

ALBERT VANHOYE

A Perfect Priest

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

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Albert Vanhoye

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Studies in the Letter to the Hebrews

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

Mohr Siebeck

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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

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‘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 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.

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