

Correspondence.

BISHOP GORE'S OPEN LETTER.

To the Editor of the CHURCHMAN.

SIR,—I have read Dr. Griffith Thomas's reply in *THE CHURCHMAN* for August, page 620 *et seq.*, with great surprise.

I had protested against his statement, that while Bishop of Birmingham I had declared that the Virgin Birth of our Lord "could not be regarded as part of the faith." I pointed out that I had written on the subject in a published work of that date, entitled, "The New Theology and the Old Religion," in precisely the opposite sense. He replies that an Irish newspaper had quoted from a report in a Birmingham newspaper a statement of mine to the effect that "the evidence of our Lord's birth of a Virgin was not part of the original apostolic testimony, and still to-day this question is not a ground on which belief is asked."

Now, I have repeatedly dealt with this subject in public volumes—"Bampton Lectures" in 1891, "Dissertations" in 1896, and the volume already referred to, "The New Theology and the Old Religion," 1907, as well as in other printed sermons. I have always pointed out why the Virgin Birth could not have formed part of the original apostolic testimony as described in the beginning of the Acts and the earliest Gospel, and also why it was not put forth as the ground of belief in our Lord, but that nevertheless as soon as the fact was known, on the evidence doubtless of Mary and Joseph, it was recognized as an essential part of the faith, and was enshrined in the earliest Creeds, and I have always maintained that it still remains an essential part of the faith.

Dr. Griffith Thomas has chosen to make a damaging statement about me without reading what I had said, and this statement was directly contrary to my real opinion constantly expressed.—Yours faithfully,

C. OXON.

CUDDESDON, WHEATLEY, OXON,
August 8.

[A copy of the Bishop of Oxford's letter has been sent to Dr. Griffith Thomas, who asks us to print the following reply :]

To the Editor of the CHURCHMAN.

SIR,—I, in turn, have read the Bishop of Oxford's rejoinder "with great surprise," for I notice that he does not deny the use of the words already quoted from his lecture at Birmingham. Let me state them once again :

"The evidence of our Lord's birth of a Virgin was not part of the original apostolic testimony, and still to-day this question is not a ground on which belief is asked."

I pointed out that these words were quoted by the *Church of Ireland Gazette* and by correspondents in the *Guardian* and *Yorkshire Observer* as a proof that the Bishop's view, as therein stated, is not fundamentally different from that recently set forth by Dr. Sanday, against which the Bishop wrote in his Open Letter. And I observe that the Bishop makes no reference whatever to this contention, which is obviously either true or false.

It is for Dr. Gore to reconcile this statement (presumably) made in Birmingham with those referred to by him from his other works. And until he does so, I must respectfully maintain that I have not misquoted or misused his Birmingham utterance.

I venture to add that it is unfair of the Bishop to say that I have made "a damaging statement about him without reading what he had said." On the contrary, I have quoted words which appeared as part of his lecture, the reporter's notes having been corrected by the Bishop himself. This is surely "reading what he had said."

It is indeed a "damaging statement"; but I submit that it is one for which the Bishop alone is responsible.

Yours faithfully,

W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS.

August 17.