

ALBERT VANHOYE

A Perfect Priest

Edited and translated by
NICHOLAS J. MOORE
and RICHARD J. OUNSWORTH

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe

Herausgeber / Editor

Jörg Frey (Zürich)

Mitherausgeber/Associate Editors

Markus Bockmuehl (Oxford) · James A. Kelhoffer (Uppsala)

Tobias Nicklas (Regensburg) · J. Ross Wagner (Durham, NC)

477



Albert Vanhoye

A Perfect Priest

Studies in the Letter to the Hebrews

Edited and translated by
Nicholas J. Moore and Richard J. Ounsworth

Mohr Siebeck

Albert Vanhoye, born 1923; 1963–98 faculty member at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome; 1969–75 Dean of the Biblical Faculty; 1984–90 Rector; since 2006 cardinal.

Nicholas J. Moore, born 1984; 2014 DPhil (Oxon); 2014–17 Assistant Curate, All Saints' Church, Stranton, Hartlepool; since 2017 Tutor, Cranmer Hall, St John's College, Durham.

Richard J. Ounsworth, born 1972; 1996 professed as a Dominican Friar; 2001 ordained priest; 2010 DPhil (Oxon); since 2005 Lecturer and Tutor in Scripture, Blackfriars Hall, Oxford.

ISBN 978-3-16-154289-3/eISBN 978-3-16-156363-8

DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-156363-8

ISSN 0340-9570/eISSN 2568-7484

(Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2018 Mohr Siebeck Tübingen, Germany. www.mohrsiebeck.com

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that permitted by copyright law) without the publisher's written permission. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations and storage and processing in electronic systems.

The book was printed by Laupp & Göbel in Gomaringen on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Nädele in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

Preface

The editors wish to record our gratitude to Albert Vanhoye for his enthusiasm and support for this project, without which this collection of translations of his essays would not have come to fruition. Markus Bockmuehl offered early encouragement and we thank him for the commendation to his fellow WUNT editors, and Jörg Frey for accepting the volume into this series. The editorial team at Mohr Siebeck have been characteristically efficient and helpful. Nicholas Moore also wishes to note his deep thanks to Bernard Clark, formerly of Durham Johnston Comprehensive School, and Toby Garfitt, of Magdalen College, Oxford, both much more than teachers of French.

The principles and pitfalls of translation are not unfamiliar to biblical scholars. We have aimed to produce a text which is a faithful rendition of the original pieces and useful as such. To this end original page numbers are included in double brackets at the appropriate points in the text, the use of Greek and Hebrew characters or of transliteration follows each original piece, and capitalization and emphases have been retained; footnote numbering remains identical where this was continuous throughout the original article. At the same time, as a new collected text, headings, language, and style have been unified (Roman numerals; British English; New Hart's Rules, with reference to Society of Biblical Literature style for discipline-specific points) and a full bibliography and indices prepared.

Finally, it has been a privilege to conduct a project involving a French scholar resident in Italy, a German publication house, British translators and libraries, and both Protestant and Roman Catholic individuals and institutions; at the present time it seems especially apposite to underline the European and ecumenical nature of this kind of scholarly collaboration.

N. J. M., Durham
R. J. O., Oxford
Trinity 2018

Table of Contents

Preface	V
---------------	---

Introduction: ‘A Perfect Priest’: The Letter to the Hebrews in the Scholarship of Albert Vanhoye.....	1
I. Albert Vanhoye: Life and Career	1
II. Central Features of Vanhoye’s Work	5
III. Rationale and Contents of This Volume	11

Part One Priesthood and Sacrifice

Chapter 1: Christ as High Priest in Hebrews 2.17–18	23
I. A New Concept.....	24
II. The Characteristics of the High Priest.....	33
III. Expiation?.....	38
IV. A Help in Trials	42

Chapter 2: The Place and Meaning of Hebrews 5.1–10	46
I. The relationship of Heb 5.1–10 to its immediate context (4.15–16).....	47
II. The relationship between Heb 5.1–10 and the preceding passages (Heb 3–4).....	49
III. The relationship between Heb 5.1–10 and the following passages (Heb 7–10).....	55

Chapter 3: The <i>teleiōsis</i> of Christ: Chief Point of Hebrews’ Priestly Christology	59
I. The <i>teleiōsis</i> of Christ: ‘chief point’?	60
II. The rhetorical function of τετελειωμένον in Heb 7.28.....	61
III. The <i>teleiōsis</i> of Christ according to Heb 8.1–2.....	62
IV. Rhetorical function of Heb 8.1–2 and the extent of the section.....	64
V. Reformulation of the concept of priestly <i>teleiōsis</i>	67
VI. Existential priestly <i>teleiōsis</i>	69
VII. Relational priestly <i>teleiōsis</i>	72
VIII. Conclusion	74

Chapter 4: ‘By the Greater and More Perfect Tent’ (Heb 9.11).....	76
I. Text and Context.....	76
II. Interpretative Positions	79
III. The Theme of the New Temple	89
IV. The Tent: Body of the Risen Christ	92
V. Conclusion	98
Chapter 5: Eternal Spirit and Sacrificial Fire in Hebrews 9.14.....	100
I.	101
II.	103
III.	105
IV.	106
V.	107
VI.	109
VII.	111
VIII.	112
Chapter 6: Earthly Sanctuary and Heavenly Sanctuary in the Letter to the Hebrews.....	115
I. God’s House or Christ’s House (3.2–6).....	116
II. God’s ‘Rest’ (3.11–4.11).....	121
III. The Sanctuaries in the Central Section (8.1–9.28).....	122
IV. The True Tent (8.2; 9.11)	131
V. Conclusion	145
Chapter 7: Historical Recollection and Theological Creativity in the Letter to the Hebrews.....	147
I. The Priestly Cult and the Death of Jesus	148
II. Covenant Sacrifice and the Death of Jesus	156

Part Two

Thematic Studies

Chapter 8: The Law in the Letter to the Hebrews	161
I. The place of νόμος in the letter	162
II. The exact meaning of νόμος in the letter	165
III. Polemic against the law in Heb 7.11–28.....	167
IV. Change of law in the new ‘dispensation’ (Heb 8.1 – 9.28)?.....	171
V. The prefigurative value of certain commandments (Heb 9.18–23).....	175
VI. The powerlessness of the law and the efficacy of the will of God (Heb 10.1–18)	176
VII. New approaches in a new situation (Heb 10.19–29).....	178

VIII. Conclusion	180
Chapter 9: The God of the New Covenant in the Letter to the Hebrews....	182
I. God, first and last.....	182
II. God establishes mediation.....	185
III. Questioning the First Covenant	186
IV. Establishment of the new covenant	191
V. Revelation of God through the new covenant.....	193
VI. Conclusion	195
Chapter 10: Universal Salvation through Christ and the Validity of the Old Covenant	197
I. ‘The old covenant’ in 2 Cor 3.14: a written text	199
II. Permanent and provisional aspects of the Old Testament	200
III. Permanent validity of the covenant promise given to Abraham (Gal 3.15–18).....	201
IV. Discrediting the legal covenant of Sinai (Gal 4.21–31)	203
V. Other Pauline texts on the ‘covenants’ with Israel.....	204
VI. Conclusions on the Pauline position.....	208
VII. ‘The first covenant’ destined to disappear (Heb 8.13)	209
VIII. Conclusion	213
Chapter 11: Christ as Re-creator of Humanity and Restorer of Human Rights according to the Letter to the Hebrews.....	215
I. Christ fulfils the human vocation (Heb 2.5–9).....	215
II. The path to fulfilment (Heb 2.10).....	218
III. Redemptive solidarity	221
IV. Human rights in the New Covenant.....	226
V. Conclusion	228

