

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351411710>

"DO NOT GO BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN" (1 COR 4:6) AND ADVENTIST HERMENEUTICS

Chapter · May 2021

CITATIONS

0

READS

62

1 author:



[Davidson Razafiarivony](#)

Adventist University of Africa

14 PUBLICATIONS 3 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

CHAPTER VI

“DO NOT GO BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN” (1 COR 4:6) AND ADVENTIST HERMENEUTICS

Davidson Razafiarivony

Introduction

Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 4:6¹ has been rightly labelled an “enigmatic saying.”² Nonetheless, the phrase “do not beyond what is written” was a meaningful injunction for the Corinthians.³ When the referent of ἃ γέγραπται (“what is written”) is identified, implications and application for contemporary church can be derived from Paul’s injunction “do not go beyond what is written.”

Text and Translation

A Slogan with an Ellipsis

The phrase under consideration in the Greek New Testament, 4th rev. ed., reads: τὸ Μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται (lit. “to not . . . beyond what is written”). The construction of τὸ + Μὴ (note the capital M) reveals that the “following words are a kind of slogan.”⁴ It signals a quotation of something.⁵ The reader also notices an elliptical form of the phrase: the verb is absent, prompting some manuscripts to supply the verb *froneîn* at the end.⁶ Lenski explains:

What Paul intended the Corinthians to learn is marked by τὸ, and this article substantivizes μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται, “not beyond what has been written.”. . . An ellipsis occurs after μὴ. This is a common idiom in the Greek and one which must be completed when the thought is rendered into English: “not (to go or to think) beyond what has been written.”⁷

Interpretive Referent of “What Is Written”

Bible translators/commentators have adopted three main views as to what “it is written” refers:

- (1) ἃ γέγραπται refers to Scriptures (OT in general, or specific texts from the OT):

This conventional translation of 1 Corinthians 4:6, according to John Strugnell, does not vary much from that of the Revised Standard Version, “that you may learn by us to *live according to Scripture*.”⁸ The variant reading ὃ γέγραπται in various manuscripts (D F G L, majority of minuscules, sy) in the NA²⁸, instead of ἃ γέγραπται, demonstrates that the copyists of these manuscripts may have had Paul referring to a particular scripture⁹ or the “Old Testament” as a unit.¹⁰ But the *Complete Jewish Bible* simply understands γέγραπται as Tanakh: “Now in what I have said here, brothers, I have used myself and Apollos as examples to teach you not to go beyond what the *Tanakh* says, proudly taking the side of one leader against another.”¹¹ That γέγραπται refers to Scriptures, in plural, is found in the *New Living Translation*: “If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures, you won’t be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another.”

- (2) Reference to some written document, unspecified whether Scripture or non-Scripture:

The New English Bible which has been produced under the supervision of the joint committee on the New Testament

“Do Not Go Beyond What is Written”

Translation of the Bible, and published by Oxford University Press, reads, “learn to keep within the rules.” The *Jerusalem Bible* puts the phrase as parenthetical and considers it as a maxim, “Remember the maxim: ‘Keep to what is written.’” According to the *New English Bible with Apocrypha*, published by both Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press, the maxim was known to Paul’s hearers, “Learn to ‘keep within the rules’, as they say.”

- (3) As it will be seen in the brief history of interpretation below, a third view expresses that the phrase refers to some written, non-Scripture, unknown, and lost document.

Brief History of Interpretation

The Text Does Not Make Sense

John Strugnell notes that until 1884, the only reading for 1 Corinthians 4:6 was Ταῦτα δέ, ἀδελφοί, μετεσχημάτισα εἰς ἑμαυτὸν καὶ Ἀπολλῶν δι’ ὑμᾶς, ἵνα ἐν ἡμῖν μάθητε τὸ μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ [ὃ] γέγραπται, ἵνα μὴ εἷς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐνὸς φυσιοῦσθε κατὰ τοῦ ἐτέρου.¹² The view that the text does not make sense is clearly reflected in James Moffat’s translation of 1 Corinthians 4:6, as early as 1935, “Now I have applied what has been said above to myself and Apollos, to teach you . . . that you are not to be puffed up with rivalry over one teacher against another.”¹³ In the footnote, Moffat clarifies “the text and the meaning of the phrase between μάθητε and ἵνα μὴ are beyond recovery.”

Conjectural Emendation.¹⁴

Strugnell, following Baljon states that “the problem is not that such a maxim is unattested, nor that it would be inconceivable on the lips of Paul or his opponents—but that such

a reference to Scripture would be irrelevant *at this point* in Paul's argument."¹⁵ Thus he argues that the copyist has made a conjectural emendation.¹⁶

According to Strugnell, the archetype manuscript read ἵνα ἐν ἡμῖν μάθητε ἵνα εἷς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐνὸς φυσιοῦσθε κατὰ τοῦ ἐτέρου,¹⁷ "so that you may learn from us that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." In this respect, τὸ μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ [ὁ] γέγραπται would be a gloss to mean "'the μὴ is *beyond what was written*.' . . . In other words, the scribe in his gloss is saying that he has added a μὴ to a text that didn't have one." ¹⁸ Hanges further notes: "the copyist found a sentence for which the context clearly demanded a negative that had been unfortunately left out. Having inserted the necessary negative, the scribe noted that his insertion went beyond what was written in the text."¹⁹ More precisely, the phrase "represents a copyist's marginal note explaining a problem in the text that, in the course of successive copying, was mistakenly inserted into the text."²⁰

D. E. Garland's reaction comes to the point: "No evidence exists that this phrase was not original to the text."²¹ Few commentators have accepted the view that it was a gloss.²²

Making Sense of the Text As It Stands, But What Is the Referent?

