

In behalf of the Truth and Christian liberty the following letter is published. This letter was written in reply to a kindly letter from Bro. C. R. Cox, who had written in response to a demand from those in control of the Society at Brooklyn that Bro. Cook's attitude toward them and the 7th Volume be ascertained before appearing on the convention program. We refrain from further comment, but his reply as mailed follows:—

Mr. Chas. R. Cox,
Westfield, N. Y.

Dear Brother Cox:—

Your letter of Aug. 22nd just received and I immediately make reply. At once I make reply to your inquiry. You ask if I "accept the 7th Volume as coming from the Lord through the channel he has used these past forty years." To this question I answer candidly and emphatically "NO." I most earnestly do not believe that this so-called 7th Volume should for a moment be classed along with the six Volumes of Scripture Studies which has meant so much to us all and never meant more to us than right now. If there is any evidence for you and me either internally or externally that this volume called "The Seventh" comes from the same source of the preceding volumes, then there would be occasion for some earnest consideration indeed before rejecting any part of its contents. I am sure you will agree with me that we are to accept no statements coming through earthly channels without proving them to be true, according to God's word and the best light we have. It takes something more than the branding by the printing press of the name "International Bible Student's Association" or Peoples' Pulpit Association" to make a book authentic. I, therefore, read this 7th Volume with a mingling of interest, curiosity and surprise, finding in it much that I fully endorse, because in harmony with what I have previously accepted, as outlined in the six volumes of Studies of Scripture. All that is not in harmony with these or is in addition to these previous volumes I claim the prerogative of using my best judgment and Christian common sense as to the matter of accepting or rejecting.

You state that it is reported that I am actively engaged in opposing the 7th Volume. This report, I will advise, is not true. I have not opposed it either publicly or privately. In private conversation, where an opportunity has been offered to render any help by way of suggestion and of expressing my opinion, I am using my Christian liberty and privilege as best I know how. If we are not here to mutually aid and help each other in every way we can, then our calling and our life as a Christian is a failure, but as to attempting to enforce my opinion on any others or attempting in any way (if I had the right or power) to dictate what others shall accept or reject is the farthest from my thought or purpose.

Our opinion of the 7th Volume, whether favorable or unfavorable to it, is but a matter of opinion and should never be considered more than that. My opinion is not of any more weight or importance than anybody else's opinion. It is a very difficult matter, however, we have all found, to distinguish always between our opinions and the truth. All our difficulties, divisions and strife come because somebody insists upon his or her opinions and that everybody else must have the same opinion that we have, while the truth itself remains unaffected.

While I am glad indeed to have this opportunity of giving my testimony as to my real convictions, yet I want to assure you, my brother, that it grieves me to think of you in any way being distressed or burdened because of my apparent waywardness. I believe you have always trusted me and I certainly have esteemed highly your helpful fellowship and I want you to know that I am just as much your brother as ever, whether we have the same opinion about the 7th Volume or not. I am familiar with church history and know how close our religious convictions lie to all our hearts, and I think I enter quite fully into your feeling and appreciate just how you now look on this matter. You are sincere and are really grieved at heart that Brother Cook should make such a great mistake and turn out so badly in this matter of the 7th Volume. Perhaps for all I know, I may be an additional proof to you that this volume was truly ordained and sent down direct from the Heavenly Court simply because I do not accept it. The good authors of this Volume, I note, take the old time and much worn method of anticipating sure opposition and make this opposition proof that they are right in the stand they take. By this method we can prove anything to be right that has enough in it to be opposed because of the opposition. By such reasoning all the wrongs and the sins and injustices of every generation could be proved to be right, as well as all the cults and

philosophies of men, simply because they have been opposed by those who have stood against them true to their convictions and have struggled for the right and true against the impure or the false.

I must not attempt to say much within the confines of a letter, but I must add this additional thought that I may not necessarily be misunderstood and that my true position may be known. The message of the six Volumes of Scripture Studies and their outline of God's great plans and purposes as revealed in His word, are accepted fully and heartily by me today, as they have been the past twenty years and more. They never were believed more earnestly or with greater appreciation than today. The great truths in them pointed out with words of warning and counsel coming from their faithful author were never needed more by us all than now. I may further say that everything in the 7th Volume that is in accord with the Scripture Studies, and there is much of this, I accept heartily, because I accept it as truth. I have tried to maintain the mind of the Bereans of old, searching the Scripture to see whether these things are so, and I, therefore, must reject much of this so-called 7th Volume as being both fanciful and unreasonable and without Scriptural warrant.

In all kindness let me say that I appreciate too highly the labor of our dear brother Russell and cherish too much his memory after several years of close fellowship with him to consent for a moment to the demands now being made on us, to class this so-called 7th Volume along with or indeed as a part of his writings. I have no thought that Brother Russell would ever have permitted such a message going out to the people. My own judgment is, based on certain things that came to my knowledge while a member of the Bethel Family, that this 7th Volume could have been gotten out two or three years ago or perhaps longer ago than that, if occasion had been offered, or in other words, if Brother Russell's death had occurred earlier. It is important to bear in mind that there has been a tradition among us that the 7th Volume had to be written, and after Brother Russell's death, not being able to find any manuscripts among the things that he left behind, somebody had to get busy and get out the volume that the friends might not be disappointed and one of our cherished expectations might not lack fulfillment.

I had looked forward with pleasure to being with you and the fellowship of the Convention, and not the least of these anticipated pleasures was the expected privilege of meeting our good brothers Woodworth and Fisher, both of whom I know well and appreciate most highly. I presume I would have been frank enough to have expressed privately and kindly my own opinion in regard to their production, but there would not have been a single word of discord, nor any public references reflecting in any way upon their cherished work. I hope I am learning well enough the difference between "opinion" and "truth" not to allow my opinion to cause any discord in my relationship with my brethren.

I want to request of you, Brother Cox, that if any reference is made as to why I am not at the Convention, that you be fair with me and give the explanation which I have outlined in this letter. I know well the natural tendency is to feel that if we do not have the same opinion on all points, which to some seem to be very important, the conclusion is usually reached that the brother is unsound in everything else and has or is "going out of the truth."

I have declared simply my convictions and I am one with you, the same as I have always been, in faith, hope and doctrine. I stand with you firmly without any apologies for the teachings of the six volumes of Scripture Studies. Please, however, do not insist that I shall accept all found in this 7th Volume. If you and the other brethren should insist that I must accept this in toto and make this a test as a basis of fellowship, then you must take the responsibility and not myself. I have too much confidence in you and the good brethren to believe that you have any such thought or desire.

You will pardon me for dictating this letter to a stenographer instead of writing it out. Would have much preferred in some respects to have taken the time to have written out my reply to your inquiry, but in order to have a true copy of the letter, thought it best to dictate the letter and have it typewritten. We all realize in times of stress we are very liable to be misquoted and for others to get a wrong understanding of what we have said or done. I will preserve a copy and you can make any use of this letter that you may see fit in the interest of truth and a right understanding of my position, as well as others who may hold a like opinion.

Assuring you again of my best wishes and heartiest Christian love, with the prayer that God's blessing may rest upon you in your Convention, guiding you with wisdom in all those things that will aid in building one another up in the most holy faith, I am

Your Brother,
FRANK F. COOK.