Part Three

Exegetical Studies

Chapter 12: The <i>οἰκουμένη</i> in the Letter to the Hebrews	233
I. State of the question.....	233
II. The <i>oikoumenē</i> of the Lord	235
Chapter 13: Long Journey or Imminent Access? The Biblical Context of Hebrews 3.7–4.11	240
I. Allusions in the Hebrew Psalm	240
II. Allusions in the Greek version	243
III. The Perspective of Hebrews.....	248

IV. Exegetical Insight	250
V. Links with the rest of the Letter	253
VI. Conclusion	255
Chapter 14: Hebrews 6.7–8 and the Rabbinic <i>Mashal</i>	256
Chapter 15: The Faith of Jesus? On Hebrews 12.2: ‘Jesus, Author and Perfector of Faith’	261
Chapter 16: The Literary Question of Hebrews 13.1–6.....	273
I. Composition of Hebrews 13.1–6.....	274
II. Situation of Hebrews 13.1–6 in the Letter as a Whole.....	282
III. Conclusion	291
Bibliography.....	293
I. Works by Albert Vanhoye.....	293
II. Other Works Cited	294
Acknowledgements	301
Index of Ancient Sources	303
Index of Modern Authors	325
Index of Subjects.....	327

‘A Perfect Priest’

The Letter to the Hebrews in the Scholarship of Albert Vanhoye

Nicholas Moore and Richard Ounsworth

A volume such as this has two aims. It seeks primarily to make available to a wider audience a number of important pieces of work by a prominent scholar on a particular field. Within this overarching aim there nestles a secondary yet inseparable intent to pay homage to that scholar and his scholarship. This particular volume had its genesis in the doctoral work of the editor-translators, who both undertook research on the Letter to the Hebrews at Oxford just a few years apart. In the course of our studies we found ourselves indebted at numerous points to the work of the French Roman Catholic scholar, Albert Vanhoye. We offer this collection of sixteen of his articles, published for the first time in English translation, as a small contribution to the dissemination of his work, and to the burgeoning field of research into the elusive document known as ‘to the Hebrews’. This introduction will survey Vanhoye’s life and career, highlight a number of central emphases and features of his work on Hebrews, and then offer a brief rationale for the selection of the essays and a short summary of each one.

I. Albert Vanhoye: Life and Career

Albert Vanhoye was born on 24 July 1923 in Hazebrouck, in the far north of France, the second of five children in a devout Roman Catholic family of Flemish extraction.¹ He joined the Society of Jesus in 1941; this was during the German occupation of France in the Second World War, and Vanhoye

¹ Dates and other details in this section are drawn from Yohan Picquart, *Entretiens avec le cardinal Albert Vanhoye* (Avignon, 2014), 7–30, and the Holy See Press Office press release, ‘College of Cardinals: Biographical notes. Vanhoye Card. Albert, S.I.’, 1 April 2006, http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/documentazione/documents/cardinali_biografie/cardinali_bio_vanhoye_a_en.html, accessed 13 March 2018.

had to cross the demarcation line clandestinely in order to reach the novitiate. He spent brief spells in the *chantier de jeunesse* (the replacement for military service in Vichy France) and in the French Army following the Allied landings. After demobilization he completed his studies in literature at the Sorbonne, and went on to study philosophy at Vals-près-le-Puy and theology at the Jesuite scholasticate at Enghien in Belgium. At the completion of his training he was ordained priest, on 25 July 1954. He taught New Testament exegesis for a short period at his former scholasticate, recently relocated to Chantilly from Enghien. He completed a doctorate in sacred scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome in 1961, on the structure of the Letter to the Hebrews, which was to form the basis for his published work on this topic. In 1963 he began to teach at the Pontifical Institute, where he would spend the rest of his career. He was Dean of the Biblical Faculty there from 1969–1975, and Rector of the Institute from 1984–1990. Alongside his work at the Institute, Vanhoye had teaching responsibilities at the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Pontifical Lateran University, and supervised a number of doctoral students. He retired in 1998 at the age of 75.

Among his ecclesiastical appointments and responsibilities, Vanhoye was part of the commission which prepared the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (1979), on ecclesiastical universities and faculties. He was a member and for two terms secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission; during his first term of office the Commission published *L'Interprétation de la Bible dans l'Église* (1993; English version *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, issued 1994), an important and well received document open to Catholic engagement with the full variety of interpretative methods being used in biblical studies. He was also Consultor of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (1980–1996), and a member of the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In the scholarly community Vanhoye joined the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* in 1964, and served as its President in 1995. His presidential address was subsequently published in *New Testament Studies* and is included as the third essay in this volume. He served on the editorial board of the journal *Biblica* from 1969, and was editor from 1978 until he stepped down from the board in 1984.² In later life he was appointed Cardinal, with as his titular church the Deaconry of Santa Maria della Mercede and Sant'Adriano in Villa Albani. This was in 2006, when he was over 80 and therefore excluded from an elective conclave of the College of Cardinals, and thus the appointment is purely honorific, and Vanhoye was not consecrated bishop. The further honorific *pro hac vice* (temporary) elevation of the Deaconry of Santa Maria della Mercede and Sant'Adriano to a presbyteral title – and thus of Vanhoye

² 'Nuntii Personarum et Rerum: S.E. Cardinale Albert Vanhoye', *Biblica*, 87 (2006), 298.

to Cardinal-Priest – took place in 2016.³ In 2008 he led the Lenten retreat for the Roman Curia, using the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises and focussing on the theme of Jesus as High Priest.⁴

The nature of Vanhoye's appointments reflects a lengthy and distinguished career in which he has made a significant contribution to the life of both the church and the academy. This is reflected in his numerous publications in several European languages, across eight decades, and at both scholarly and more popular levels. It is not our intention in this volume to provide a comprehensive bibliography of Vanhoye's works, for which we would refer readers to the bibliography compiled for the 2007 *Festschrift*.⁵ In a sub-section of the bibliography here we simply note several works that have appeared in the decade or so since that volume.

If we were to epitomize the progress of Vanhoye's thought and scholarship by reference to his publications, we would first observe his early and substantial work on the structure of Hebrews, which stretched from his doctoral studies through the publication of *La Structure littéraire* and *Traduction structurée* in 1963 to the second revised edition of *La Structure littéraire* in 1976,⁶ with a number of other shorter pieces appearing in the intervening period.⁷ We then note a movement towards the Christology of Hebrews with the 1969 volume *Situation du Christ*.⁸ This formed a staging-post, as it were, on the way towards Vanhoye's other major area of research, Christ's priesthood. Already within Hebrews 1 and 2, the focus of *Situation du Christ*, there is a pre-echo of this major theme of the letter, and Vanhoye explores this in his

³ Holy See Press Office, Bolletino, 'Concistoro Ordinario Pubblico per il voto su alcune cause di Canonizzazione, 20.06.2016', <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2016/06/20/0456/01046.html>, accessed 23 March 2018.

