use of words, primarily plays a persuasive role. In its functionality, hypophora is used to engage one's audience in such a subtle way that the speaker authoritatively takes charge of an argumentative sphere. By adopting hypophora as an argumentative technique, the speaker not only anticipates the burning questions in their audience's mind but also offers a compelling response, often before the questions are even asked. According to Cicero in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, hypophora is often used in the context of disputation or in the courtroom, where the defendant preempts the questions of adversaries and answers them with what ought or ought not to be said.¹⁶ In this

¹⁶ Pseudo-Cicero, *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 4.24.33-34.

sense, hypophora deflates the opposition's attacks much beforehand in a disputative scene, offering the speaker the opportunity to channel their thoughts persuasively in a choiceful direction. In other words, hypophora, in its persuasive splendour, serves to silence one's adversaries in argument and solicits the audience's participation, admiration and support. By asking a question, the speaker enforces an unforeseen break, challenging the audience to proffer an appropriate, superior and compelling answer. However, before such a response is furnished, the speaker mesmerises the audience further with a convincingly dripping answer.

Now, to better appreciate and grasp the uniqueness of hypophora as a literary device, it is crucial to highlight how it is distinct from interrogative and rhetorical questions. On the one hand, an interrogative clause seeks and elicits information and clarification. Through questioning, it seeks an answer from the audience or reader. In effect, the sought answer is expected to be external or emanate from outside the inquisitor. This rhetorical device is often engaged in the context of dialogue and interviews. An obvious instance of the use of interrogation in the Bible is the story of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). The interrogative doublets (And who is my neighbour? – v29; Who proved neighbour to the man? – v36) solicited an appropriate response outside of the one who asked. On the one hand, Jesus responded to the lawyer's question elaborately by telling a story. On the other hand, the lawyer gave a succinct, straightforward response to Jesus' question. In both cases, as in the nature of interrogation, the lawyer and Jesus expected and received an appropriate response to their respective questions.

On the other hand, a rhetorical question operates on the basis of an interrogation whose answer is evident and does not need to be stated. In other words, a question is asked, but a verbalised answer is not expected in return. This is so because "the speaker presumes some proposition, and challenges the addressee [audience] to deny it."¹⁷ In effect, the trick behind such questioning is to establish

¹⁷ Stanimir Rakić, "Serbo-Croatian Yes/No-Questions and Speech Acts," *JP* 8 (1984): 701.

an obvious fact, create a dramatic effect, or help the audience internalise or introspect rather than expecting to receive or elicit an answer. The question contains an answer in itself. In this sense, rhetorical questions are essentially a statement disguised as a question. They “serve the purpose of imparting or calling attention to information, not eliciting it. They are thus semantically equivalent to statements.”¹⁸ Their peculiar goal “is not to inquire but to assert.”¹⁹ In its biblical usage, rhetorical questions are used as a literary technique to evoke deep reflection within the audience or reader (Gen 3:11; Isa 53:1; Job 38:4; Prov 6:27; Matt 6:27; 16:26; 23:17).

Consequently, given that it involves posing a question and immediately providing an answer, hypophora ought not to be put in the same category as interrogative and rhetorical questions. The use of hypophora implies that the speaker not only anticipates the reader’s curiosity and objection but also, through the question-response process, deliberately dictates and guides the direction of the argument or conversation.

5. A Hypophoric Pedagogy for the Gen Z

The nexus between literature and culture is evident. In effect, literature is frequently used as a vehicle for promoting culture. For instance, classical African novels such as Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* go beyond their categorisation as literary fiction to depict the culture, beliefs, values and worldview of a people. The Bible is not any different, by the way, as its textuality exposes the readers to the cultural realities of the ancient Hebrew people. As such, literature exposes cultures but is also sufficiently potent in shaping cultures.

¹⁸ John Beekman and John C. Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 238.

¹⁹ Kenneth J. Kuntz, “Making a Statement: Rhetorical Questions in the Hebrew Psalter,” in *Probing the Frontiers of Biblical Studies*, ed. Harold J. Ellens and John T. Greene (Eugene: Pickwick, 2009), 157. See also, Adina Moshavi, “Can a positive rhetorical question have a positive answer in the Bible?” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 56, no. 2 (2011): 254-256.