Traditional view

For Chrysostom, the phrase refers to the words of Jesus for not being self-exalting. Chrysostom writes:

But what is the meaning of, not to be wise above what is written? It is written, Matthew 7:3 "Why do you behold the mote that is in your brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in your own eye?" and

“Do Not Go Beyond What is Written”

“Judge not, that you be not judged.” For if we are one and are mutually bound together, it behooves us not to rise up against one another. For he that humbles himself shall be exalted, says he. And Matthew 20:16-27; Mark 10:43, He that will be first of all, let him be the servant of all. These are the things which are written.”²³

In Hanges’ assessment, recent scholars, who do not support this view, base their case on the perception that Paul did not have knowledge of the logia of Jesus.²⁴ Then came the more common view for Paul to refer to Scriptures, as initially promoted by Origen, who understood ἡ γέγραπται as the Old Testament Scriptures.²⁵

Calvin allows for two options for interpreting 4:6: “The phrase, ‘beyond that which is written,’ can be explained in two ways, as referring either to what Paul has written, or to the scriptural proofs which he has adduced.”²⁶

The “referent” in modern scholarship

1. “What is written” refers to scriptural texts Paul just cited in the preceding passages, i.e. 1 Cor 1-3.²⁷
2. “What is written” refers to Scripture, i.e. OT. This is clearly spelled out in the *Complete Jewish Bible*: “Now in what I have said here, brothers, I have used myself and Apollos as examples to teach you not to go beyond what the *Tanakh* says, proudly taking the side of one leader against another.” According to Robertson and Plummer, there was a familiar rabbinic adage that cautioned against any departure from Scripture.²⁸ The adage may have been drawn from Paul’s earlier rabbinic experience,²⁹ which Paul adapted here as his own.³⁰ However, Lenski reacts that such an adage has never been found.³¹

3. "What is written" refers to wider Hellenistic cultural context, and it is not Scripture.

This view has been expressed in a number of ways:

The first has to do with the experience of school children, known and used by Paul to tell the Corinthians to trace the pattern correctly. In this sense, the Corinthians were told to have "Paul and Apollos as examples of proper harmony rooted in the possession of correct wisdom and understanding."³² Actually, school children were "taught to write correctly by tracing over paradigmatic figures supplied by their teachers."³³ The teachers told these pupils, "do not go above or below the lines."³⁴ Having been raised and received his primary education in Tarsus, Paul was familiar with that educational system, before going to Jerusalem to receive his training under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).³⁵ The weakness of this view has been pointed out by Hanges, saying that the word commonly used for such experience is *hypographein*, which is not used by Paul here.

The second viewpoints to "literature of the concord."³⁶ This implies a threat to concord. Thus, Paul is using "something analogous to what philosophers and rhetoricians do when they attempt to resolve political strife between rival factions."³⁷ "Arbitration" was the "instance of conciliation" very known to the ancient world.³⁸ For Paul, "not to go beyond the things which are written," was a maxim in "arbitral agreements" to facilitate reconciliation: "In the arbitral agreements, in particular, it was a fixed part of the machinery, with a well-defined role. It was Paul who abstracted the admonition from its context and gave it the character of maxim. But Paul had correctly recognized that wherever in ancient political life this principle was found, it served the same general purpose: negatively, it erected a barrier against faction; positively, it facilitated reconciliation."³⁹ Thus, Welborn succeeded in establishing Greco-Roman philosophical and political parallels to the phrase "to not go beyond what is

written.”⁴⁰ But Welborn “never actually identifies the referent of ἃ γέγραπται.”⁴¹

The third view indicates that there was a written document, known by all parties at Corinth. It was a “prior, foundational document (the referent of ἃ γέγραπται) to which Paul and all of the Corinthians are parties.”⁴² That written document or charter was similar to contemporaneous *leges sacrae*, or “written bylaws,” for which the “use of the maxim makes perfectly good sense.”⁴³ In his article, “1 Corinthians 4:6 and the Possibility of Written Bylaws in the Corinthian Church,” Hanges has elaborately dealt with Paul’s referent for the phrase τὸ μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται.⁴⁴ He provides Hellenistic parallels for “bylaws,” or legal contract, in existence known by, and binding to the Corinthian church which Hanges thinks Paul was referring to. For a specific example, Hanges mentions the cult bylaws of the Andanian mysteries which use the following phrases in legal pronouncements: ὁ δε ποιῶν παρα τα γεγραμμενα ὑποδικος ἔστω (lines 81b-82a), καθὼς ἐν τ[ω] diagrammatic gegraptai (lines 94b-95a), and μη ποιεῖν καθως γεγραπται (lines 43b-44a).⁴⁵ Hanges argues that the “participial phrase τα γεγραμμενα and the finite verb γεγραπται are used in the *leges sacrae* in contexts analogous to Paul’s in 1 Cor 4:6.”⁴⁶ Having that idea for the understanding of Paul’s statement, Hanges concludes:

