CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL

Writer's Guidelines

Updated Nov. 2026

For almost 50 years, CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL has been a magazine and a publication of the Christian Research Institute (CRI). The JOURNAL specializes in in-depth research of new religious movements, aberrant Christian movements and teachings, and issues affecting Christian apologetics, both evidence for faith and objections to it, emerging from sources as diverse as biblical and historical studies, science, philosophy, and popular culture. Currently, the CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL is a free, online publication.

The JOURNAL aims to equip Christians to discern errors in doctrine, biblical interpretation, and reasoning; to evangelize people of other faiths and belief systems; and to present a strong defense of Christian beliefs and ethics. As its statement of purpose affirms, "the JOURNAL strives to be at once scholarly and readable, uncompromising and charitable; offering analyses and critiques that are biblically, rationally, and factually sound."

Due to the specific areas and scholarly nature of our focus, we do not accept for publication poems, fiction, personal testimonies (except when they have very specific apologetic applications), or articles on Scripture passages unrelated to our focus areas.

Unsolicited manuscripts and article queries are accepted (but are rarely published). All unsolicited manuscripts need to be submitted via e-mail to response@equip.org.

Almost nothing can better prepare you to write for the CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL than familiarity with the JOURNAL itself. If you are not a regular reader of the JOURNAL, you should read articles (that we publish weekly online at https://www.equip.org/category/articles/) that correspond to the type of article you wish to write (e.g., feature articles, *Postmodern Realities*, *Practical Hermeneutics*, *Effective Evangelism*, *Viewpoint*, and book/film/television reviews. Many thousands of sample articles are on our website equip.org. In reading these articles, please note especially the vocabulary/tone, level of scholarship, and mechanics that are employed.

Articles should reflect a command of the subject at hand, including its history, the key personalities/teachers involved, the beliefs and/or practices surrounding a theological controversy, and the criticisms that have been made concerning the subject. This requires familiarity with relevant primary source materials, secular treatments, and Christian critiques, and it will often require direct interaction with the people involved. You as the author should be confident that you have not missed some critical point relative to the subject and should strive to make an original contribution, not just repeat what others have already said.

AUDIENCE

We aim to reach the thoughtful and inquisitive layperson and also to be of service to the theological and academic community. Our readership is intellectually comparable to that of *First Things*, but we generally offer treatment of issues within our focus on

apologetics and discernment. And, as a research publication, all quotations and assertions that might in any way be disputed, or not properly assumed to be public knowledge, are footnoted. Please remember that although our audience includes academics and specialists, it mainly consists of concerned laypersons.

QUALITY OF RESEARCH

- Use a variety of media (e.g., books, journals, websites) from a variety of sources (organizations, groups, authors) and viewpoints (Christian as well as non-Christian, where appropriate). For example, when researching possible legislation from a Christian perspective, do not consult resources only from the Family Research Council or Focus on the Family. If there is a discrepancy between Christian and secular sources, investigate the reasons for the discrepancy and address them in the article, bearing in mind that Christians as well as non-Christians have biases and can employ faulty research methods.

- Use only primary and original sources, except in rare cases where the use of other sources is unavoidable. Quote sources directly; minimize the use of quotations from original authors "as quoted in" the works of other authors whenever the primary sources are obtainable. JOURNAL editors would lean toward rejecting an article based on overuse of secondary sources since it brings into question the author's research methods, authority, and ability to address the issue at hand.

- Make sure all of your references are current (within the last five years, except for historical sources). When dealing with scientific or cultural data, we will not publish any references to sources that date back more than five years. Using references that are as up-to-the-minute as possible helps your article carry more weight and relevance for our readership.

- Your sources should have current references as well. If you must use a secondary source, even if it is less than five years old, the earlier primary source that you are citing from within it should be no more than a year or so older.

VOCABULARY/TONE

The JOURNAL is a scholarly publication—its articles are longer, well-documented, and at times use technical terms that may challenge lay readers. However, because lay readers are our primary audience, please avoid assuming prior knowledge of technical material. Aim to make your article as accessible and engaging as possible. To that end, please avoid submitting a straight academic paper, which can feel dry or daunting. The guidelines below will help improve readability.

- Avoid dry, merely descriptive article titles such as "An Evaluation of Smith's Arguments."

- Please use technical terms only when necessary to the development of an article, and supply definitions for all such words the first time they appear in each article. If more than six terms require definition in your article, we request that you prepare a glossary. Glossary terms should be in alphabetical order, boldfaced, and followed by a colon (e.g., an **adult survivor of SRA:** An adult presumed to have survived and escaped from the control and abuse of a satanic

cult...). Capitalize glossary terms only if they are normally capitalized in text.