⁴ Subsequently published as Albert Vanhoye, *Accogliamo Cristo nostro sommo sacerdote: esercizi spirituali predicati in Vaticano, 10-16 febbraio 2008* (Vatican City, 2008); ET: *Let Us Confidently Welcome Christ Our High Priest: Spiritual Exercises with Pope Benedict XVI*, trans. by Joel Wallace (Leominster, 2010).

⁵ José Enrique Aguilar Chiu and others, eds., *'Il Verbo di Dio è vivo': studi sul Nuovo Testamento in onore del cardinale Albert Vanhoye, S.I.*, Analecta Biblica, 165 (Rome, 2007), 603–28.

⁶ Albert Vanhoye, *La Structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris, 1963); *La Structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1976); *Traduction structurée de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (Rome, 1963); ET: *Structured Translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. by James Swetnam (Rome, 1964).

⁷ Albert Vanhoye, 'La Structure centrale de l'Épître aux Hébreux', *Recherches de science religieuse*, 47 (1959), 44–60; 'Structure littéraire et thèmes théologiques de l'Épître aux Hébreux', in *Studiorum paulinorum congressus internationalis catholicus*, Analecta Biblica, 18 (Rome, 1963), 2.175–81; 'Discussions sur la structure de l'Épître aux Hébreux', *Biblica*, 55 (1974), 349–80.

⁸ Albert Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ: Hébreux 1–2* (Paris, 1969).

Nouvelle revue théologique essay (excerpted from the book) on Christ as high priest in Heb 2.17–18, which forms the opening piece in this volume.

His work on priesthood took place in the context of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Just a few years after it closed (and in the same year as *Situation du Christ*, 1969) Vanhoye published *Le Christ est notre prêtre*,⁹ a short discourse on the doctrine of Christ's priesthood in Hebrews in the light of the Vatican Council's dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* (1964), which had made a threefold distinction between the priesthood of Christ, the priesthood of all the baptized, and the ministerial priesthood. Vanhoye develops his thinking both on priesthood and on its contemporary application in his wider-ranging monograph *Prêtres anciens, prêtre nouveau selon le Nouveau Testament*, which appeared in 1980.¹⁰

Vanhoye's interests and research studies extend more widely than these areas, to encompass other passages and themes within the Letter to the Hebrews and also other parts of the New Testament in its ancient context, but these are his mainstays. Indeed, one might ultimately subsume all of these concerns under the banner of priesthood, given that Vanhoye's understanding of the structure of Hebrews points towards the priestly section as the structural and thematic centre of the letter.¹¹ The epicentre, on his view, is formed by the two linked pericopes of Heb 9.1–10 and 11–14, which expound the priestly work of Christ on the basis of the tabernacle service and in particular the Day of Atonement rite. It is this focus on Christ's priesthood in Hebrews, its superiority and its perfection vis-à-vis the old covenant priesthood, that gives rise to the title of this volume. This bibliographical survey of Vanhoye's scholarship leads us to a consideration of some of the key features of his work.

⁹ Albert Vanhoye, *Le Christ est notre prêtre*, Supplément à 'Vie chrétienne' no. 118 (Paris, 1969); ET: *Our Priest Is Christ: The Doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. by M. Innocentia Richards (Rome, 1977).

¹⁰ Albert Vanhoye, *Prêtres anciens, prêtre nouveau selon le Nouveau Testament*, Parole de Dieu, 20 (Paris, 1980); ET: *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest: According to the New Testament*, trans. by J. Bernard Orchard (Petersham, MA, 1986).

¹¹ Note in this regard the helpful concise discussion of Vanhoye's contribution in Craig R. Koester, "'In Many and Various Ways': Theological Interpretation of Hebrews in the Modern Period", in *Hebrews in Contexts*, ed. by Gabriella Gelardini and Harold W. Attridge, *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums*, 91 (Leiden, 2016), 299–315, at 309–12.

II. Central Features of Vanhoye's Work

In this section we draw attention to Vanhoye's concern for structure, exegesis, and application. First, however, we might note Vanhoye's enthusiasm for the object of study; this ought in one sense to be unremarkable, although it is of course neither necessary nor sufficient as a precondition for research. Vanhoye's intense interest in Hebrews is evident from the extent of his published work on the letter, and from its character and tone, exploring this ancient document in sympathetic mode. He also expresses this attitude openly at points, as for example in his SNTS presidential address where he muses that the society must, in appointing him president, have desired to honour the Letter to the Hebrews.¹²

Structure

To highlight structure as a feature of Vanhoye's research on Hebrews is not simply to reiterate his various publications on the structure of Hebrews as a whole, although there is no doubt that this opening focus of his career has had an influence on all that followed. It is rather to note that structure has a role to play in interpretation, and it plays this role at every level. This is amply demonstrated by the essays in this volume, as we shall indicate below. The core contribution of Vanhoye's direct study of the overarching structure of Hebrews is the attention it gives to literary devices, over and above content. Building on the work of earlier scholars, Vanhoye identifies five specific structuring devices: i) *annonce du sujet*, 'announcement of the subject', where the subject of a subsequent section of the text is announced in advance, for example in 2.17 where the designation 'high priest' first occurs, preparing the lengthy discussion of Christ's priesthood later in the letter; ii) *mots-crochets*, hook words which link together the end of one section with the beginning of another; iii) *genre*, in particular the distinction between expository and hortatory sections; iv) *termes caractéristiques*, words or phrases which are repeated throughout a section to reinforce its unity, the obvious example being the use of *πίστει* in Hebrews 11; v) *inclusio*, where words or phrases 'bookend' a section.¹³ Four of these five devices involve the functioning of individual terms or phrases, and it can be readily seen that all of them have application at both the macro- and micro-level of discerning structure. Although Vanhoye's actual proposal – a five-part, concentric arrangement of Hebrews, centring on 8.1–9.28 and especially 9.1–14 – has not been widely

¹² See the third essay in this volume; by a similar token his correspondence with us as editors at the outset of this project expressed his enthusiasm because 'it will make better known the riches contained in this writing of the New Testament' (personal correspondence, 27 February 2014).

¹³ Vanhoye, *Structure littéraire* (1st edn), 37.

accepted or followed,¹⁴ his attention to and categorization of the mechanisms by which the text has been structured and by which readers might discern this structure does represent an important advance in the scholarly discussion.

We now turn to some specific examples, drawn from this volume, of Vanhoye's attention to structure in relation to interpretation at a variety of levels. The short note on Heb 6.7–8 (Chapter 14 in this volume) draws on structural analysis of terse rabbinic *meshalim* to elucidate the structure of the two verses immediately following Hebrews' most infamous apostasy warning. This micro-structural consideration demonstrates that the opening phrase, 'land which has drunk in the rain frequently falling on it', is descriptive rather than evaluative. That is, it sets the scene for the two contrasting possibilities (producing useful or useless vegetation), rather than forming part of the comment on the good response only – and by inference compounding the critique of the bad response. Thus the fruitful and unfruitful terrains have undergone the same experience and it is their response to this that is highlighted; there is a balance to the agricultural illustration which, instead of simply underlining the threat of 6.4–6, bridges the warning and the reassurance on either side. This is an example, then, of how Vanhoye explores structure at the level of individual words and phrases as an essential part of his interpretation of two verses, which in turn fosters a more nuanced understanding of the structure of the wider context.

