

## THE MIDDLE YEARS OF THE *JOURNAL OF THE EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY*

RONALD YOUNGBLOOD\*

Fellow ETS members and friends, my wife Carolyn and I want to welcome you to San Diego, “America’s Finest City” (at least according to the San Diego Chamber of Commerce). We’re glad you’re visiting us this month rather than last month. As a local columnist recently stated, “There’s just one little thing that the Chamber of Commerce seems to have left out of the brochure: It turns out that America’s Finest City is also America’s most flammable.”<sup>1</sup> Despite the dangers implied in such an assessment, Carolyn and I decided to move here from Wheaton, Illinois, in 1982, exactly 25 years ago. Wheaton College’s Alan Johnson, whose excellent review of the earliest years of *BETS* and *JETS* you have just heard, was ETS president in 1982. Our presidents used to tell jokes back in those days, and Alan’s were some of the best. Since I’m not noted for having a sense of humor, my remarks thus far are the most hilarious you will hear from me tonight. But I digress.

I hold in my hand a copy of Volume 28, Number 5, *JETS* 1985. It’s the silver anniversary index issue, and it was therefore the fifth issue published that year. You may well ask, however, “Why 1985? Why not 1982?” Please. Have you so soon forgotten how often my irrational insistence on letter-perfect final page proofs caused *JETS* to be published in something other than “in a timely manner”? Indeed, one of our members used to refer to our *Journal* as *PROPELLERS* rather than as *JETS*, and with some justification—although I’m not sure what *P-R-O-P-E-L-L-E-R-S* would have been an acronym of. But in the case of the index issue date I can probably blame its author, John Wiseman, who compiled it under my direction as his Master of Theology thesis when he was my student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1982. In addition to five article indexes, three book-review indexes, and a Scripture index, Wiseman included three tables covering the years 1949–82: membership statistics, presidents, and meeting locations and themes. An especially valuable feature is Wiseman’s Introduction, which provides a fine 20-page summary of the history of our Society from its inception through 1982. I’ve already recommended to Andreas Köstenberger

\* Ronald Youngblood is emeritus professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Bethel Seminary San Diego, 6116 Arosa Street, San Diego, CA 92115-3902. These remarks were originally delivered at the banquet of the 59th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society on November 15, 2007 in San Diego, CA.

<sup>1</sup> R. Navarrette Jr., *San Diego Union-Tribune*, October 26, 2007, B7.

that he consider inviting one of his graduate students at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary to compile a golden anniversary *JETS* index issue. If that student begins immediately, it will be available in the year 2010.

For reasons that still boggle my mind, the ETS Executive Committee appointed me to become the new editor of *JETS* as of January 1, 1976, for a term of three years. Since mathematics has never been the Committee's strong suit, three years stretched into 23 before any of us realized what was happening. By the time of my retirement and resignation as *JETS* editor effective December 31, 1998, I had gathered, organized, copy-edited and twice proofread 92 paperback books—92 issues of *JETS*—for a grand total of 12,136 pages of consummately exciting reading material that now monopolizes 33 inches of shelf space in my study. But all of this would have been impossible without the support and encouragement of the Executive Committee and their Secretary-Treasurers—Vernon Grounds, Sam Kistemaker, and Jim Borland—as well as 23 presidents and a host of Editorial Committee members and book review editors too numerous to name. One of those editors, however, deserves special mention. Michael Bauman, theology book review editor during the last twelve years of my tenure, provided an invaluable service by producing a *JETS* style manual that served as a quick reference guide to matters of capitalization, punctuation, etc. And it goes without saying that ultimately, of course, without the hundreds of essays and reviews written by many of you and your predecessors not a single issue would have seen the light of day. Humanly speaking, you are the real heroes of whatever success *JETS* enjoyed during that 23-year period.

What is the task of an editor? Early on, my longtime friend and colleague, Ken Barker, reminded me that an editor's basic task is to make an author look good. And although good content in an unedited essay trumps bad form every time, from the outset I promised to do my best to choose superior-content articles and then keep grammatical mistakes and typographical errors in the finished product to the barest minimum. On one occasion when I had failed to do that, Bob Gundry, in his gracious and soft-spoken way, pointed out to me two typos that I had allowed to slip through in an article of his I had already published. I was thereby reminded that once an article or book review appears in a journal, its flaws remain there for all time to come. And so, properly chastised, I immediately instituted first and final page-proofing of every subsequent issue. I should have learned that lesson long ago, by the way, since in a 1964 volume entitled *The Text of the New Testament* Bruce Metzger mentions a 16th-century edition of a Greek NT whose text is "curiously electric."<sup>2</sup> Now a Greek text can be shocking, of course—but I assumed from the context that Metzger's manuscript had intended "eclectic," so with some trepidation I asked him if that was indeed so. Crestfallen, he thanked me profusely—especially since, as it turned out, he had

<sup>2</sup> B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) 103.

stated in his Preface that he was “indebted to the readers of the [Oxford University] Press for their customary care and painstaking vigilance in the reading of the proofs.”<sup>3</sup>

Another decision of mine was to institute consistent transliteration of all Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words. It was based on the *JBL* system that editor Joseph Fitzmyer kindly authorized as just one part of the invaluable *JBL* “Instructions for Contributors” that made its earliest appearance in *JETS* 20/1.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately I also used Hebrew and Greek fonts whenever any of our authors preferred to use them instead of transliteration.