- Use Greek, Hebrew, and other foreign languages, where absolutely necessary, with the same discretion (italicized and transliterated when applicable). Make the English translation of each word clear.

- We prefer the use of the singular first person ("I," "me") over the formal "this writer," and especially discourage the use of the plural first person unless you are clearly speaking on behalf of a collective entity. On the other hand, we discourage frequent use of the second person pronoun "you" in JOURNAL articles, except in more informal columns such as Effective Evangelism and some Viewpoint articles.

- We desire that the JOURNAL be read by those whose positions we criticize. We, therefore, seek to avoid unnecessary offensiveness. Steer clear of the overuse of derogatory adjectives such as "cultic," "satanic," "heretical," and so forth. There certainly are occasions when it is appropriate and even necessary to use such terms. Still, you as an author should rely on facts and sound reasoning rather than emotive language to influence readers. We strive to "speak the truth in love," showing respect for the people whom we discuss, acknowledging whatever truth may be found in their overall teaching while exposing whatever error may underlie their beliefs and practices.

ORGANIZATION

- All evangelism, review, op-ed, and hermeneutics articles 1800 words must have run-in subheadings.

- Please avoid using generic subheadings such as "Introduction" or "Conclusion." Subheads should engage the selective reader and draw them into the article, not simply announce what comes next. Please see **SCRIPTURE REFERENCES** for instructions about including Bible verses in your conclusion.

- Feature-length articles should normally have multiple levels of subheadings (see **SUBHEADINGS** under **MECHANICS/STYLE**, for subheading levels and formatting).

- All department articles of 1800 or more words (e.g., those written for *Postmodern Realities*, *Effective Evangelism*, and *Viewpoint*) also should have subheadings, but only run-in subheads, which flow right into the text on the same line (see C-level and D-level subheadings under **SUBHEADINGS**).

ARTICLE LENGTH

- Web JOURNAL articles published at equip.org are a minimum of 1800 words (not including footnotes) and a maximum of 3800 words (not including footnotes) unless an editor or the author determines it should be longer than 3800 words.

- Word counts *do not include* footnotes, the 250-300 word synopsis, glossaries (if applicable), and a one- or two-sentence bio line. Online articles are a minimum of 1800 words (for departments) and can be up to 12,000 words, including

footnotes. There is a lot of leeway for going over your assigned word count since our articles are published online.

SYNOPSES

- Prepare a 250–300-word synopsis (i.e., abstract) for each feature article assigned at 3,500 words or more. Please pay particular attention to the following rule, as it is one authors often fail to follow even after reading these guidelines: the synopsis should communicate not merely the subject and direction of the article but also its substantive conclusions. It should not merely describe what the article does (e.g., "This article addresses four Christian concerns about…") but should summarize the main facts, arguments, and conclusions presented in the article (e.g., "There are four Christian concerns about…" — and go on to identify those concerns and the conclusions reached). It should summarize not what the article does but rather what it says. It should present the gist of the article for those who want to grasp it at a glance — in other words, give spoilers.

- Do not introduce material in a synopsis that is not already presented in the article itself. Do not include citation numbers or references to notes in a synopsis; reserve such documentation for the article text.

BIBLE VERSIONS

- Always indicate which version of the Bible you are using in your article.

- If you use the same Bible version throughout your article, please insert a footnote after the first Bible reference as follows: "All Bible quotations are from the New International Version [or whatever version]."

- If one version is predominantly used but others are also cited, in the footnote please state, "All Bible quotations are from [name the version you are using] unless otherwise noted," and then note the exceptions parenthetically in the text.

- When an article uses multiple Bible versions, indicate the abbreviation for the version used for a particular verse in parentheses immediately after the verse (according to the specifications listed in the **SCRIPTURE REFERENCES** section under **MECHANICS/STYLE**).

BYLINES, BIOLINES

- For feature articles, place your byline (e.g., "by Jane Doe") directly under the article title.

- For all other articles, place your name at the end, italicized, and preceded by an em dash (e.g., "— *Jane Doe*"). (Mac: command/option/hyphen; PC: alt/control/minus sign on the number keypad. Note: two hyphens [--] function as an em dash when dash commands do not work.)

- Do not affix personal titles ("Dr.," "Rev.," etc.) or educational degrees to your name. You may include such information in your short end-of-article biography (bioline).

- At the end of the article, include a short one- or two-sentence biography (bioline) on a separate line after the boldfaced byline with relevant personal background information (e.g., degrees, publications, positions, affiliations and their locations) at the end of the article. Do not include any such personal information in the article text.

