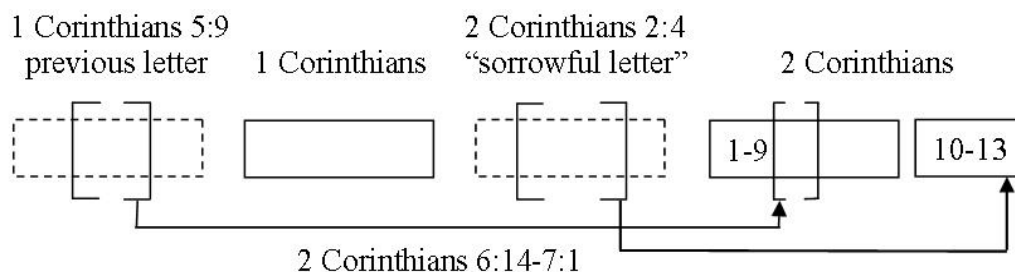


RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FOURFOLD CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE THEORY

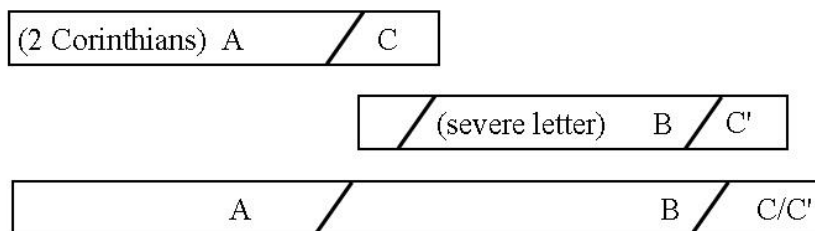
Virgil Warren, PhD



2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 does not form the whole of the "previous letter." It is not a unit that can stand on its own, so its beginning and end have been removed and then inserted where it does not fit very well. The reasons for considering these verses an interpolation are (1) that they do not tie closely to the surrounding context and (2) that if they are omitted, the flow of thought is smooth enough that a reader would not notice anything was missing. In relation to the first reason, we wonder why a redactor would put it in at this point if it does not fit with the context very well, especially after he had excised it from its original setting in a fashion that does not form a unit. If a redactor could insert a paragraph that was loosely connected, an author himself could do the same thing.

In relation to the second reason, during a writing project most of us have misplaced a page with a paragraph on it and later found it or lost a segment on a computer and without being able to tell from the resulting writing that something was missing. Besides, we go back into a document and add in sentences and paragraphs without changing the surrounding wording. We add them, not because there are obvious holes without them, but because we thought of other points to include. That a piece of writing flows well without a segment hardly shows that the segment was not part of the original.

Something of the same thing goes for 2 Corinthians 10-13 as a portion of the so-called "sorrowful letter." In this case, there are some other considerations. What else comes from supposing that 10-13 is part of a lost "severe letter"? 2 Corinthians is not likely to have ended after chapter 9, so something has been deleted or at least shoved apart for the insertion of the "severe letter." The materials in 2 Corinthians 10-13 do not form a unit either. The front must have been chopped off. The end of either the "severe letter" or 2 Corinthians must have been omitted, because 2 Corinthians does not now seem to have two conflated conclusions.



The likelihood of such a process—especially being able to detect it later—readers must judge for themselves, but it seems rather uncertain.