By a similar token we might note the way Vanhoye engages structure in his discussion of the difficult phrase 'the greater and more perfect tent' (Heb 9.11; Chapter 4 and taken up again in Chapter 6). Here his prior work on structure is adduced briefly to highlight the significance of the phrase within the sentence through discussion of a carefully diagrammed chiasm. Then he locates this verse in relation to the wider context of 9.1–14, as part of a comparison and contrast between the sanctuaries and service of old and new covenants. These verses are in turn connected with the discussion of tent and sanctuary in 8.1–2, which introduces the section running through Hebrews 8 and into Hebrews 9. All of these structural considerations bear on the interpretation for which Vanhoye argues, that the 'tent' is Christ's (risen) body: it corresponds to 'his own blood' within the individual phrase, the first tent of the tabernacle in the preceding context, and the distinction between tent and sanctuary in 8.1–2.

A complementary example is Vanhoye's piece on Hebrews 13 (Chapter 16 in this volume). Here he addresses structural work he had not previously undertaken in depth, rather than building on his earlier research, yet we observe the same attention to structure at several levels. He begins by examin-

¹⁴ For a summary of his contribution and its position within the history of scholarship on this question, see Barry C. Joslin, 'Can Hebrews Be Structured? An Assessment of Eight Approaches', *Currents in Biblical Research*, 6 (2007), 99–129, esp. pp. 109–12.

ing the substructure of the short injunctions in 13.1–6, resisting the solutions proposed by other scholars which impose a uniform shape, discerning instead a more complex pattern. He considers the integration of Hebrews 13 with the letter as a whole, arguing for identity of authorship and situating 13.1–6 in the middle of a concentric section running from 12.14 to 13.21. He also discusses the nature of the transition at 13.1, a point of particular importance for Vanhoye, because he places the last major division in the book at 12.14, and must therefore argue for continuity at 13.1 and at the same time account for the transition in style and subject matter.

Vanhoye's proposal for the overall structure of Hebrews has not ultimately won a large number of adherents, perhaps especially in the Anglophone world, and there are good reasons for this. His failure to take into account the structural significance of the parallel exhortations in 4.14–16 and 10.19–23 (or 25) is problematic for some, while a clearer candidate for the epicentre of the letter might be seen in 8.1–2 and the surrounding verses, rather than in 9.1–14. The more explicitly method-driven approaches of Graham Guthrie and Cynthia Long Westfall, in particular, have seemed more persuasive to many.¹⁵ Ultimately, though, it remains the case that no fully convincing account of the structure of Hebrews has yet been given, and that a number of proposals including Vanhoye's remain contenders, as Barry Joslin has outlined.¹⁶ Yet whether or not his proposal on structure is widely accepted, Vanhoye's enduring contribution is on the one hand to have codified a number of literary structuring features, such as hook words and 'announcement of the subject', which later scholarship has largely incorporated; and on the other hand, an emphasis on the fundamental importance of structure for interpretation at every level.

Exegesis

It should be unremarkable, in one sense, to note a biblical scholar's interest in exegesis. It is instructive therefore to begin by exploring how Vanhoye understands the term. Following the publication of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, produced under Vanhoye's leadership, he gave an interview to Peter Williamson in 1997 exploring its context and significance.¹⁷ There is, first of all, an empha-

¹⁵ George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, 73 (Leiden, 1994); Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship Between Form and Meaning*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 297 (London, 2005).

¹⁶ Joslin, 'Can Hebrews Be Structured?'.

¹⁷ Peter Williamson, 'Catholicism and the Bible: An Interview with Albert Vanhoye', *First Things*, 74 (1997), 35–40. Page references included in the text in what follows are to this interview.

sis on the importance of historical critical study, and distinguishing it from later Christian interpretation and application: ‘The document expressed a concern to defend exegesis against [the] danger of attributing to the text developments that occurred subsequently in the tradition.’ (p. 38) This decision is undergirded by a theological rationale: ‘The historical meaning of the text is important precisely because God has manifested himself in history’ (p. 36).

There is, however, a further subdivision within this historical work, ‘between exegesis, properly speaking, and the use of biblical texts for historical purposes’ (p. 38). This latter use can tend in directions that are anti-religious, but only on the basis of ‘naturalistic and historicist’ presuppositions (p. 39). In its basic form historical study is essentially neutral, although it is also less extensive – Vanhoye might say less complete – than exegesis, because exegesis has in view the full meaning of the text, including its religious meaning: ‘all the steps in exegetical work must aim at understanding more deeply the religious meaning of the biblical text, since *this is its principal meaning*’ (p. 37, emphasis added). A couple of further quotations fill out this depiction:

If one does not explain the religious meaning of a biblical writing, one has not explained the text adequately [...] the religious meaning of the Bible is always present, and it is the indispensable task of exegesis to discover and communicate it. (p. 36)

Exegesis [...] seeks to illumine the total content of the text, not just which details are historical or nonhistorical. Exegesis emphasizes the content of faith, divine revelation, and the invitation to a renewed existence that is at the heart of the biblical text. (p. 38)

Such interpretation is not in and of itself application or, to use the Commission’s term, actualization, but when undertaken properly does prepare for it – and indeed exegesis should always have this ultimate goal in view. Conversely and correspondingly, every part of the life of the church should be influenced by exegesis.

Thus understood, exegesis is an historically-informed and rigorous engagement with the full meaning of the text, which is distinct from but conducive to subsequent theological and ecclesial reflection and application. This can be illustrated by Vanhoye’s piece on the phrase ‘by eternal spirit’ in Heb 9.14 (Chapter 5). He engages the immediate and wider context of Hebrews to relate this to the combustion of the sacrificial victim in the fire of the altar of burnt offering. He then adduces a phrase from 1 Esdras and demonstrates the structural and conceptual affinities between it and the verse in Hebrews, in order to suggest that ‘by eternal spirit’ echoes the perpetual flame of the altar. In support of this he explores the Old Testament depiction of the various offerings that were burned, in part or whole, and the account in 2 Maccabees of the miraculous preservation of the altar fire as *naphtha*. All of this is straightforward historical exegetical procedure. Yet the article is framed by a wide-reaching dialogue with a tradition of interpretation stretching from the early church through the Reformation to modern commentators. The varia-

tions on this theme are carefully explored and differentiated, and Vanhoye judges the connection that emerges between the love of the Holy Spirit and the fire of the altar to 'unify and enrich' the exegesis of the text. What is significant is that Vanhoye locates this interpretation firmly in the domain of exegesis, and not simply later (if fruitful) development; his key move is to identify the parallel with 1 Esdras, which supports the idea that 'eternal' might in its original context allude to the sacrificial fire. At the same time, and in line with his understanding of the nature and role of exegesis, this interpretation is explicitly undertaken with a view to the subsequent meaning of the text for the church.