SPECIFIC TYPES OF ARTICLES

Reviews (Books, Films, Television Series)

- Please do not merely summarize the contents of the book or plot of the film/TV series. We are looking to you to evaluate it. Of course, some summary is needed so readers know what it's about, but please refrain from statements such as, "Chapter 1 covers... Chapter 2 covers...."

- Book reviews generally have one of the following two purposes: (1) to assess a book's value in a Christian's library or (2) to provide an apologetic response to a work that attacks or undermines Christian orthodoxy.

- A good review answers several questions about the author as well as the book: What are the author's credentials? What is the author's viewpoint or worldview? What is the author's main argument? Does the author succeed in defending that argument? Are the author's facts credible? Who agrees or disagrees with the author's argument? Who is the author writing to, laypersons or scholars, youth or adults, or people of a particular faith or worldview? What is his relationship to, or position on, orthodox Christianity? How is the material presented — in a popular or scholarly format? What is the reading level? Does it contain a helpful index or glossary? Is it intended as a lasting reference work or is it something that will become dated? Why is the book important? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Were there any points that the author missed or perhaps could have covered better?

- All reviews, whether critical or complimentary, should strive to be fair by acknowledging the strengths as well as the shortcomings of a book, film, TV series, theological conference, etc. A review that is either totally complimentary or totally critical is suspect.

- Always give reviews and summary critiques creative article titles; do not simply use the title(s) of the work(s) being reviewed.

- Above your centered, original article title, include the publication information on the work you are reviewing. Place such information flush with the left margin:

    1. the book title (boldfaced) on the first line,
    2. the author's name on the second line,
    3. and, in parentheses, the publisher and date on the third line.

- All of the preceding points apply to film and TV series reviews as well. In place of the author's name, supply the director's name, and in place of the publisher, supply the studio or production company.

- Generally, we only review books published within two years of the publication. However, older books that become current cultural sensations are an exception to this requirement.

Practical Hermeneutics **(PH)** is a column that was conceived to illustrate and teach a different hermeneutic principle each issue by looking at how a particular group or teacher misreads a Bible passage, explaining which hermeneutic principle is being violated, and showing how the passage should be interpreted. *It has proven easy for writers to miss the point of what we're looking for in PH submissions,* and so the format of the column will be described here in greater detail:

1. An influential but erroneous interpretation of Scripture is introduced at the beginning that the reader may well be familiar with and would appreciate having an answer to — one that the cults, the occult, atheism, aberrant Christianity, liberal Christianity, or some other form of errant teaching use.

2. The hermeneutical error behind that teaching is identified and analyzed.

3. The positive hermeneutical principle on the other side of that error is therefore taught in a practical way; thus, not only does the reader have an answer to that errant interpretation but also a better grasp on sound hermeneutics that he or she can apply to other Scripture passages and erroneous teachings as well.

- There is plenty of flexibility within this format for dealing with a wide spectrum of topics across Scripture, theology, and practical Christian living.

Viewpoint addresses relevant contemporary issues in discernment and apologetics from a particular perspective that is usually not shared by all Christians, with the intended result that Christian thinking on that issue will be stimulated and enhanced (whether or not readers end up agreeing with the author).

Postmodern Realities is written primarily (but not exclusively) by younger authors (born in 1982—2004). All authors writing for this column address relevant issues for the Gen Z and Gen Alpha Generations. Authors address (primarily but not exclusively) members of these generations regarding Christian apologetics and theology and Christian living and spiritual formation issues (both theological and cultural), as well as pop culture trends (including but not limited to film and television, books and literature, video gaming, music, sports, geek culture, entertainment, social media, fandom, wellness, influencers, and technology etc.).

Effective Evangelism **(EE)** is, as its title suggests, a practical advice column on

how to reach people of other faiths and of no faith with the gospel. Authors with experience witnessing to adherents of a particular non-Christian or unorthodox belief system or group share their knowledge and wisdom on approaches to breaking through the barriers that Christians commonly encounter with that group. They may share general tips on how to reach these people, explore a particular evangelistic tactic that has proven effective, or focus on how to overcome a particular challenge that often comes up with them.

MECHANICS/STYLE

The JOURNAL generally follows the *Chicago Manual of Style*. This manual is a worthwhile investment for any writer and would answer most questions that these guidelines do not address.