The use of the phrase ποιῶν παρα τα γεγραμμενα or its equivalent, μη ποιεῖν καθως γεγραπται, in the Andanian bylaws is clearly a warning against the violation of the regulations prescribed in the inscription itself. . . . In this respect Paul’s use of the preposition ὑπὲρ in the phrase μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται appears to be functionally equivalent το ποιῶν παρα τα γεγραμμενα and το μη ποιεῖν καθως γεγραπται. That Paul is prohibiting the violation of

something written is unanimously held to be the sense of the phrase by interpreters who try to make sense of the present text.⁴⁷

If such a document ever existed, it would refer to one on “church practice that is now lost (a ‘letter of intent’ of sorts)?”⁴⁸ But D. E. Garland points out the weakness of this view: “what rules are being broken? Why not cite them specifically?”⁴⁹ Moreover, Paul does not mention any prior, founding written document in his other epistles.

“Do Not Go Beyond What Is Written” in Jewish Wider Context

“It Is Written”⁵⁰ and Tradition in Pharisaic Judaism

There is no doubt that the Jewish background and education of Paul played an important role in understanding what he meant in 1 Corinthians 4:6. According to his testimony in a number of occasions, Paul says he was “a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee.” (Phil 3:5). He was “advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.” (Gal 1:13; see also 2 Cor 11:22).

Being a Pharisee⁵¹ who studied under Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3), and like other Rabbis, Saul also had tendency to identify antecedent materials from Scripture.⁵² Therefore, it is not surprising that in rabbinic writing “passages and words of scripture are almost always identified as such by introductory formula, such as ‘the scripture says,’ ‘as it is written,’ ‘as it is said,’ or ‘a [scriptural] teaching says.’”⁵³ One among several specific examples of the use of the phrase “it is written” is in the Pharisaic justification of the Hebrew language in phylacteries: “What is the reason why tefillin, and mezuzahs

must be written in Hebrew? — Because in reference to them it is written, ‘and they shall be’ [Deut 6:6] which implies, they shall be as they originally were.” (*Megillah* 9a). Aside from the use of antecedent materials from the Old Testament (i.e. Deut 6:6), and the introductory formula “it is written,” this rabbinic text clearly states that the language and the words contained in the phylacteries should be without change, implying inviolability.⁵⁴

Ferguson aptly notes that “the twin pillars of the Pharisaic system were “Torah and Tradition.”⁵⁵ Part of what is termed, “Pharisaic innovations,”⁵⁶ tradition (i.e. *paradosis*; Gal 1:14; cf. Phil 3:5-6),⁵⁷ is “one aspect of the way in which the Pharisees conceived their practices that went beyond what was written in the Bible.”⁵⁸ The “traditions of the elders” constituted the forerunner of the traditions which were later compiled in the Mishnah, Midrash, and Talmuds.⁵⁹ It is the ordinances that are derived from the interpretation and application of the law, thus, having divine authority as the written Torah.⁶⁰ But ultimately, tradition became superior to Torah, as *Sanhedrin* 11.3 clearly states: “Greater stringency applies to [the observance of] the words of the Scribes than to [the observance of] the words of the [written] Law.”⁶¹

Josephus, who himself went through a Pharisaic stage in his life, affirms:

The Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the Law of Moses; and for that reason the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers.⁶²

An NT example of Pharisaic tradition is found in *korban*, the temple treasury or a gift to it (Matthew 27:6; Mark 7:11-13; cf. Matt 27:6). It is a "gift to God as substitution for another obligation."⁶³ Outside the NT, an illustrative example, where Pharisaic application went beyond what is written is found in Yeb. 62b, "Concerning him who loves his neighbours, who befriends his relatives, marries his sister's daughter."⁶⁴ Tosefta (*Kiddushin* 1:2),⁶⁵ similarly, teaches, "A man should not marry a woman until his sororal niece comes of age [so that he can marry her], or until he finds [another woman equally] fitting for him."⁶⁶

But Paul's coming into the Christian religion, where non-biblical Jewish tradition was undermined and abandoned (cf. Matt 15:6),⁶⁷ must also be taken into consideration. Though not directly involved in the present situation he was dealing with in 1 Corinthians 4:6, there is no doubt that the conflict between Pharisees and Sadducees over traditions was fresh and present in Paul's mind. Elsewhere, Paul would remind his readers that he stopped preaching circumcision (and all other halakhic traditions that come with it) (Gal 5:11).⁶⁸

Dead Sea Literature

The use of "it is written" abounds in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the *Rules of Community* alone, it occurs six times.⁶⁹ Moreover, the Qumranians did not accept tradition as authoritative:

The Qumran sectarians considered biblical law to be the "revealed" law (*nigleh*) and the additional prescriptions as "hidden" (*nistar*). This latter class of laws was revealed to the sect through inspired biblical exegesis in their regular study sessions. The claim of the sectarians was that tradition was not an authoritative guide to Jewish law. Nor did they accept the notion of