Application

This is a suitable note on which to turn to address directly the question of the application of the biblical text. The Pontifical Biblical Commission settled on the term 'actualization', and Vanhoye explains that this means 'to bring the word of God into the present; [...] after the historical meaning is understood, to find the points that can be actualized in the life of the believer and of the Christian community' (p. 36). In this regard, Vanhoye commends the practice of *lectio divina*, the slow and attentive reading of and meditation on scriptural texts, as 'the highest priority' in placing the Bible at the centre of Christian living (p. 40). Similarly we might note his various popular writing and speaking for Roman Catholic laity and clergy. A clear turn of phrase characterizes much of his scholarly writing too: for example, the exposition of typology or Christian fulfilment of Old Testament figures in terms of 'resemblance, difference, and superiority' recurs several times in the essays collected here.

In terms of his scholarship, Vanhoye's primary achievement has been to align his central research interests with matters of great significance within the church. In part this is a question of fortunate timing and co-incidence of Vanhoye's research interests with the church's concerns: his emergence as a scholar coincided with the Second Vatican Council and its aftermath, and as we noted above, the interest in priesthood was already interwoven with and promoted by his work on structure (and, indeed, had been awoken long before, during his first studies in theology).¹⁸ Yet we must also give due credit to Vanhoye's acumen in choosing to pursue these particular interests; and the Roman Catholic Church recognized this in appointing him to a number of significant posts bearing on the Bible's place in the church.

Craig Koester's essay on three Hebrews scholars¹⁹ highlights the synergies between their interpretations and their context, but in each case the scholar is to at least some degree aware of the situatedness of his scholarship and seeking actively to engage his contemporary situation. Vanhoye in particular is

¹⁸ Picquart, *Entretiens*, 20.

¹⁹ Koester, "'In Many and Various Ways'", 299–315.

explicitly conscious of, and desires to speak to, his context. One need not endorse Vanhoye's conclusions on ministerial priesthood (and the editors of this volume – one a Dominican friar, the other an Anglican minister in the Reformed tradition – take rather different views on this matter) to appreciate his careful treatment of the biblical material and his desire for this to inform the church's debates. Indeed, one of the great contributions of the Second Vatican Council was to set ministerial priesthood firmly back in the context of the high priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of all the faithful, points on which there is significant ecumenical consensus.

An openness or even explicit attention to application is evident in many of the pieces in this volume. Two pieces are worth highlighting in that they set out from a contemporary issue and interrogate biblical texts from that perspective. Chapter 11 examines the question of human rights in dialogue with the papal encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*. Here Vanhoye recognizes the gulf of language and conceptuality that divides the ancient from the modern world, but identifies two rights, that of rule over creation, and of access to God, which Hebrews ascribes to the people of God. Both of these rights are restored by Christ. We note a concern for contemporary application, although it is perhaps here not entirely successful: the language of rights as Vanhoye applies it to Hebrews may offer a new perspective on the text, but he does not bring the rights he identifies into conversation with the specific modern understanding of human rights as applying to freedoms or entitlements of the person with respect to other individuals, society, and property. Instead, the closing note is that Christians should show solidarity with others and respect for human rights. This is important so far as it goes, but hardly commensurate with the cosmic scope of the biblical picture he has just traced.

A more successful example might be cited in the previous piece. Chapter 10 forefronts a phrase of Pope John Paul II, who had stated that God had never revoked the old covenant, and explores whether this perspective finds support in the New Testament. Vanhoye is aware of the sensitivities in Jewish-Christian relations that bear on the question, and makes a distinction between the prophetic and institutional life of the old covenant. The former persists in the words of the Old Testament, but the latter has come to an end – indeed, the Old Testament scriptures foretell the demise of their own institutions. A text such as Hebrews goes further than the Pauline corpus but is in line with their overall thrust and direction. Vanhoye is open to the possibilities of a text such as Hebrews 11 for Jewish-Christian relations, but ultimately in Hebrews and throughout the New Testament relationship with God is reframed christologically: Christ cannot be excised from the picture, and this will always be a point of difference between Christian and Jewish understandings of covenant. Thus actualization, for Vanhoye, speaks to the contemporary setting and yet at the same time is bound by the frame of responsible biblical exegesis.

III. Rationale and Contents of This Volume

The primary contribution of this volume might be summarized as *accessibility*: we have sought to make available in English translation and in a single volume a representative range of Vanhoye's most significant studies on Hebrews as a service to the academy. It has been the expectation within Anglophone biblical studies that, in addition to the ancient languages, scholars will read at least German and French; but the reality is that many do not today achieve this. Long gone are the days when university entrants had already had exposure to Latin, Greek, French, and German in the course of their time at (in the British context) grammar school or public school. Moreover, given the continued strength of Germanic biblical studies, it is natural that the first language to go, as it were, should be French. While English translations of Vanhoye's significant monographs have long been available, none of his many articles and essays were originally published in English or have to our knowledge been translated. Our desire for accessibility has also prompted the inclusion of articles from journals whose back issues are currently unavailable electronically, or of pieces that form part of multi-authored volumes also unavailable digitally and unlikely to be found in the libraries of non-Francophone institutions.

Other considerations in the selection of these essays include the desire to cover the span of Vanhoye's career, to include pieces which treat diverse sections and themes within Hebrews, and to represent the best of his work. Pieces preparatory for or overlapping with the subject of monographs already available in English, including work on structure, have been excluded. Given the recent appearance in English of two Hebrews commentaries by Vanhoye,²⁰ this volume is a timely resource for those who wish to dig into the detailed exegesis that underlies many of the decisions and readings offered in those works. We turn now to a summary of the argument of each essay, in the three groupings in which they are presented.

Part One: Priesthood and Sacrifice

The first and longest group of writings deals with the themes of priesthood and sacrifice. These concepts naturally draw Vanhoye's attention, primarily because they are a central emphasis of Hebrews itself, and also in part due to his situation as a Catholic priest and scholar in the wake of Vatican II, with

²⁰ Albert Vanhoye, *A Different Priest: The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. by Leo Arnold, *Rhetorica Semitica* (Miami, 2011); *The Letter to the Hebrews: A New Commentary*, trans. by Leo Arnold (Mahwah, NJ, 2015); see Nicholas J. Moore, 'Review of Albert Vanhoye, "A Different Priest: The Epistle to the Hebrews"' and "The Letter to the Hebrews: A New Commentary"', *Reviews of Biblical and Early Christian Studies* (February 2016), <https://rbcs.org/2016/02/10/vanhoye/>.

its dual concern for the renewal of interest in biblical interpretation and for a re-articulation of the nature of ministerial priesthood.

In light of the fact that no other New Testament document calls Christ a priest, let alone high priest, and that Heb 2.17 is the first occurrence of this term in the letter, the first chapter, 'Christ as High Priest', offers an exploration of the question, 'how and why did the author of Hebrews come to call Christ a high priest?' The problem is a perplexing one, given Jesus' lack of priestly lineage, and the total absence of ritual associated with his death. Vanhoye argues that in applying the term to Jesus, the author of Hebrews abandons the Old Testament priestly concepts of ritual exaltation and separation in favour of humiliation and solidarity, yet maintains and strengthens the concept of mediation. The two qualifiers 'merciful and trustworthy' in 2.17 define the dual relationships a priest must inhabit, with God and with people respectively. The first two chapters of Hebrews prepare for these ideas, and 'high priest' represents a concise summary of what it means for Christ to be both the Son of God and brother of humans. (The two terms also announce, in reverse order, the subject of the following two sections.) The high priest's function, expiation (mentioned in 2.18), is not to be identified with Christ's sacrificial death but is rather an ongoing work of the glorified Christ, parallel to but not identical with his intercession (7.25). Christ is thus able to offer present help, though this remains essentially linked with his perseverance in and through trials, suffering, and death on the way to his present heavenly position.

After Heb 2.17–18, the priestly theme takes something of a back seat until its reappearance from 4.14 onwards. Structural concerns are never far from Vanhoye's mind, and in Chapter 2, 'The Place and Meaning of Hebrews 5.1–10', he argues that Heb 5.1–10 stands at the end of a section, 3.1–5.10, which begins and ends with a consideration of Christ's priesthood; this instead of beginning a long section on priesthood through to 10.18 or 39, as many other commentators and scholars have argued. This structural clarification enables us to see that the concern in this section is not to contrast Christ's priesthood with the Levitical priesthood, as will be the case in 7.1–10.18, but rather to show the ways in which they are similar. Despite the apparently programmatic nature of its opening four verses, Heb 5.1–10 is not in itself sufficient to define the author's conception of priesthood, but only these similarities. In this it deals primarily with the priestly characteristic of solidarity with human beings ('merciful'; cf. 2.17; the other attribute of relationship to God, 'trustworthy', having been dealt with in 3.1–4.14). Vanhoye's structural conclusions have by no means carried the day, but he here draws attention to an important distinction between this first extended discussion of priesthood in Hebrews and the later, longer material of chapters 7 onwards.

As we move into that central priestly material within Hebrews, we come to the key phrase at 8.1–2, which announces the 'chief point of what we are

saying'. In 'The *teleiōsis* of Christ' (Chapter 3), the published version of his 1995 presidential address to the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, Vanhoye identifies this 'chief point' as Christ's τελείωσις or perfection (from 7.28). The latter verse picks up on 5.9 and announces the subject of the whole of the central section of the letter. Christ's τελείωσις is an active rather than static thing, and is equated with his sacrificial offering resulting in his access to God and session at his right hand. Heb 8.1–2 announces the beginning of a section extending to the end of chapter 9, split into two parts (8.3–9.10 and 9.11–28 dealing with the former tent and the new sanctuary, respectively), and in which we should expect to find the author's articulation of τελείωσις. The author clearly picks up on the priestly concept of τελείωσις in the Penta-teuch, but radically transforms it, and is bold enough to claim that perfection was not available under the Levitical priesthood. Two key factors in Hebrews' conception of τελείωσις are that it is *existential* (Hebrews 2 and 5), in that it involved Christ personally in passing through suffering and death, and that it is *relational*, in that it is concerned not only with relations with God but also with his people through the covenant (this also explains the otherwise surprising presence of covenant in Hebrews 8 and 9). Vanhoye continues to emphasize the cultic aspect of perfection in Hebrews, as he had in his 1980 book *Prêtres anciens, prêtre nouveau*,²¹ but his discussion here is more sophisticated in its attention to perfection's existential aspect.

Moving further into the cultic material in Hebrews, the passage in 9.11–14 is of substantial importance, and all the more so for Vanhoye, for whom it forms, structurally and thematically, the epicentre of the entire book. It is unsurprising, then, that a number of Vanhoye's studies, including the three that follow here, should all focus to a greater or lesser extent on these verses. These studies are also noteworthy for their dialogue with patristic sources. Chapter 4, "By the Greater and More Perfect Tent" examines the contested phrase in Heb 9.11–12, and argues that the 'tent' by which Christ entered the sanctuary is his own risen and glorified body. This identification with Jesus' risen body avoids the problem that the tent is 'not of this creation'; the interpretation moreover fits with other parts of the letter such as 10.19–21, and avoids the pitfalls of the various other interpretations that have been proposed: mythological, cosmological, ecclesial. It requires a careful distinction between the 'tent' and the 'sanctuary', and an instrumental reading of the preposition διὰ (without, however, entirely excluding the possibility of a local sense – or the ecclesial theme, in that God's people enter *through* Christ's body). Vanhoye further explores connections between this interpretation, Gospel traditions concerning Jesus' death, and early Christian readings.

²¹ Vanhoye, *Prêtres anciens, prêtre nouveau*, 188–91, 210, 237, 244; ET *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest*.

The next article, ‘Eternal Spirit and Sacrificial Fire’ (Chapter 5), traces the early interpretation of the phrase ‘through eternal spirit’ in Heb 9.14, noting how this was first understood to be the Holy Spirit *in contrast to* sacrificial fire but later seen as the Spirit *in parallel with* (and also greater than) the sacrificial fire of the old covenant sacrifices. To assess this interpretation Vanhoye turns to the LXX, specifically to 1 Esd 6.23, which contains a parallel expression ‘perpetual fire’, and therefore supports an interpretation of the Holy Spirit as the means by which Christ’s sacrifice ascended to God. One hurdle for this interpretation is the fact that the offering on Yom Kippur was not a burnt offering – although the victim’s carcass was burned, this was outside the camp and not as a sacrificial offering; this difficulty is circumvented when we appreciate that Hebrews draws on an overlapping complex of old covenant sacrifices including the whole burnt offering. Additionally, recognition that the perpetual fire of the altar was understood as God-given strengthens the association of the Spirit with that fire. We thus find an affirmation and clarification of an early tradition of interpretation, which accords the Holy Spirit an essential role in Jesus’ sacrifice, one that coheres with Hebrews’ emphasis on Jesus’ humanity and progress through suffering.

The last of these three studies that touch on the central paragraph of Heb 9.11–14, ‘Earthly Sanctuary and Heavenly Sanctuary’ (Chapter 6), ranges more widely and then reprises the argument of “‘By the Greater and More Perfect Tent’”. It begins with a word study of οἶκος (‘house’) in Hebrews, before moving onto the theme of sanctuary more widely. Vanhoye discerns in Heb 3.1–6 significant allusions to Nathan’s oracle to David concerning his household, as well as reference to Moses in Numbers 12; here the ‘house’ is both the sanctuary (the new, spiritual sanctuary built by Christ) and the people of God. Vanhoye moves quickly over Heb 3.11–4.11, concluding that ‘God’s rest’ is spiritual rather than spatial, and therefore not directly pertinent to the question in hand. His attention focuses primarily, and unsurprisingly, on God’s house in the form of sanctuary in the central part of the letter; structural observations limit the primary focus of enquiry to chapters 8–9, as the tabernacle is not explicitly mentioned in chapter 10. Vanhoye also discusses at length the difficulty of the forms *αγια* and *αγια αγιων* in 9.2–3, concluding that they should be read as feminine and thus adjectival in function, rather than as neuter and substantive, given that the neuter without the article is not used in this way to describe the holy place or the holy of holies. Vanhoye distinguishes the model Moses was shown on the mountain from the earthly sanctuary, which was itself a prefiguration of heaven itself, that is, the most holy place, God’s own dwelling. The lesser form of heavenly realities includes heavenly things purified by Christ’s sacrifice (9.23) and the fiery models shown to Moses (8.5). The sanctuary is distinct from the first tent, through which the high priest had to pass; this presses the question of what in the new covenant corresponds to this – what is it that Christ must pass

through? In answer to this Vanhoye revisits and expands on the four options he had dealt with in his earlier *Biblica* article, reaffirming his commitment to a christological interpretation of ‘the tent’, and interacting briefly with the reception of his original argument.

Chapter 7, ‘Historical Recollection and Theological Creativity’, is the final essay on a cultic theme and explores the interplay between historical events and the author of Hebrews’ theological innovation. It looks at the priestly cult and then, more briefly, at the covenant inauguration ceremony, and argues that Hebrews juxtaposes historical recollections of events from the Old Testament with the death of Jesus, and develops new theological insights by instigating a kind of two-way conversation between the two. In terms of sacrifice, there is a similarity of *ends* but difference of *means* between the old cult and Jesus’ death, and ultimately the concept of sacrifice is transformed into something which Christians inhabit through obedience to God and solidarity with fellow human beings. As for covenant inauguration, the author of Hebrews connects the (non-cultic) old covenant inauguration ceremony of Exodus 24 with the (non-cultic) new covenant of Jeremiah 31 *via* the death of Jesus under its sacrificial construal – an unexpected but not unfruitful move.

Part Two: Thematic Studies

The second grouping of studies within this volume opens up a number of themes in connection with Hebrews. The first two (law and new covenant) emerge more directly from the text’s concerns, whereas the latter pair are prompted by external interests which are then explored through a reading of Hebrews. The second two pieces quite naturally contain secondary and partially submerged conversations with documents produced by Pope John Paul II.

Chapter 8, ‘The Law in the Letter to the Hebrews’, forms an appropriate bridge piece from the cultic themes of the previous section, given the interrelated – indeed, inextricable – nature of the two themes in Hebrews. Vanhoye notes the relative lack of scholarly attention to the theme of law, and at the same time the importance of Hebrews, which mentions law more frequently than any other New Testament document apart from Romans and Galatians. Where Hebrews speaks positively of the similarities between the old and new priesthoods, it does not mention the law, suggesting that there is little continuity in its understanding of law under the two covenants. Vanhoye finds in Hebrews a distinction between the law (of Moses) and God’s law, with the former spoken of only negatively and the latter written on hearts but not codifiable. He also refuses the distinction between ceremonial and moral law: the law is all of one piece. Ultimately, Hebrews contains a radical critique of the law, which reaches its peak in chapter 10, and holds this in tension with the

persisting revelatory and prefigurative value of the Old Testament and the direct inscribing of 'God's laws' on the hearts of believers.

The next essay, 'The God of the New Covenant' (Chapter 9), is an earlier piece with several resonances with the preceding study on law. It proceeds by means of a word study of θεός in Hebrews, focussing in particular on the question of knowledge of God. Mention of God begins and ends the letter; the noun carries the article but no further qualification, indicating God's pre-eminence. He is a speaking God, one who communicates and reveals himself through mediation. Through a careful reticence, the author of Hebrews avoids associating God too closely with the old covenant, yet at the same time maintains the prophetic role of the Old Testament as God's word to his people; this leads us to understand that God is primarily, for Hebrews, the God of the present, new covenant. The coming of the new covenant reveals God as the one who transforms humanity in Christ. This revelation imparts not conceptual knowledge but existential knowledge, creating a new people who experience relationships and life in communion with one another and with God.

The chapter entitled 'Universal Salvation through Christ and the Validity of the Old Covenant' tackles the sensitive topic of contemporary relations between Jews and Christians, opening with a line from John Paul II to focus the discussion: 'the old covenant, which God has never revoked'. To explore the extent to which this phrase reflects the New Testament's perspective, Vanhoye offers a reading of Pauline texts and Hebrews. The Letter to the Romans and 2 Corinthians suggest that the Old Testament has continuing validity as a prophetic text, but the institutions of the old covenant are no longer in force; indeed, the Old Testament in its prophetic mode proclaims the end of the institutions it describes. Turning to Galatians, the promise given to Abraham was unconditional and has indeed never been revoked. Yet Galatians understands Abraham's offspring to be Christ, and therefore the only way to belong to the covenant authentically is by belonging to Christ. Moreover, the way to a covenant relationship with God is through justification by faith and not through the law given at Sinai. Neither Romans 9–11 nor Ephesians 2 explicitly rules out the possibility of a special way of salvation for the Jewish people, but the thrust of the argument in both cases suggests there is only one way to salvation, open to all, through Christ. The final stopping point is Hebrews, which suggests that the Sinai covenant (unlike the covenant with Abraham) is conditional, and heading for total revocation via the abrogation of the cultic institutions. Hebrews is more radical than the Pauline texts in speaking of abrogation or abolition, but essentially confirms and reinforces their line on this question. Vanhoye ends on a brief suggestive note, wondering whether Hebrews 11 might leave open the possibility of authentic Jewish faith in God in the Christian era, but noting that the passage retains an essential role for Christ's priestly mediation.

The following thematic article, ‘Christ as Re-creator of Humanity and Restorer of Human Rights’ (Chapter 11) looks at the question of human rights through the lens of Hebrews, in partial dialogue with the papal encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*. Vanhoye argues from Psalm 8 that the rights of humanity are, in their origins, on the grandest scale, amounting to the right (with concomitant responsibility) to a glorious rule over all other created things. This right has never been fully exercised, however, due to human sin, and it is only in Christ that human mastery and thus human rights are re-established (Hebrews 2). This process takes place not through a glorious conquest or reassertion of mankind’s rightful place, but instead through the path of suffering and death. In this, Christ enters into full solidarity with human beings, renewing mankind from the inside as it were, and thus enabling humans with transformed hearts to enter the reality of the new covenant. In this light, Vanhoye interprets the new covenant privilege of *παρρησία* as both right of expression and right of movement into the presence of God. Christians enjoy the rights of that primeval glorious rule, generously offered to them by their brother Christ, and exercise those rights in their relationship with God and in their solidarity with one another and with all people.

Part Three: Exegetical Studies

The final grouping in this volume draws together a number of mostly shorter pieces on specific verses or passages in the Letter to the Hebrews. To describe these as ‘exegetical’ studies is not, it need hardly be said, to imply that the other pieces in this collection contain no exegesis; by this point it should be clear that Vanhoye’s approach is exegetical throughout, in the sense outlined above, incorporating the religious meaning of the text at the same time as employing all the tools of historical-critical and philological analysis. Here we see Vanhoye – in dialogue, variously, with the Old Testament, rabbinic texts, Church tradition, and other scholars – address specific interpretative knots, with interesting results.

The first piece, ‘The *οικουμένη* in the Letter to the Hebrews’ (Chapter 12), is a short note which argues, on the basis of LXX usage and internal consistency, that the occurrence of *οικουμένη* in Heb 1.6 refers to the eschatological world inaugurated at Christ’s exaltation, and not to the created world he entered at his incarnation.

On the grounds that Hebrews cites the Greek version of Psalm 95 (LXX 94), Chapter 13, ‘Long Journey or Imminent Access? The Biblical Context of Hebrews 3.7–4.11’, explores the Septuagintal background for the narrative account alluded to in the Psalm and in Hebrews’ interpretation of it. This indicates that, rather than a general allusion to widely dispersed references to Massah and Meribah, the background is Numbers 14 and the Israelite rebellion at Kadesh Barnea. This setting suggests that Hebrews envisages not a

long, meandering pilgrimage in the desert (as some scholars have held), but rather an imminent passage into the Promised Land, a reading confirmed by the absence of interest in the wilderness theme elsewhere in the letter.