SUBHEADINGS

Subheading levels are as follows:

- **A**-level (major) subheadings should be entirely capitalized, centered, and boldfaced.
- **B**-level subheadings (divisions under the major subheadings) should also be centered and boldfaced, but lowercased, except where it is proper to capitalize in titles (e.g., nouns, pronouns, adverbs, and adjectives; but not articles, conjunctions, and prepositions).
- **C**-level subheadings are boldfaced run-in sideheads, set within the text at the beginning of a paragraph, capitalized in the same way as B-level subheads, and followed by a period.
- **D**-level subheadings are also run-in sideheads that end in a period and flow right into the beginning of a paragraph, but they are initial cap only, italic, and lightface. Use sparingly.

● Please add one line space before all subheadings, no line space after. ● Do not indent the first paragraph after a subheading, including run-in sideheads.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- When noting the use of a specific Bible version, place its abbreviation in parentheses immediately after the verse **(**either alone, if the reference was spelled out earlier in the regular text, or following the abbreviated Scripture reference citation, if the reference is included in the parentheses).

- Place all Scripture reference citations in the text, never in the footnotes.

- Spell out Bible books in regular text; abbreviate them when mentioned in parentheses and footnotes.

- If not spelled out in the regular text, place Scripture reference citations in parentheses immediately after the verses quoted. Use the general abbreviations for Bible books recommended in the *Chicago Manual of Style* (10.45–10.51 in the 16th ed.).

- For indented quotes, place the Scripture reference after the closing period.

- In regular text, the parentheses for Scripture reference citations and Bible versions should appear after the closing quotation mark and before the period. Example: In Luke 2:32, Scripture says, ''Jesus wept" (NIV). OR "Jesus wept" (Luke 2:32 NIV). Note that the Bible translation abbreviation is in caps and there is no comma between the Bible passage citation and the translation citation.

- Please ensure all theological statements in your concluding remarks are supported with biblical references. You don't need to quote the verses—just include the citation in parentheses. As an apologetics magazine, we want every theological point grounded in Scripture.

LONG QUOTATIONS

- Quotes of more than eighty words should be indented in full, one-half inch from the left margin with no quotation marks. Do not indent them at the right margins; these are considered extracts, not strictly block quotations.

- The first sentence of the first quoted paragraph should have no extra indentation, but the first sentence of any subsequent quoted paragraphs should be indented one-half inch further, beyond the main indentation.

- Add an extra line space before and after all such indented quotes.

DOCUMENTATION

Standard References

- Use footnotes (rather than endnotes or parenthetical notes within the text) for all feature articles, unless the editor has approved a different arrangement. (Note: when published, your notes will be set at the end of the article, but we request that you set them in footnote style for greater ease in the editing process.)

- Use footnotes for all column articles that quote from four or more sources. For articles that have only three or fewer quotes, include documentation parenthetically within the text, giving all of the facts of publication.

- Footnotes should follow the current edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (see recent issues of the JOURNAL for examples). Pay specific attention to the following points:

    - Do not use the letter "p" before page numbers.
    - Do not include the states of major cities in the facts of publication. (Include states for lesser-known cities, using current two-letter postal abbreviations, e.g., CA, NY, WA.)

- When simply referring to or recommending a book (not quoting or citing it as supporting evidence), give only the author, title, and, in parentheses, the publisher and date.

- Use title case for all article titles cited, *including news articles*, which means you cannot simply cut and paste article titles from the Internet if they are not capitalized.

- Keep content footnotes short and display them as continuous text; never more than one single one-hundred-word paragraph in length.

- Try not to use more than one or two sources per reference. Rather than using one citation at the end of a paragraph or a sentence to cover multiple sources, place different citation numbers at different elements in the sentence, and separate the sources accordingly, giving each its own reference. For example, instead of using one citation as in, "Some Christian traditions view the bread and wine as Christ's real physical body, some as His real spiritual presence, and others as a memorial of His sacrifice," add citations and arrange their references to reflect each specific point: "Some Christian traditions view the bread and wine as Christ's real physical body, some as His real spiritual presence, and others as a memorial of His sacrifice."

WEB REFERENCES

- When citing a Web page or Web article, include as much of the following information as possible: the author's name, the title of the article and of the Web page (sometimes these are different), the name of the website; in the case of online publications, the publication name, the date published, and the specific URL for the portion of the site that you are quoting.

- Do not use the URL of a main website when citing a specific page within that site. For example, when referencing a JOURNAL article from the CRI website, do not simply cite http://www.equip.org; use the article's specific URL: http://www.equip.org/free/JAI001.htm.

- Use the official websites of organizations rather than sites where those groups are mentioned. If a site has information that you want to use regarding a particular group, double-check whether the group has an official site that may provide a more complete and reliable reference and URL.

- Do not cite the URL from a blog site (e.g., http://www.religionnewsblog.com) as the URL for an article. Please follow the link to the original article and cite that URL instead whenever possible. If the original article site requires a subscription to see the article, then just cite the URL of the home page of that site in place of the article URL (e.g., http://www.latimes.com).