"Do Not Go Beyond What is Written"

any "extra-biblical" revelation at Sinai in addition to the written Torah.⁷⁰

It seems that the Qumran settlers labelled the Pharisees as "expounders of false laws."⁷¹ 1QpNah II.2 mentions "those looking for easy interpretations," elsewhere translated as "seekers after smooth things," who have been identified with the Pharisees. The phrase is "plausibly taken as a derogatory play on the Pharisaic halakah, a form of legal interpretation that the followers of the Teacher regarded as too lenient."⁷² In the polemics between Pharisees and Qumranians, views on specific issues are expressed, among which the permission (or even encouragement) to marry one's sororal niece (Yev. 62b).⁷³ But the Dead Sea Scrolls clearly state that it is forbidden: "And they also defiled the temple, for they did not keep apart in accordance with the law, but instead lay with her who sees the blood of her menstrual flow. And each man takes as a wife the daughter of his brother and the daughter of his sister." (CD 5.7-11). The Temple Scroll (11QT 66.12-16) also lists forbidden marriages, stating marriage with one's niece, even sororal niece, as consanguineous: "A man is not to take his brother's daughter or his sister's daughter because it is an abomination." (11QT 66:16).

An Interpretation and Implication of 1 Corinthians 4:6

According to Acts 18:1-8, Paul founded the Corinthian church during his second missionary journey. As his custom was (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1-2), Paul conducted his preaching activities in the synagogue where Jews as well as Gentiles (proselytes/God-fearers) who were familiar, at least to some extent, with the Old Testament were readily available to hear him. Being in a cosmopolitan and unfavourable area for right

Christian living, the church of Jewish as well as Gentile origins in Corinth was constantly facing challenges. Thus, reports had reached Paul while he was ministering in Ephesus (1 Cor 1:11; 5:1; 7:1; 12:1). Paul devised ways to deal with these challenges through letters and a personal visit (1 Cor 5:9; 4:21; cf. 2 Cor 2:1).

It is not surprising that Paul needed to remind the Corinthians of the basics. Reminding the Corinthians of “what is written” was perfectly in order. But what is its referent?

As Anthony C. Thieselton affirms, “the most widely held view is that what is written refers to the Old Testament as the church’s scripture.”⁷⁴ As a matter of fact, Paul clearly refers to Scripture as γέγραπται and always uses it to introduce citations from Scripture (except 1 Cor 4:6). In the two letters to the Corinthians alone, he used it that way eleven times (1 Cor 1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19; 9:9; 10:7; 14:21; 15:45; 2 Cor 8:15; 9:9). The same use is found elsewhere in his epistles (Rom 1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17; 8:36; 9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8, 26; 12:19; 14:11; 15:3, 9, 21; Gal 3:10, 13; 4:22, 27).

Nonetheless, taking into consideration his usual use of γέγραπται, “as a formula to introduce Old Testament texts, it is quite possible that his real aim was to remind the Corinthians of the specific Old Testament texts quoted earlier in his letter (1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19, 20). Held together, those texts function as a summary of Scripture’s teaching on boasting and destruction of unity.”⁷⁵ D. E. Garland specifies this more narrowly with the five OT quotations Paul previously mentioned in the epistle, and concludes that “it is best to regard the saying as referring to the five quotations from the OT, all introduced by γέγραπται, cited in the first three chapters.”

“Do Not Go Beyond What is Written”

Corinthians references	Text	OT references
1:19	“For the wisdom of their wise <i>men</i> shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent <i>men</i> shall be hidden”	Isa 29:14
1:31	“Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord”	Jer 9:22-23 (LXX)
2:9	“What eye has not seen and ear has not heard and what has not entered the human mind, things God has prepared for those who love him.”	Isa 64:4 (LXX)
3:19	“He catches the wise in their <i>own</i> craftiness”	Job 5:13
3:20	“The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”	Ps 93:11 (LXX [94:11 MT])

The first two (1:19; 1:31) and the last two (3:19; 3:20) clearly mention boasting and hint at its danger. Therefore, Paul calls upon the church to not boast. And he concludes by linking the four OT quotations for the application in the Corinthian context, “let no one boast in humans” (1 Cor 3:21).⁷⁶ In its context, “Paul cited the phrase as part of his attempt to urge the Corinthians to avoid factionalism and foster reconciliation (v. 6c).”⁷⁷

What we learn from the Greek context, cultic (as well as legal) regulations can be summarized as follows: (1) what is written is binding to all, (2) what is written cannot be abrogated, (3) the law’s authority in what is written will endure for all time.⁷⁸ As a matter of fact, the idea that what is written is inviolable “is expressed also by the common practice of depositing copies of the law in the temple.”⁷⁹

Known by Paul, and applied to the church, “what is written” has its expectation. Jesus Himself attests the fact that it is binding; it cannot be abrogated, and it will endure for all time (Matt 5:17-19). More specifically, parts of what is written were

kept in the holy of holies of the temple (Ex 25:16; Deut 31:26). In the Old Testament, an explicit order was given that the king who ascends on the throne must write for himself a copy of the law to serve him as a charter for his kingship, and which he was bound to obey (Deut 17:18-20; 2 Kings 11:12). According to Paul himself, the Jews were entrusted with the Scripture (Rom 3:1-2). There is no doubt that Paul also thinks of the church (i.e., Israel of God," [Gal 6:16]), to be the custodian of "what is written."

