

24.13

Structure of Hebrews

Exposition and Exhortation

The book of Hebrews alternates between sections expounding Christian doctrine and sections exhorting the readers to persevere in faith and act in ways appropriate to their confession:

1:1–14	exposition	2:1–4	exhortation
2:5–3:6	exposition	3:7–4:16	exhortation
5:1–10	exposition	5:11–6:20	exhortation
7:1–10:18	exposition	10:19–13:25	exhortation

Concentric Circles?

Albert Vanhoye has proposed that the book of Hebrews is organized in a chiasmic pattern of concentric circles: the outer material at the beginning and end of the book deals with eschatological concerns (the revelation of Christ and culmination of God’s plan in the last days); an inner circle deals with ecclesiological concerns (living faithfully for Christ as a community in the present world); and the center of the book presents its principal theme, an exposition on sacrifice.

A	eschatology	the name superior to the angels (1:5–2:18)
B	ecclesiology	Jesus faithful and compassionate (3:1–5:10)
C	sacrifice	the central exposition (5:11–10:39)
B’	ecclesiology	faith and endurance (11:1–12:13)
A’	eschatology	the peaceful fruit of justice (12:14–13:19)

See Albert Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SubB
12 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1989).