As the number of pages in each issue ratcheted upward at various times every few years, it became possible to increase the number of articles per issue. My self-imposed ideal was to publish at least two OT articles, two NT articles, two theology articles, and two history/other articles in each issue, although—for various reasons—that didn’t always occur. Many articles were deliberately solicited; many others were not. This mix enabled us to feature well-known and lesser-known authors and introduced a veritable Who’s Who of evangelical scholars to our readership. Some of our most stellar authors I had already known as my seminary professors (Carl Henry, William Sanford LaSor, Harold Lindsell, *et al.*); others had been my teaching colleagues at various institutions (Don Carson, Millard Erickson, Wayne Grudem, Dave Howard, Walt Kaiser, Tom McComiskey, Grant Osborne, John Piper, Bob Rakestraw, Glen Scorgie, Julius Scott, Bob Stein, Mark Strauss, *et al.*); still others I had worked with on various projects and committees (Bob Alden, Ken Barker, Laird Harris, R. K. Harrison, Meredith Kline, Moisés Silva, Elmer Smick, Bruce Waltke, Marv Wilson, Sherwood Wirt, *et al.*) Of course, editing a journal always has its special perks: I was able to sneak in an article or two written by myself now and then. And on one occasion, shameless nepotism also made its appearance: *JETS* 21/3 includes a fine article by Carolyn Johnson Youngblood.<sup>5</sup>

Needless to say, adherence to the ETS purpose and doctrinal basis was always our benchmark, and the silver anniversary issue (*JETS* 25/4) included the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics<sup>6</sup> as well as 12 articles celebrating the inspiration, inerrancy, unity, harmony, consistency, and eternal relevance of Holy Scripture. (The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy had already been published in *JETS* 21/4.<sup>7</sup>) Our doctrinal basis also prompted me, with the concurrence of our Executive Committee, to compile and edit a volume entitled *Evangelicals and Inerrancy*, published by Thomas Nelson in 1984. It included 23 chapters (a prescient number, as it turned out) reprinted from the Society’s previously published papers and journals from 1954 to 1979, beginning with ETS charter member Roger Nicole’s classic essay on

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vi.

<sup>4</sup> *JETS* 20/1 (March 1977) 57–72.

<sup>5</sup> C. J. Youngblood, “The *New International Version* Translation Project: Its Conception and Implementation,” *JETS* 21/3 (September 1978) 239–49.

<sup>6</sup> *JETS* 25/4 (December 1982) 397–401.

<sup>7</sup> *JETS* 21/4 (December 1978) 289–96.

how the authors of the NT quoted their OT counterparts and concluding with Stan Gundry's programmatic presidential address.

Once in a great while I decided to devote an entire issue to a unified theme. Because of the importance of the topic of women in ministry, *JETS* 30/1 was just such an issue. In an attempt to give equal time to both sides in the debate, I alternated articles that took the complementarian position with those of egalitarian persuasion. More recently I decided to check the etymology of those two terms and arrived at this remarkable conclusion: The key syllable in the word "complementarian" is "men," while the key syllable in "egalitarian" is "gal."

In the editing game, some things work and some do not. Every so often it's not a bad idea to encourage dialogue and debate by publishing a response to an article, perhaps even in the same issue. Such interchanges can be healthy—at least to a point. But when a response leads to a rejoinder followed by a surrejoinder, it may be time to call the operation to a halt and ask the combatants to agree to disagree, if that's possible. In my case, when eight brief articles in *JETS* 26/1 added up to one series of article/response/rejoinder/surrejoinder followed by another series of article/response/rejoinder/surrejoinder, the amount of uneasiness in our membership signaled to me that more harm than good was being accomplished. Ideally, an academic journal can be a welcome forum for discussing issues and airing differences, but ideal intention does not always match stark reality.

So, thank you again for putting up with me for those 23 years. Editing *JETS* expanded my theological horizons, introduced me to many wonderful scholars and their theories, and gave me the opportunity to work and pray with a godly assemblage of ETS officers, editors, and committee members. Without a doubt it remains to this day one of the highlights of my professional career, which has included teaching, preaching, Bible translating, and other related endeavors—all of them *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*. Andreas, you have perhaps already experienced all of this and more—excepting only, of course, the longevity. If you have not, it is my prayer that you most assuredly will.