"Do Not Go beyond What Is Written" and Adventist Hermeneutics

Scripture as Final Authority

In the specific context of 1 Corinthians 4:6, "the thing that is written, which Paul wants the Corinthians to observe in their conduct, is that no one should puff himself up 'in favor of one person as against another person.'"⁸⁰ But beyond reasonable doubt, the injunction applies to all issues the church is dealing with. Members are "to conduct themselves according to the rules laid down in the Word of God."⁸¹ "What is written" explicitly points that "in all matters pertaining to religion the Scriptures are to be final authority."⁸²

E. G. White herself was in full agreement with the plain meaning and sufficiency of Scripture. The phrase "[not to] go beyond what is written" has a striking similarity with the one Ellen White used as she spoke about her experience at a camp-meeting in Southern California. Ellen White wrote: "I dare not say more now, lest I go beyond what the Spirit of the Lord has permitted me."⁸³

Exhibits for Hermeneutics: Prohibited vs. Not Prohibited

A constitutional principle of English law states that "everything which is not forbidden is allowed."⁸⁴ To some extent,

“Do Not Go Beyond What is Written”

Pharisaic innovations have been justified, using the similar English reasoning, to allow them to go beyond what is written.

Even biblical interpretation in the church has not been spared by the same reasoning: scriptural silence means permission, or that which is not explicitly prohibited is permitted.⁸⁵ James White himself has used it, but it is clear that he used it in a particular situation about what to do with church property. He wrote in 1860:

But if it be asked, where are your plain texts of scripture for holding church property legally? We reply. The Bible does not furnish any: neither does it say that we should have a weekly paper, a steam printing-press, that we should publish books, build places of worship, and send out tents? Jesus says, “Let your light so shine before men,” etc.; but he does not give all the particulars how this shall be done. The church is left to move forward in the great work, praying for divine guidance, acting upon the most efficient plans for its accomplishment. We believe it safe to be governed by the following RULE.

All means which, according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed.⁸⁶

In such a so-called silence, James White indeed sought out “biblical principles” and applied them with “sanctified reasoning.”⁸⁷ There may be no explicit prohibition. However, if there is clear statement from the Bible, that should serve as our guiding principle. The following table is illustrative:

It is not explicitly prohibited	It is permitted	Clear statement as guiding principle
To observe Sunday as a day of worship	Worship on Sunday	Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Exod 20:8-11)
For two females to marry	Lesbianism	Man will leave his parents and cleave to his wife (Gen 2:24)
To smoke	Smoking	Whoever destroys the temple of God will be destroyed (1 Cor 3:16-17).
To eat shrimp	Eating shrimps	Whatever has scales and fins, you can eat (Lev 11:9; Deut14:10).
To have non-baptized children and/or non-baptized members participate in the emblems of the Lord's supper	All-inclusive participation	John 13:1-16 (1) Only those who have Participated in foot washing can partake the emblems, (2) only those who have been baptized can participate in foot washing. ⁸⁸

Proposal and Conclusion

It is undeniable that going beyond what is written would irremediably lead to factions and divisions in the church. Adventist hermeneutics must stay within the boundaries of what is written. Therefore, to ascertain our hermeneutics do not go beyond what is written, the following proposal is in order:

- (1) We need to do a critical assessment of tradition. This is the spirit/principle of Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 4:6. As Kenneth Bailey puts it, "A proper understanding of Paul's intent surely includes the affirmation that church tradition, reason and experience are all valuable. But none of them must *ever* be allowed to 'go beyond Scripture.' (4:6). . . . Christian history is strewn with wreckage caused by violations of Paul's directives in this matched pair of texts."⁸⁹
- (2) We need to strongly establish and affirm our high view of the inspired writings.⁹⁰

“Do Not Go Beyond What is Written”

Paul had enjoined Timothy to “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15) for him “to not go beyond what is written.” Moreover, as a church, we recognize our privilege to have the Spirit of prophecy (non-canonical inspired writing). Ellen White herself subscribed to a high view of Scripture: “I take the Bible just as it is, as the Inspired Word. I believe its utterances in an entire Bible.”⁹¹ Her warning is still relevant for Bible interpreters to not go beyond what is written: “Unaccustomed to accept God's word exactly as it reads, or to allow it to be its own interpreter, they read it in the light of their maxims and traditions. So long had they neglected to study and contemplate the Bible, that its pages were to them a mystery. They turned with aversion from the truth of God to the traditions of men.”⁹² In another occasion, she makes it clear: “all who exalt their own opinions above divine revelation, all who would change the plain meaning of Scripture to suit their own convenience, or for the sake of conforming to the world, are taking upon themselves a fearful responsibility.”⁹³

- (3) We need to respect and abide by the corporate decisions of church in session, which is put into writing, such as the decision of the Jerusalem council in AD 49 (Acts 15:23-31), which when made known to all churches, became binding for all churches. Ellen White states that (1) some disciples contested the decision of the council and they were not willingly to accept it, (2) even Peter did not fully comply with it as his conduct in Antioch demonstrates (Gal 2:11-14), but Paul upholds that the decision stands written, thus, binding, (3) going against the decision of the council threatened the church with division, (4) “Peter saw the error into which he had fallen, and immediately set about repairing the evil that had been wrought.”⁹⁴

Keown aptly concludes:

So, entrenched deeply in our world, let us who name Jesus as Lord dig deep into Scripture, consider our context through the gospel, determine what God is saying in and through his Word and then apply and live it with holiness and grace. Paul's injunction to the Corinthians who are compromising the gospel in all sorts of directions under the pressure of her culture, "do not go beyond what is written," remains as important as it was then.⁹⁵

NOTES:

¹ Unless otherwise stated, the NIV is used throughout this paper.