As earlier argued, beyond its aesthetic relevance, hypophora is often used in an exhortative or disputative context as a persuasive tool. It is in this sense that this literary technique (hypophora) has been repeatedly adopted to modify, amend or shape socio-cultural stances. Javid Babayev exposes the transformative use of hypophora in the polity. In other words, thanks to its persuasive nature and discursive usage context, the use of hypophora has effectively shown how literature shapes the polity, especially through political speeches. Babayev argues that most of the world's famous leaders extensively use hypophora to persuade their people to embrace lasting and transformative actions,²⁰ citing the case of Martin Luther King,²¹ John Kennedy,²² and the autobiographical work written by Kurt

²⁰ Javid Babayev, "Usage Sphere of Hypophora," 105.

²¹ In his 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech, in expressing his objection against racial discrimination, Martin Luther King Jr. asked: There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" he went further to proffer a response: "We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality." Cf. "I Have a Dream" Speech by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. at the "March on Washington," 1963 (excerpts), *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History* (2014), <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/king.dreamspeech.excerpts.pdf>

²² In the case of John Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States of America, he notes in a speech on the nation's space effort at Rice University on 12th September 1962: "But why, some say, the Moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask: Why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas? We choose to go to the Moon. We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too." Cf. "Address at Rice University on the Nation's Space Effort," *The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum*, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/address-at-rice-university-on-the-nations-space-effort> (accessed on 6th August, 2025).

Vonnegut,²³ to mention a few. While this observation appears to be indeed true, it also provokes the relevance of the use of hypophora in contemporary political rhetoric. In effect, the emerging cultural shift towards a “Gen Z mentality” raises the question: to what extent can the hypophora effect positively influence and impact the Gen Z protest culture, especially in Africa?

In categorising generations, a recent classification for a section of youth is designated Gen Z. While a clear-cut determination of those who fall into this category remains hotly contested, Gen Z is generally considered to be those born between 1995 and 2012.²⁴ Lopez and Abadiano outline three major characteristics of the Gen Z population, indicating that they are technologically dependent and social media driven, understand life fulfilment differently, and are learner-centred, though with a short attention span.²⁵ In his systematic literature review, K.A. Jayatissa²⁶ extensively shows how several studies have been dedicated to understanding the Gen Z population, underscoring social activism, spirituality, cultural

²³ In his 1981 monograph, *Palm Sunday: An Autobiographical Collage*, Kurt Vonnegut notes: “What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured.” Cf. Nostalgia Rants, “On Building Community,” *Medium* (Mar 28, 2024), available from <https://medium.com/@nostalgiarants/kurt-vonnegut-and-the-loneliness-epidemic-bf434211e186>.

²⁴ Cf. Eva Niña B. Lopez and Mark N. Abadiano, “Understanding Generation Z: The New Generation of Learners: A Technological-Motivational-Learning Theory,” *Journal of Harbin Engineering University* 44, no. 10 (2023): 770-784; Tidahar Aharon Lev, “Generation Z: Characteristics and Challenges to entering the world of work,” *Cross-cultural Management Journal* 33, no. 1 (2021): 107-115; Dimani Jayatissa, “Generation Z – A New Lifeline: A Systematic Literature Review,” *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 2 (2023): 179-186; Jean Twenge, *Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents – and What They Mean for America’s Future* (New York: Atria Books, 2023).

²⁵ Lopez and Abadiano, “Understanding Generation Z,” 770.

²⁶ Dimani Jayatissa, “Generation Z,” 182-184.

diversity, independence, responsibility, critical thinking, and transparency as some of the core values held by this demographic. Jayatissa also pinpoints authoritarian rule and hierarchical structure as some of the dislikes of the Gen Z population. The perception of any traits of these dislikes or the absence of these core values among political elites often leads the Gen Z population to take up protest.

Africa, for instance, has repeatedly experienced an unprecedented surge in youth demonstrations, protests, and uprisings in recent times. Unlike previous generations, the Gen Z population no longer takes things for granted and has, as such, become very critical towards matters of religion, politics, and sexuality. In the political sphere, particularly in Africa, the past few years have been significantly shaken by youth activism. In the early 2010s, the Arab Spring was a strong statement by the youth in North Africa and the Middle East (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen) against corrupt political leaders and economic saboteurs. In effect, millions of mobilised youth led to the toppling of once untouchable autocratic leaders, ending the long-term leadership of presidents Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak, Blaise Compaoré, Abdoulaye Wade, and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.²⁷ Subsequently, youth activism has been at the forefront of the African continent. The #EndSARS protest against police brutality in Nigeria was a synonym for #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria. According to Irungu Houghton, “protests took place in 29 out of 36 states and the federal capital of Nigeria”.²⁸ In Kenya, recent youth uprisings combine both online and offline activism. What began as

