Reference is made to the introduction to 1 Corinthians, since all that is said there with reference to the authorship and authenticity of that epistle is also true of this.

**Authorship:** "That the Second Epistle is a genuine work of the apostle Paul has seldom been seriously disputed." Furthermore, even in the instances in which radical scholars have questioned its authenticity, the result has been the discredit of themselves, rather than the erosion of the confidence with which the Christians of all ages have received both these epistles as absolutely canonical and authentic works of the blessed Paul. "That the apostle Paul was the author of what is now known as 2 Corinthians is not a matter of dispute in reputable scholarly circles." Both external and internal evidence of its genuineness are overwhelmingly sufficient. "It would be difficult to find a composition more convincingly impressed with the personality of its author."  

**Date:** Hughes gave the date of 2 Corinthians as "the autumn of 57 A.D." Macknight favored "the summer of 57 A.D." Lipscomb set it in "the latter part of 57 A.D." The discovery of the fragment of a limestone tablet at Delphi in 1905, fixing the date of Gallio’s coming to Corinth as proconsul in the year 51 A.D. has led to an adjustment of the usually accepted date for 2 Corinthians. As Tasker said, "The Second Epistle to the Corinthians was almost certainly written in the late autumn of A.D. 56."  

**The Unity of 2 Corinthians:** The irresponsible speculations and denials of radical scholars in the first half of this century are no longer of any significance. As Hughes pointed out, there was a time when to question the unity of 2 Corinthians "was to be very much in the fashion, but now a swing back to the traditional view of the letter's integrity is noticeable." Hughes went on to name a number of the outstanding scholars of today who declared that "2 Corinthians is beyond doubt a unity." There has never existed even the slightest evidence to the contrary. The epistle has come down through history as a unit; and the fulminations of critics who based their theory of a chopped-up letter containing fragments of other documents solely upon internal characteristics of the epistle have been repeatedly refuted and frustrated. Tasker summed it up by saying, "It is our duty to approach the Second Epistle to the Corinthians as a unity."  

How many letters? First Corinthians refers to a letter Paul had written, and which had been misunderstood (1 Cor. 5:9), a letter which was lost, no copy of it having survived. Beyond this, however, this student is not willing to go to the extent of postulating another lost letter, usually referred to by scholars as "the severe letter." The theory of such a letter is founded upon a misreading of 2 Cor. 2:5-9; and for a discussion of this see the notes under those verses. That 1 Corinthians
itself may be identified as the "severe letter" of 2 Cor. 2:5-9 and 2 Cor. 7:8 is evident in the fact that many of the wisest scholars have been doing so for many generations. Even some who have postulated the "severe letter" as being another lost document have candidly admitted that such a postulation "is not necessary."<12> Again, it should be reiterated that no evidence of any kind has ever been discovered that lends the slightest credibility to the existence of a lost "severe letter." The true instincts of faith in Christ lead automatically to the rejection of the kind of wild guessing which marks the works of critical scholars trying to support a hypothesis. Once the imagination of the lost severe letter is accepted as a fact, then the explanations of what was in it surpass all the boundaries of likelihood or reason. All of the dogmatic assertions of what was "probably" in that lost letter may be set aside as having no value whatever. They are not even good reading.

**Occasion of writing:** All that is certainly known of the occasion for the writing of 2 Corinthians is that it was written about a year after 1 Corinthians. After the riot at Ephesus, Paul found it necessary to leave there for Macedonia; but, in spite of the fact that wonderful opportunity opened to him at Troas, where he had stopped en route, his anxieties regarding the situation in Corinth began to press upon him very heavily. It may be assumed that he had received some news at intervals after the 1 Corinthian letter had been delivered; but the question of whether or not they would obey his commands still remained in Paul's mind. The mention of the expected coming of Titus to Troas, where Paul had hoped to meet him, indicates that Titus might have been working with the situation at Corinth for some time; but, as preachers often do, Titus had neglected to write Paul any real news of what had taken place. Paul, therefore, could not settle down for a preaching tour in Troas; but, instead, he decided to strike out through Macedonia in search of his brother Titus. He met him, supposedly at Philippi, learned the glad news of the obedience of the Corinthians, and promptly wrote 2 Corinthians. Paul's supposed reference to "the severe letter" in 2 Cor. 7:8 is quite applicable to the severe admonitions and apostolic condemnations in the canonical first letter; and it is a thousand times more reasonable to suppose that the matchless words of that inspired epistle produced the change at Corinth than to attribute their repentance to some speculative "bawling out" administered in a letter supposedly lost.

Is the "severe" letter incorporated in this Second Epistle, beginning at 2 Cor. 10:17 Absolutely no! The very existence of any "severe" letter must be denied, as Hughes so ably demonstrated; and the hypothesis that it did exist is worthless as the basis for another hypothesis to the effect that a considerable fragment of it became a part of 2 Corinthians. In this monstrous hypothesis built upon another hypothesis, the radical critics have elaborated an absurdity. It would seem that the fallacy of 2 Corinthians being a "scissors and paste" job, like those of modern critics, was concocted out of utter ignorance or total disregard of the way in which ancient manuscripts were produced. How foolish is the notion that "some leaves of one letter got mixed up with another"; when, as a matter of fact, Paul's letters
were written on parchment in the form of a roll; and there were no "leaves"! As
Munch said of the alleged interpolation beginning at 2 Cor. 10:1, "This
assumption will not hold water."<13>

**Criticisms of Paul:** It is clear that 2 Corinthians was Paul's response to vicious
and untruthful slanders alleged against him by false teachers and savage
partisans at Corinth. These will be noted in the text of the commentary as the
evidence of them occurs; but this summary of them should be kept in mind: (1)
some questioned his credentials as a true apostle; (2) they alleged vacillation
and cowardice on his part, due to his change of plans; (3) they hinted charges of
irregularity in his handling the collection for the poor in Jerusalem; (4) they
charged him with conscious inferiority, citing the fact that he did not preach for
pay; (5) they demeaned his personal appearance and made fun of his sermons,
etc., etc. It is not hard to see in such evil slurs the hand of the Jewish hierarchy in
Jerusalem. They never missed any opportunity of pursuit and harassment of
their former sheriff who became the most gifted of apostles.

**Nature of the epistle:** There is no doubt that this letter creates and sustains an
emotional impact nowhere exceeded in the New Testament. It is a letter of
"profound spiritual riches."<14> F. W. Farrar stated that:

As hope is the keynote of the Epistles to the Thessalonians, joy of that to the
Philippians, faith of that to the Romans, heavenly things to that of the Ephesians,
affliction is the predominant word and thought in the Second Epistle to
Corinthians.<15>

Paul was a man of absolute integrity; and, as an apostle of Christ, one of the
most gifted who ever lived. When such a man was subjected to the attack of
vicious and unprincipled enemies, his very soul was outraged. The pouring out of
his impassioned defense in this letter is as eloquent and moving a dissertation as
was ever penned upon earth. Even beyond that, the fire of his inspiration
illuminates every line of it.

**Outline:** The epistle falls naturally into three divisions: 2 Cor. 1--7 stress the joy
and relaxation that Paul felt upon receiving the good news of the success of his
corrective efforts in Corinth. 2 Cor. 8--9 are principally concerned with the
promotion of the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. 2 Cor. 10--13
contain Paul's impassioned and vehement defense of his apostleship. The
logical unity of these three sections will become starkly evident as they are
studied.

Abbreviations: These are the same as those already listed in the introduction to 1
Corinthians.

**ENDNOTES:**


<3> Ibid.

<4> Ibid.


<9> Philip E. Hughes, op. cit., p. xxi.

<10> Ibid., p. xxii.

<11> R. V. G. Tasker, op. cit., p. 35.

<12> Ibid., p. 18.


<14> Philip E. Hughes, op. cit., p. xxxv.


[The Introductions to 1 & 2 Corinthians are taken from the electronic version of Coffman's New Testament Commentaries published by Abilene Christian University Press.]
Intro to 2 Corinthians. Introduction from the NIV Study Bible | Go to 2 Corinthians. Author. Paul is the author of this letter (see 1:1; 10:1). It is stamped with his style and contains more autobiographical material than any of his other writings. After writing 1 Corinthians Paul continued his ministry at Ephesus until he heard that his letter had not completely accomplished its purpose. A group of men had come to Corinth who presented themselves as apostles. They were false teachers who were challenging, among other things, Paul’s personal integrity and his authority as an apostle (see 11:4; 12:11). In the face of this serious situation, Paul decided to make a quick trip to Corinth (12:4; 13:1â€“2) to see whether he could remedy the situation. The second visit to Corinth recorded in Acts 20:1-3 is probably the third visit which Paul promises to make in 2 Corinthians 12:14 and 13:1. a. Here for this third time I am ready to come to you ....â€ (2 Cor. A. First Corinthians was probably written in the spring of AD 55/56 (see introduction to First Corinthians for argumentation). B. Second Corinthians was probably written in the fall: 1. Paul’s final departure from Corinth was after three winter months (Acts 20:3) whereupon he sailed from Philippi in the spring (after the feast of Unleavened Bread 20:6). 2. Therefore, Paul’s writing of his intended visit in 2 Corinthians 12:14; 13:1 would have been before his final winter stay there: in the fall. Introduction to 2 Corinthians. by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson Audio (11:06). Free E-mail Bible Study Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134). Second visit, the “painful visit,” is a quick trip to deal with troubles in Corinth that were serious enough to require direct personal confrontation (2:1; 13:2). During this visit Paul was personally attacked by one of the members (2:5; 7:12). This visit was difficult for both Paul and his converts in Corinth. “Tearful letter” or “severe letter” from Paul (2:3-4), no longer extant, is written from Ephesus, probably carried by Titus in lieu of Paul going himself. In it, Paul apparently professed his love for the Corinthians and required them to discipline the ma