² R. F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999), 177.

³ Ibid., 178.

⁴ L. L. Welborn, "Conciliatory Principle in 1 Cor. 4:6," *Novum Testamentum* 29, no. 4 (1987): 322.

⁵ D. E. Garland, *First Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 134.

⁶ Witnesses in NA²⁸ include C D, Byz, sy

⁷ Lenski, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1935), 175.

⁸ John Strugnell, "A Plea for Conjectural Emendation in the New Testament, with a Coda on 1 Cor 4:6," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1974): 555 (Emphasis his).

⁹ Welborn, 324.

¹⁰ This is how Paul uses the Scripture (i.e., γραφή, in Galatians 3:22; 2 Tim 3:16). At times, the plural is used to refer to Scripture(s) (Rom 1:2; 15:4).

¹¹ David H. Stern, *The Complete Jewish Bible: An English Version of the Tanakh and B'rit Hadashah* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998).

- ¹² Strugnell, 555. “Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, ‘Do not go beyond what is written.’ Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.” But in 1884, “[J. M. S.] Baljon suggested that τὸ μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται should be removed as a gloss written by a scribe who, seeing in his archetype the μὴ, (of ἵνα μὴ εἷς κτλ) written above the alpha in ἵνα (or α = εἷς), restored this interlinear μὴ, to his text, and noted in the margin “The μὴ, was written above α, [i.e., the alpha of ἵνα, or above εἷς represented by α]” (ibid.). In his study, Strugnell followed through his view for a conjectural emendation of 1 Corinthians 4:6.
- ¹³ *The Bible: A New Translation* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935).
- ¹⁴ Conjectural emendation is a critical reconstruction of the original reading of a corrupt, illegible, or nonsensical text.
- ¹⁵ Strugnell, 555.
- ¹⁶ See also, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 81-94; Murphy-O'Connor lists the saying in 1 Corinthians 4:6 among non-Pauline interpolations in the epistle.
- ¹⁷ Strugnell, 557.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. Welborn mentions Johannes Baljon as the initiator of the view for conjectural emendation, and further clarifies “in 1884 Johannes Baljon suggested that τὸ μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται should be removed from the text as a gloss by an early scribe, originally noted in the margin. What the copyist found in his archetype were the words: ἵνα ἐν ἡμῖν μάθητε ἵνα εἷς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐνὸς κτλ; but over the α of the second ἵνα was written the word μὴ. What was the scribe to do? He was reluctant simply to add the μὴ to his copy of the text, so he placed in the margin the observation: τὸ μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται, that is, ‘the μὴ was written above the alpha.’

- Later, when the manuscript was copied again, this note found its way into the text.” (Welborn, 329).
- ¹⁹ James C. Hanges, “1 Corinthians 4:6 and the Possibility of Written Bylaws in the Corinthian Church,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117, no. 2 (1998): 276.
- ²⁰ Hanges, 276.
- ²¹ Garland, 133.
- ²² Murphy-O'Connor, 84. As he notes, most commentators have not accepted this view, because removal of the gloss does not solve the problem and the second *iva* clause still remains a problem.
- ²³ Chrysostom, “Homily 12 on First Corinthians,” accessed 22 August 2017, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/220112.htm>.
- ²⁴ Hanges, 277.
- ²⁵ Origen, *Catena Graecorum Patrum*, ed. J. A. Crammer, 5:77, quoted in Welborn, 325, note 30.
- ²⁶ John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. J. W. Fraser, Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 90.
- ²⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 169, note 2; M. L. Soards, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 92.
- ²⁸ Archibald T. Robertson and Alfred A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1914), 81.
- ²⁹ Mark Keown, “Do Not Go Beyond What Is Written,” accessed 22 August 2017, <https://www.laidlaw.ac.nz/assets/Files-PDF-Word/Stimulus-July-2015-Mark-Keown.pdf>.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Lenski, 175.
- ³² Hanges, 281.
- ³³ Hanges, 281, referring to B. Fiore.

³⁴ Garland, 134.

³⁵ Steven Hunter, “The Education of the Apostle Paul,” accessed 22 August 2017, <https://start2finish.org/education-apostle-paul/>.

³⁶ Welborn, 340.

³⁷ Hanges, 282. One relevant example is cited by Weldon: “In the speech entitled *περι πολιτεια*, sometimes attributed to Herodes Atticus, the citizens are urged to put an end to factional strife by living ‘according to the law’ (*κατα νομον*), instead of destroying one another ‘lawlessly’ (*παρασομς*).”

³⁸ Welborn, 343.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁴⁰ Hanges, 285.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 284.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 286-298.

⁴⁵ Hanges, 290.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Preben Vang, *1 Corinthians*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 53.

⁴⁹ Garland, 134.