- Do not underline Web addresses in articles or footnotes. And do not hyperlink web URLs in the body of the article. All URLs that are cited need to be done so in a footnote as detailed above.

- Carefully follow the links to the sites that you are quoting, even if you are not quoting any of the links themselves. Check that no Web page from which you quote is linked to any pornographic or otherwise offensive sites.

- Whenever a work is available in print and online, footnotes should include the

full bibliographical information for both. In other words, URLs are *in addition to*, not *in place of*, standard publishing information. Go back and research this information as needed (Amazon and the Library of Congress are helpful sites for determining print availability).

- Concerning the use of Wikipedia: it can be helpful in research but, by its own admission, it is not an authoritative source. The greatest value Wikipedia has in research is the links it provides to authoritative sources. Furthermore, although the quality of its articles varies greatly, some of them are quite helpful. If Wikipedia has an illuminating article on a topic, then that entry may be used as a supplemental reference with the date the article was viewed noted (because the entry may no longer be the same, but the "view history" page will reveal when changes were made and the discussions that surrounded them), but additional sources must be cited as well. If one of those sources is quoted, it should not be Wikipedia. Because it is not authoritative, there is no reason why the reader should trust its assertions of fact.

NUMBERS

- Spell out numbers between zero and one hundred and multiples of one hundred. Use numerals for numbers 101 and greater.

- Allow exceptions for consistency in format when comparing or citing numbers one hundred or less with numbers 101 or greater; that is, in these cases, use all words or all numerals (e.g., "5 out of 117").

- Use a comma after every thousandths place in numbers 1,000 and greater (e.g., 3,064, not 3064).

- Separate inclusive numbers (e.g., years, page numbers, Bible verses and chapters) by an en dash (–), which is between a hyphen (-) and an em dash (—) in length. This applies even when only two inclusive numbers are involved (e.g., Gen. 1:1–2; not Gen. 1:1, 2). If your computer does not have this function, use a hyphen.

ADDITIONAL SPECIFICATIONS

- If possible, please use an automatic paragraph formatting style that indents one-half inch for the first line of every paragraph instead of using a tab.

- Place only one character space after all periods and colons.

- Use a comma after the second-to-last item in a group or series (e.g., Tom, Dick, and Harry).

- Do not use spaces before, between, or after the dots in ellipses.

- Do insert spaces before and after em dashes (note: this is a change from our past practice).

- Set all main text and footnotes in twelve-point type (the main text of the article,

the synopsis, and any sidebars) using the Palatino Linotype font and double-space the text, including footnotes.

- When using pronouns for God, capitalize personal pronouns, such as He or His, but not other pronouns, such as who or whom.

- Please e-mail your scheduled or solicited article in Microsoft Word format to the managing editor at mcogdill@equip.org.

- **If requested**, or if your article contains biblical language fonts or detailed charts, e-mail a PDF of the article to our managing editor.

- All articles accepted for publication are assigned deadlines. Once your article is submitted, accepted, and any required revisions approved, it will go through the editing process. You can expect to receive your edited article back from us only if we need you to approve editorial changes.

ARTICLE FORMAT REQUIREMENTS

- All articles must be typed and entirely double-spaced (including footnotes and indented quotes—no portion of your manuscript should be single-spaced).

- All articles must be in final form. Please do not submit any drafts that are not final. If your article reads like a draft, the editors will return it to the writer to be worked on until it is in final form.

- Articles must be in 12pt, Palatino Linotype, and double-spaced. This format applies to footnotes as well.

- A short 1-2 sentence bio at the end of your article is required (see "Article Length" section above)

REMUNERATION POLICY

Contributors receive a flat-rate honorarium for completed and submitted articles payable within forty-five (45) days of the invoice, which is provided via email. The minimum word count is 1,800 words, excluding footnotes. Compensation is a flat fee of $200.00 per article unless a different rate is set for pieces exceeding 4,500 words; in no case will payment exceed $400.00 per article. All contributors who are U.S. citizens must submit a completed IRS Form W-9 before payment, regardless of compensation amount.

REMUNERATION POLICY FOR DECLINED SUBMISSIONS

If, following assignment and submission, the Publisher (Christian Research Institute) elects, in its sole discretion, not to publish the Article, the contributor shall be entitled to, and agrees to accept, a one-time payment of $100.00 as complete consideration for all

services rendered and rights granted. The Publisher shall have no obligation to provide any explanation or justification for its decision not to publish the Article.

We appreciate your interest in contributing to the online magazine, the CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL.