

EDITORIAL

“What do you look for in an article?” is a question I am often asked. Considering that the present issue includes the first revision of the *JETS Instructions for Contributors* in eleven years, this may be a good occasion to answer this question. By way of illustration, I am including examples from the previous two years of *JETS*, my first two years as editor.

Each article accepted for publication should meet at least three or four basic criteria. The first—and most important—thing I look for in a submission is *quality scholarship*. Does the author consult all of the relevant literature on the subject, including commentaries, monographs, and recent journal articles? (M. Kruger’s piece in *JETS* 42/2 comes to mind.) Or are most (or all) bibliographic items at least ten or fifteen years old? Moreover, mere citation of an item is not enough; an article must engage recent scholarship in a substantive rather than merely cursory manner.

Quality scholarship presents the information with even-handedness and fairness. Are only those sources quoted that agree with the author’s viewpoint? Or are possible objections and alternative positions dealt with as well? If someone wants to advocate a given viewpoint without substantively engaging opposing viewpoints, I generally recommend a more popular and less academic publication or a journal committed to a certain perspective.

Finally, quality scholarship reflects research in primary as well as secondary sources. (For examples of *ad fontes*, see Baugh on Cult Prostitution in *JETS* 42/3, and R. Richards on Silvanus and P. Jones on Androgyny, both in *JETS* 43/3.) Also, are the proper editions used that are standards in the field?

The necessity of quality scholarship is independent of the specific subject of a given article. Evangelical theological writing ought to be able to hold its own in comparison with more critical journals, though it will differ as to its view of Scripture and its overall theological framework. One of the functions of a leading evangelical journal such as *JETS* is to uphold a standard of excellence in academic theological scholarship.

The second important criterion is that of *maturity of perspective*. A paper written by someone who is just beginning to explore a given issue generally pales in comparison to one by someone who has done work in an area for a number of years. It is no coincidence that many of the excellent submissions that cross my desk are written by scholars who have been known for their significant contributions to scholarship in the evangelical world for years. Having said this, it is also true that some of the very best articles I receive are from doctoral students who are engaging in significant research on a given subject.

Third, does the article make a *significant contribution to scholarship*? Or is it merely restating traditional points of view? As *JETS* editor, I want to help advance scholarship beyond what is already known or accepted. Is there

a new insight generated, or at least are the pieces put together differently than has previously been done? An article that merely reiterates a position previously articulated in the pages of our journal—or elsewhere—adds little to the debate. Especially when fresh pieces of scholarship are available, the editorial choice is clear: choose the latter, reject the former.

To be sure, genuine contributions to scholarship differ from trendiness. I am not advocating originality as an end in itself. This is a conservative journal, and there is no bias against those who argue conservative positions. Yet even conservative scholarship ought not merely to restate known facts but seek to advance our knowledge on a given subject. Of course, an article may be conventional in analysis but raise a new point in application. Certainly, there should be articles in *JETS* that explore the implications of conservative scholarship in today's world (see esp. Campbell and Grenz in *JETS* 43/2 and D. Allen in *JETS* 43/3).

Fourth, I like the occasional article that *breaks the mold*. “Calvin and the Beasts” in *JETS* 42/1, “The Pastoral Predicament of Vavasor Powell” in *JETS* 43/3, and Dennison on Dutch Neo-Calvinism in *JETS* 42/2 are but a few recent examples.

In light of the purpose statement of our society—“to foster conservative *Biblical* scholarship . . . in the general field of the *theological* disciplines as centered in the *Scriptures*”—there is always a need for solid Biblical studies and the exploration of major doctrines in Scripture. This type of piece is epitomized by Merrill on “Remembering” (*JETS* 43/1) and Patterson on the OT archetype of the “trickster” (*JETS* 42/3) in the Biblical area; and M. Saucy's essay in *JETS* 43/2 in the theological arena. One of the most fascinating aspects that sets *JETS* apart from most other academic journals is the great variety of subjects covered in its pages, reaching from Biblical studies over theology and philosophy to church history and the occasional article in preaching, missions, or education. This range is indicative of the broad interests of our members and makes our journal truly unique.

Beyond these basic criteria, there are certain stylistic and technical expectations. The following must be strictly adhered to:

1. Always avoid the apt art of alliteration.
2. Avoid clichés like the plague.
3. Never, ever generalize.
4. Do not be redundant or use more words than necessary.
5. One-word sentences? Eliminate.
6. Don't use contractions.
7. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
8. Foreign words are usually not *apropos*.
9. The passive voice is to be avoided.
10. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.

Above all, contributors must understand the importance of proper punctuation, which is illustrated by the following two “portraits.”

Dear John: I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You

have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy—will you let me be yours? Gloria

Dear John: I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men, I yearn. For you, I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart, I can be forever happy. Will you let me be? Yours, Gloria.

On a more serious note, with the publication of our updated *Instructions* in the present issue (with plans to post them on our website, <http://etsjets.org>, in the near future), the expectation will be even more firm that contributors conform their submission to the *Instructions* prior to submitting an article. This expectation includes spell-checking, appropriate headings, proper abbreviations for ancient literature and modern scholarly publications, and accurate citation of bibliographic references.

While there is no formal page limit, submissions of excessive length are less likely to be accepted. By all means, observe the stipulation at the beginning of the *Instructions*, "A MS should be submitted . . . in what the author intends as its final form." Authors should not submit an article knowingly in an unfinished condition, hoping that feedback will enable them to resubmit the essay.

Clearly, this list is not exhaustive. Nor will everyone necessarily agree with the above-stated guidelines. Nevertheless, in order to run a journal, it is essential to have certain editorial in-house criteria, and for the sake of greater transparency and clarity of expectation, it seemed like a good idea to share some of these criteria openly. Of course, every submission will still need to be treated on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, as many of us have learned, rejection at one journal is not the end of the world. Fortunately, there are many other alternative avenues of publication once a submission has been turned down. Not infrequently I have seen articles I have declined to accept published in another journal, and I have rejoiced in this. Every journal has a right to set its own distinctives, and part of the challenge for authors is to determine which journal is the most suitable for a given piece. Nor does having one's article rejected necessarily mean there is anything "wrong" with it. It may simply be that there were a sufficient number of more pertinent pieces available. After all, space is limited, and only a certain number of articles can be published in *JETS* every year.

No one can please everyone all the time (or even most people most of the time). Editors have to learn sooner or later that they can only do their best and hope and pray that most of the articles they accept turn out to be competent and most of the articles they turn down were better not published in their journals. Few (if any) of us claim infallibility. In light of these comments, may I wish all of you a happy and productive new millennium and a fresh beginning as you write hopefully many new articles and submit your very best to *JETS*.