⁵⁰ The introductory formula “it is written” is also used in other Jewish literature, such as *Jubilees* 33:12, “it is written a second time ‘Cursed be he who lieth with the wife of his father, for he hath uncovered his father's shame’; and all the holy ones of the Lord said ‘So be it; so be it.’ [Deut 27:20].” The version used in this paper is that of R. H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1902). Of the Book of Jubilees, Charles says “it is true that *Jubilees* contains incidents and amplifications which are not to be found in the written Torah. But the author is careful to base everything that is of legal obligation upon the letter of the

Law itself." (pp xxvii-xxviii). Charles further states "the author was not only a priest but a Pharisee "of the straightest sect." (p. 30).

- ⁵¹ As for the source of information about Pharisees, Lawrence H. Schiffmann's statement is very helpful, "The Qumran evidence reveals that, contrary to widespread scholarly opinion, Tannaitic literature preserves reliable information about the pre-70 CE Pharisees. These Pharisees, as is illustrated by the Qumran material, are truly similar to what is described in the later rabbinic texts, especially as regards the specifics of their legal rulings. Talmudic sources, when used with adequate care and attention, can indeed play a significant role in the recovery of the history of Judaism in second temple times." ("The Pharisees and Their Legal Traditions According to the Dead Sea Scrolls," *The Dead Sea Scrolls Discoveries* 8/3 [2001], 277).
- ⁵² Jacob Neusner and William S. Green, *Writing with Scripture: The Authority and Uses of the Hebrew Bible in the Torah of Formative Judaism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1993), 17.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ This is clearly indicated in another Talmudic version of *Megillah* 9a, "The Gemara asks: With regard to phylacteries and mezuzot, what is the reason that they must be written in Hebrew? The Gemara explains: It is because it is written with regard to them: "And these words shall be" (Deuteronomy 6:6), indicating that as they are so shall they be, without change ("The William Davidson Talmud," accessed 23 August 2017, <https://www.sefaria.org/Megillah.9a.9?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en>).
- ⁵⁵ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 519.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.

- ⁵⁷ *Paradosis* is a “technical term that refers to the regulations observed by the Pharisees but not written in the law” (A. I. Baumgarten, “The Pharisaic Paradosis,” *Harvard Theological Review* 80, no. 1 [1987], 66).
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.
- ⁵⁹ Lawrence H. Schiffman, “From Temple to Torah: Rabbinic Judaism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Shofar* 10, no. 2 (1992): 3.
- ⁶⁰ “Here it is not a question of denying the Ten Commandments and the will of holy God, but rather of a new interpretation of traditional ritual and purification regulations” (Risto Santala, “Paul’s Teaching on Jewish Law,” accessed 24 August 2017, <http://www.ristosantala.com/rsla/Paul/paul16.html>).
- ⁶¹ See also J. M. Baumgarten, “The Unwritten Law in the Pre-Rabbinic Period,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 3, no. 1 (1972): 22; Risto Santala, “Paul’s Teaching on Jewish Law.”
- ⁶² Josephus *Antiquities* 8.10.6. Interestingly, Baumgarten states: “The Sadducees also observed regulations that went beyond what was written in the Pentateuch. We do not know how to reconcile these practices with their rejection of the Pharisaic *paradosis* (“Pharisaic Paradosis,” 66, note 4).
- ⁶³ Albert L. A. Hogeterp, *Paul and God’s Temple: A Historical Interpretation of Cultic Imagery in the Corinthian Correspondence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 167.
- ⁶⁴ Dead Sea literature (CD 5.7-11), which strictly forbids such a marriage, confirms its practice during the second temple period.
- ⁶⁵ The *Tosefta* version used in this study is that of Jacob Neusner, *The Tosefta* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013).
- ⁶⁶ R. Rashi in the 11th century confirmed marriage to one’s sororal niece, not just to a fraternal niece (Reuven Chaim Klein, “Avinculate Marriage in the Bible,”

<http://seforim.blogspot.co.ke/2015/10/avunculate-marriage-in-bible.html>). At the beginning of the 12th century, “Maimonides (in his commentary to the Mishnah *Nedarim* 8:5 and in his Laws of Sexual Prohibitions, end of ch. 2) understands that the Talmud does not mention one’s sororal niece to the exclusion of his fraternal niece. He thus rules that is considered a *Mitzvah* for a man to marry either his sororal or fraternal niece.” (Ibid.).

⁶⁷ Hogeterp, 167, confirms, “Jesus’ polemic undermines the authority of the traditions of the elders to which the Pharisees appeal.”

⁶⁸ In line with this, Santala states: “It was just because the first Christians or ‘*minim*’ emphasized the binding nature of the Ten Commandments as a rule of life that *in c. 90 A.D. the great Council of Jamnia took the decision that in the synagogue the Ten Commandments were no longer to be read every day*—according to the Talmud, this was so that no one should be mistaken into thinking that God gave only these Ten Commandments on Sinai” (Santala, “Paul’s Teaching on Jewish Law.” [Emphasis his]).

⁶⁹ 1QS V.17; VIII.14; 4QS III.4; V.1; XI.19. The Dead Sea Scrolls translation used in this study is that of Florentino Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

⁷⁰ Schiffmann, “Pharisees and Their Legal Traditions,” 267. See also Lawrence H. Schiffman, *The Halakhah at Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 22-32; Schiffman, “From Temple to Torah,” 77. Nonetheless, attention is drawn to the Temple Scroll which seems to see things differently; that is, its author asserts his interpretations are part of written Torah.

⁷¹ Schiffman, “Pharisees and Their Legal Traditions,” 266.

- ⁷² John Joseph Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 113.
- ⁷³ These examples are listed by Schiffman, “Pharisees and Their Legal Traditions,” 271.
- ⁷⁴ Anthony C. Thieselton, *First Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary*, 75; C. K. Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Harper New Testament Commentaries (London: Adams & Charles Black, 1968), 106-107.
- ⁷⁵ Vang, 53.
- ⁷⁶ “In each case, however, the general sense would remain the same: observe proper behavior and put an end to rivalries” (Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 89).
- ⁷⁷ Collins, 178.
- ⁷⁸ Hanges, 292. Given as examples are το δε διαγραμμα κυριον ἔστω παντα τον χηρονον (from Cos, 3rd cent. BC), and ὁ δε νομος οὔτος ἐς παντας τος χρονος κυριος ἔστω και ἐμ πολεμωι και εν εἰραναι (from Asklepion).
- ⁷⁹ Hanges, 292.
- ⁸⁰ Lenski, 176.
- ⁸¹ “That which is written” [1 Cor 4:6], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 6:682.
- ⁸² Ibid. Seventh day Adventists have cherished the principle of *Sola Scriptura*. Tim Crosby, wrote that *prima scriptura* takes into consideration canonical and non-canonical inspired writing. “With its all-or-none implications, the term sola scriptura creates an unnecessary dilemma. Some who accept it believe they must reject any post-canonical claim to inspired authority. Others with different theological leanings conclude that because of this doctrine they must elevate the writings of Ellen G. White to a position of equality with Scripture. Both positions are

untenable. The adoption of *prima scriptura* enables us to retain the concept of non-canonical inspired authority without elevating this authority to an equality with Scripture" ("Why I Don't Believe in Sola Scriptura," *Ministry*, October 1987, 11-12).

⁸³ Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Battle Creek Church*, 49, 50; *MR*, 14.3.

⁸⁴ "Everything which is not forbidden is allowed," accessed 23 August 2017, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Everything_which_is_not_forbidden_is_allowed

⁸⁵ This view is clearly implied in George Knight's paper on Adventist pioneers' discussion on church organization. Knight calls it a "transformed hermeneutic." In his own words, "transformed hermeneutic that had moved from one in which the only things permissible were those explicitly spelled out in the Bible to a hermeneutic that asserted that all things were lawful except those forbidden by the Bible and did not violate common sense. It is impossible to overestimate the impact of that transformation" (George Knight, "The Anti-organizational People Organize in Spite of Themselves," accessed 28 August 2017, <https://atoday.org/at/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Antiorganizational-People-George-R-Knight.pdf>

⁸⁶ James White, "Making Us a Name," *Review and Herald*, April 26, 1860, p. 180 (capitalization his).

⁸⁷ P. Gerard Damsteegt, "A Look at the Methods of Interpretation in *Women in Ministry*," in *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*, ed. Mercedes H. Dyer (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Affirm, 2000), 47.

⁸⁸ For the view that only baptized members who have washed their feet can partake the emblems, see Frank Holbrook, "For Members Only?" *Ministry*, February 1987, 12-17; *Seventh-day Adventist Believe: An Exposition of 27*

Fundamental Doctrines (Hagerstown, MD: Ministerial Association, 1988), 197, and note 3; John Christopher Thomas, *Foot washing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Children and the Lord’s Supper,” Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, June 2006, <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/church/children-and-lords-supper>. *Minister’s Manual* (Silver Spring: Ministerial Association, 1992), 212; Robert M. Johnston, “Children and Communion,” *Ministry*, June 2007, 11-15. In his article on the participation of children in Lord’s Supper, published in the same month of the same year, by the same magazine, Darius Jankiewicz states: “Nowhere in Ellen White’s published or unpublished writings, do we find a definitive stand on the issue of the children’s participation,” (Darius Jankiewicz, “The Lord’s Supper and Children’s Participation,” *Ministry*, June 2007, accessed 11 November 2017, <https://ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/06/th-lords-supper-and-children-participation.htm>. Jankiewicz’ statement is a clear example for the use of “not prohibited, then permitted” reasoning.

⁸⁹ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians*, 140.

⁹⁰ “We live in a world where the church is increasingly challenged by shifting values. In many instances we are seeing the society in which we are embedded move away from the Judeo-Christian ethic. As we see this occur we are faced with the question, how do we, as God’s people, respond? I find this short maxim of Paul highly helpful. In the wisdom of the church who grappled with which writings were Scripture, ‘what is written’ is now more than the Old Testament corpus. It includes the apostolic writings

of the New Testament including those of Paul. As we ponder the questions of our age and how to respond to them, 'do not go beyond what is written' remains a good starting point" (Keown, "Do Not Go Beyond What Is Written.")

⁹¹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1.17.

⁹² Ibid., *Manuscript 24*, 1891.

⁹³ Ibid., *Great Controversy*, 268.

⁹⁴ Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 197-198.

⁹⁵ Keown, "Do Not Go Beyond What Is Written."