²⁷ Conflict Trends 2020/2, “Youth Demonstrations and their Impact on Political Change and Development in Africa,” *Accord*, (August 20, 2020), available from <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/youth-demonstrations-and-their-impact-on-political-change-and-development-in-africa/>

²⁸ Irungu Houghton, “Youth, Protest and Power: Emerging Global Narratives in Human Rights Advocacy,” (2025): 3. Available from <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-AI-Kenya-Global-Youth-protest-and-Power.pdf>

#RejectFinanceBill2024 and #OccupyParliament eventually became #RutoMustGo. Each of these cases offers insight into how the Gen Z population interacts with authority and challenges existing unjust power structures. While their attitude is commendable, one must question whether they can discern the difference between inquisitiveness and creativity.

Moreover, as a result of their puritanist approach to effecting socio-political change and order, the Gen Zs are often criticised for political unevenness. On the one hand, their visible activist culture and spirit are noticed. On the other hand, their low trust in institutions often leads to the display of a laissez-faire attitude towards policymaking, thus stunting or sabotaging economic growth. In other words, the Gen Z activist spirit may be easily taken by sensationalism or unnecessary associationism syndrome, without translating into effective social transformation. In political electioneering matters, for instance, reports and surveys show the disparity between Gen Zs' activist rhetoric and actual voting results.²⁹ In effect, it remains unexplainable why the Gen Z influencer culture and activism leading to an election do not translate to votes, but rather voter apathy, especially among the same Gen Z demographic. This corroborates the colloquial expression that talk is cheap; hence, do the talk. As such, while the Gen Z protests and agitations are able to raise awareness and shape discourse, very often, they fail to translate into predictable and cohesive solutions. This problem shows that the Gen Z protests and

²⁹ Cf. Sofia Ammassari, "Young Voters, Abstainers and Unregistered: Generation Z Turnout in a Compulsory System," *Political Studies* (2025): 1-22; Christian Paz, "How Democratic Gen Z activists lost the Gen Z vote," *Vox*, (Feb 4, 2025), available from <https://www.vox.com/2024-elections/393531/democrat-gen-z-republican-conservative-vote-young-loss-trump> ; Deborah Apau *et al.*, "How Does Gen Z Really Feel About Democracy? Insights from Three Profiles of Youth and Democracy," *CIRCLE (Centre for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) & Protect Democracy*, (March 2025), available from https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2025-04/genz_democracy_report_2025.pdf.

agitations have, for a long time, tilted towards a problem-sighting and calling-out pedagogy.

Now, having the critical and audacious mind to question unjust socio-political and economic structures does not automatically translate into having the creative prowess to proffer solutions. In this sense, what makes the Gen Z protests and demonstrations democratic, and not ochlocratic (literally ‘mob rule’ or action), is the ability to challenge and simultaneously proffer creative solutions. There is a need for a problem-solving, solution-oriented approach. In other words, the absence of a detailed and laudable solution by the Gen Z population to their grievances renders their agency incomplete. This is where the “hypophora effect” arguably becomes a valuable didactic tool for the Gen Zs.

By its very nature, the rhetorical device hypophora thrives when an inquiry immediately gets a response from the inquirer. In other words, while it is a known fact that critical thinking and protest appear to be spontaneous traits for Gen Z, this particular generation, in my opinion, will be more relevant to, and positively contribute to, nation-building if they adopt the hypophoric pedagogy. As history has shown, most revolutionary leaders and activists are not always the most effective and best national leaders for long-term, stable governance. This is so because the revolutionary or activist mindset is formed to see problems and to question them. Only a few withdraw to critically and detailly think of solutions. With the hypophoric pedagogy, it becomes imperative for the Gen Z population not only to stage protests but to proffer detailed and well-thought-out solutions to their demands. A hypophoric pedagogy, therefore, stresses the fact that beyond revolution is nation-building.

Consequently, the Gen Z incessant protests must transcend mere episodic questioning of the *status quo* to birth a true pedagogy of liberation, where, in Paulo Freire’s terms, conscientização (critical consciousness) leads to praxis (in-depth reflection and action).³⁰

³⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (Texas: University of Texas Press), 1970.

In the hypophoric sense, the questions that emerged thanks to critical consciousness ought not only to be uttered but must also find lasting and concrete responses. So far, the majority of the Gen Z protests have largely focused on single-issue reforms, symptomatic treatments or fragmented grievances rather than analysing the totality of domination and diagnosing root causes in view of structural transformation. As such, the Gen Z population must insist that their contributory praxis directly influences policies and decision-making. Hence, the hypophoric effect challenges the Gen Zs not simply to articulate or theorise societal problems but mainly to mobilise collective remedies.