The next essay, 'Hebrews 6.7–8 and the Rabbinic *Mashal*' (Chapter 14), is another short note. Here Vanhoye argues on the basis of rabbinic *meshalim* – specifically, 'specimens with two branches' – that the agricultural imagery in Heb 6.7–8 lays as much emphasis on the positive outcome (crop and blessing) as on the negative one (thorns and burning). This corrects the general impression that the image simply reinforces the warning that immediately precedes it; instead, it forms a fitting bridge between the warning of vv. 4–6 and the encouragement of v. 9 and following.

In Chapter 15, 'The Faith of Jesus?' (originally published in Italian, not French) Vanhoye examines the expression 'Jesus, Author and Perfecter of Faith' in Heb 12.2, and asks whether this suggests that Jesus is not merely the source or cause of faith but actually had faith in his earthly life. The definition of faith in Heb 11.1 sheds some light on the question but does not incorporate faith's relational aspect of trust in God, which can be discerned elsewhere in Hebrews. Because Jesus is more than a mere believer, in that he enjoys a direct and eternal relationship with God, and because Christians are urged to imitate his endurance and not his faith, we cannot say that Jesus possessed the theological virtue of faith. We can however affirm Jesus as 'pioneer of faith' in that in his human life he inhabited lower-order attributes associated with faith, in particular trust in God's salvation through his suffering and trials. Here, as in 'Universal Salvation' and 'Christ as Re-Creator of Mankind' above, we see Vanhoye bringing Catholic tradition into dialogue with close exegesis, not for the former to determine the latter, but for it to inform and in turn be elucidated by the reading of the text.

The final article in this collection, 'The Literary Question of Hebrews 13.1–6' (Chapter 16), responds to those scholars who see Hebrews 13 as a later addition, and also those who defend its originality yet in doing so concede its separateness from the rest of Hebrews. Vanhoye proceeds via a close exegetical reading of 13.1–6; this also fills a lacuna in Vanhoye's work on structure, which did not address this passage in detail. In Vanhoye's structural division of Hebrews as a whole, which he maintains and amplifies here, the final section of the letter begins at 12.14, and 13.1–6 is its centre; he observes structural similarities in the micro and macro composition that echo other parts of Hebrews. The first half of the article looks in detail at the verses in question, discerning a tripartite structure, with each part containing a core of two exhortations and a scriptural allusion or citation, with other variations. The vocabulary is no more or less similar to Paul or the rest of the New Testament than other sections of Hebrews, and together with thematic similarities suggests that this paragraph is from the same author and text. In the second part of the article the precise nature of the transition at 13.1 is discussed, and

attention is given to demonstrating the poverty of alleged similarities with Pauline letter endings. Vanhoye is in a significant minority in viewing 12.14 and not 13.1 as the major transition at the end of the letter, yet as he points out rather wryly in this piece such questions are not decided by majority vote; instead, he calls us afresh to the patient hard work of careful exegesis.

This is a fitting note on which to end this introduction, for Vanhoye would call our attention to that text for which he has such respect, the Letter to the Hebrews, not so much to agree with him in all points, as to read and re-read it carefully and come to our own, well-reasoned, structurally sound, and exegetically considered conclusions.

Part One

Priesthood and Sacrifice

Chapter 1

Christ as High Priest in Hebrews 2.17–18

[[449]] Following the concluding sentence in 2.16, the first part of the Letter to the Hebrews continues a little further: the author wishes to announce the developments that will follow. He does this in two sentences where we see, alongside themes already touched on, several new elements appear:

- 2.17 Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a high priest who is merciful and trustworthy in relation to God, in order to remove the sins of the people.
- 2.18 Because he himself suffered testing, he is able to help those who are being tested.

The first sentence expresses an obligation ('he had to'), defined as a function of the desired goals. A second sentence is added to it, which states the facts ('he suffered', 'he is able to help'). The reasons for this latter note are understandable. To close with a theoretical reflection would leave people in suspense. A positive observation about concrete facts forms a better ending.

The connection of these two verses with what comes before can be seen clearly. A logical link is expressed by the Greek adverb *hōthen* (literally, *whence* it follows that), which is dear to the author and never used by St Paul. The necessity of becoming like mankind is thus presented as resulting from Christ's mission, which was stated in 2.16: to care for Abraham's descendants.

[[450]] In the rest of the sentence, 'to be made like' recalls the wording of 2.14: 'sharing in the same things'; and the term 'brothers and sisters' is picked up from 2.11–12. Further on, 'he suffered' translates a Greek verb (*peponthen*) from the same root as the noun used in 2.9–10 to denote Christ's passion (*pathēma*). Finally, 'to help' can be linked with 'to free' (2.15). We see that there are numerous close connections.

a) Necessary Assimilation

The first statement, 'he had to', forms part of the development of the logic of 2.14: 'Since, therefore [...]'. The thought, however, becomes more explicit and even daring. This is the only place in the New Testament where the verb *opheilō* ('to owe, ought') is applied to Christ. This verb can be used of a

financial debt (Luke 7.41) or of a moral obligation (1 John 4.11). Clearly the second sense applies in this context.

With regard to Christ's passion the Gospels tend to speak of necessity rather than of obligation: '*it was necessary (edei)* for the Christ to suffer...' (Luke 24.26; cf. Mark 8.31; John 12.34). Yet they also evoke Christ's submission to the Father's will (Mark 14.36) and St John even speaks of a 'command' received from the Father (John 10.18; 14.31; 15.10), which implies the notion of obligation. Pauline texts which emphasize Christ's obedience (Rom 5.19; Phil 2.8) presuppose a similar view. The Letter to the Hebrews, let us note, will speak later on in terms similar to those of St Paul (Heb 5.8) and of the Gospels (Heb 10.9; cf. Luke 22.42; John 4.34; 6.38). Here the author does not dwell on the interpersonal relationship which defines obedience, but considers the objective situation from which obligation arises. In taking care of sinful human beings Christ had to fulfil the functions of high priest and, in order to do this, he had 'to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect'.

b) Total Assimilation

The Greek verb is in the passive: 'to be made like'; but it can take a reflexive sense: 'to make oneself like' (cf. Matt 6.8). The author clarifies that this assimilation is total: 'in every respect'. The preceding context (2.9–10, 14) and the following verse (2.18) show that he is particularly thinking of the acceptance of the painful aspects of human existence: trials, suffering, and death. This will be confirmed by the text of 4.15 where the same expression is linked to the verb 'to test': our high [[451]] priest was '*tested in every respect as we are*'. At that point a doctrinal clarification will be given: resemblance in everything does not include sin.

Among 'brothers and sisters' resemblance is natural and requires no obligation. To present it this way in Christ's case is to indicate again his unique position, already suggested by '*he is not ashamed*' in 2.11: fraternal association with mankind is not a basic fact for the Son of God, but rather the result of the mission he received. It is not through personal necessity that Christ faced suffering and death, but through voluntary acceptance of his destiny as saviour.

I. A New Concept

The novel item which attracts attention in this sentence is the introduction of the title 'high priest'. The obligation to 'become like' human beings is directly related to priesthood. This marks a decisive step in the exposition: from this moment, it becomes clear that the letter's Christology is a priestly one.