6. Church of the Gen Zs

The Gen Z culture seems to be flourishing even within the ecclesial sphere. It is fast becoming a thorn in the flesh, especially in checking the excesses of clergy carried away by clericalism and hierarchism tendencies. Despite the call to promote a synodal culture, the hierarchical model of the Church appears to be more prevalent on the African continent, with a firm and determined will to suppress the culture of questioning. It is in this regard that Gen Z appears puzzling to many Church leaders who might find their attitudes hard to understand and even threatening. Given its inherent nature of questioning, Gen Z has become synonymous with rebelliousness. Yet, this phenomenon of not wanting to be questioned is strange, as the Church has always thrived and remained relevant due to its questioning prowess.

The medieval 'angelic doctor', Thomas Aquinas, was known for his penchant for questioning. Interestingly, Aquinas' scholarly pedagogy, especially in the *Summa Theologiae*, entails his repetitive use of hypophora. Indubitably, Thomas Aquinas may have been a victim of his time, i.e. scholasticism. The latter is a scholarly system that emphasises questioning, dialectic reasoning and the use of deduction to resolve contradictions. The approach involves launching a thesis or question, to which it receives a response, a set

of detailed answers.³¹ However, in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas' dialectic approach exemplifies the hypophoric method. Brian Davies stresses this, claiming that each part of the *Summa Theologiae* is broken down into questions divided into articles, such that following a raised question, Aquinas then goes ahead immediately to give replies.³²

Consequently, the approach of Thomas Aquinas shows that questioning and proffering answers to one's own questions has always been part of the Church's intellectual tradition. Thanks to the continuous consideration of the hypophoric tradition in the ecclesial, literary, and political spheres, adopting the hypophora effect as an engagement tool for evangelising the so-called Gen Zs appears as an appropriate path to tread. This approach involves accompanying and evangelising Gen Zs, teaching them to provide detailed and rational answers or solutions to their own questions and demands.

7. Conclusion

This paper first establishes the Bible beyond its theological reception, highlighting its literary and rhetorical richness, especially in its use of hypophora. Distinguishing hypophora from interrogative and rhetorical questions, the paper presents hypophora as a rhetorical device where a speaker poses a question and immediately provides the answer. In addition to perceiving the Bible as a theological and literary corpus, this paper argued that the Bible has a transformative influence on the polity. As such, the paper proposed hypophora as a powerful pedagogical tool for societal transformation.

Hypophora is particularly relevant for the Gen Z population, who are known for their critical thinking and social activism but often face criticism for a "problem-sighting and calling-out

³¹ See Thomas F. O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas, Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press), 1997.

³² See Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14.

pedagogy” that does not always translate into effective solutions. To this end, the paper suggested the shift from critical awareness to praxis (reflection and action) and from problem-sighting to solution-proffering pedagogies, encouraging the development of concrete responses and collective remedies for structural change, influencing policy and decision-making. The paper concluded, alluding to Thomas Aquinas as an intellectual precedent for the hypophoric approach.

References

- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.
- . “How Convention Helps Us Read: The Case of the Bible’s Annunciation Type-Scene.” *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 115-130.
- Ammassari, Sofia. “Young Voters, Abstainers and Unregistered: Generation Z Turnout in a Compulsory System.” *Political Studies* (2025): 1–22.
- Babayev, Javid. “Usage Sphere of Hypophora.” *Reviews of Modern Science* (2023): 104–105.
- Baker, A. “Parallelism: England’s Contribution to Biblical Studies.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 35 (1973): 429–440.
- Beekman, John, and John C. Callow. *Translating the Word of God*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974.
- Berlin, Adele. *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- . “Parallelism.” In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman, 155–162. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Berlin, Adele, and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Brown, Raymond. *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture*. PhD diss., St. Mary’s University, 1955.
- . *The Critical Meaning of the Bible*. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

- Bullinger, Ethelbert William. *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, reprint. 1968.
- Cassuto, U. *Commentary in Genesis*. Vols. 1–2. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964.
- Conflict Trends 2020/2. “Youth Demonstrations and Their Impact on Political Change and Development in Africa.” Accord. August 20, 2020. Available from <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/youth-demonstrations-and-their-impact-on-political-change-and-development-in-africa/>.
- Davies, Brian. *Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Dobbs-Allsopp, F. W. *On Biblical Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- . “Poetry, Hebrew.” In *New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, 550–558. Nashville: Abingdon, 2009.
- Dobbs-Allsopp, F. W., and Robert Lowth. “Parallelism and Biblical Poetry.” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 21 (2021): 1–35. Available from <https://doi.org/10.5508/jhs29586>.
- Fairchild, Serah. “What Is the Bible?” Updated September 23, 2024. Available from https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-the-bible-700735?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- Fischer, Georg. *Wege in die Bibel: Leitfaden zur Auslegung*. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2011.
- Fokkelman, Jan Pieter. *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide*. Translated by Ineke Smit. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- Hawk, Daniel. *Joshua*. Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000.
- Hayes, John H., and Carl R. Holladay. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook*. Rev. ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- Houghton, Irungu. “Youth, Protest and Power: Emerging Global Narratives in Human Rights Advocacy.” (2025). Available from

<https://www.law.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-AI-Kenya-Global-Youth-protest-and-Power.pdf>.

Jayatissa, K. A. "Generation Z – A New Lifeline: A Systematic Literature Review." *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 2 (2023): 179–186.

Kennedy, John F. "Address at Rice University on the Nation's Space Effort." *The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum*. Accessed August 6, 2025. Available from <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/address-at-rice-university-on-the-nations-space-effort>.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. "I Have a Dream" Speech (Excerpts). *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*. 2014. Available from <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/king.dreamspeech.excerpts.pdf>.

Kugel, James L. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981.

Kuntz, J. Kenneth. "Making a Statement: Rhetorical Questions in the Hebrew Psalter." In *Probing the Frontiers of Biblical Studies*, edited by J. H. Ellens and J. T. Greene, 157–170. Eugene: Pickwick, 2009.

Lev, Tidahar Aharon. "Generation Z: Characteristics and Challenges to Entering the World of Work." *Cross-cultural Management Journal* 33, no. 1 (2021): 107–115.

Leroux, N. R. "Repetition, Progression, and Persuasion in Scripture." *Neotestamentica* 29, no. 1 (1995): 9.

Lopez, Eva Niña B., and Mark N. Abadiano. "Understanding Generation Z: The New Generation of Learners: A Technological-Motivational-Learning Theory." *Journal of Harbin Engineering University* 44, no. 10 (2023): 770–784.

Majewski, Marcin. "Repetition and Not Parallelism as the Determinant of Poetry in the Hebrew Bible: A Case Study of Biblical Story of Creation (Gen 1)." *The person and the Challenges* 11, no. 2 (2020): 211. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.15633/pch.3758>.

- Malina, Bruce J. *The Gospel of John in Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1985.
- Moshavi, Adina. "Can a Positive Rhetorical Question Have a Positive Answer in the Bible?" *Journal of Semitic Studies* 56, no. 2 (2011): 254–256.
- Mukarovsky, Jan. *Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts*. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan, 1970.
- O'Meara, Thomas F. *Thomas Aquinas, Theologian*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.
- Paz, Christian. "How Democratic Gen Z Activists Lost the Gen Z Vote." Vox. February 4, 2025. Available from <https://www.vox.com/2024-elections/393531/democrat-gen-z-republican-conservative-vote-young-loss-trump>.
- Ps-Cicero. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.24.33–34.
- Rakiæ, Stanimir. "Serbo-Croatian Yes/No-Questions and Speech Acts." *JP* 8 (1984): 701.
- Rants, Nostalgia. "On Building Community." *Medium* (Mar 28, 2024). Available from <https://medium.com/@nostalgjarants/kurt-vonnegut-and-the-loneliness-epidemic-bf434211e186>.
- Rehkopf, F. "Der 'Parallelismus' im NT: Versuch einer Sprachregelung." *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 71 (1980): 55.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1976.
- Sarvinoz G'afurovna, Tursunova. "The Importance of Using Syntactic Stylistic Devices in Literary Texts." *American Journal of Education and Learning* 3, no. 2 (2025): 987. Available from <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14942623>.
- Stuart, D. *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.
- Thompson, Thomas. *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past*. London: Random House, 1999.
- Twenge, Jean. *Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z,*

Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents – and What They Mean for America’s Future. New York: Atria Books, 2023.

Vatican Council II. “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*.” November 18, 1965. Available from https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vatii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

Van der Watt, J. G. *Family of the King: Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel According to John*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Palm Sunday: An Autobiographical Collage*. New York: Random House, 1981.

Watson, Wilfred G. E. *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*. Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT Press, 1984.