—or that *the first* did so, and this was  
subsequent to it. Now *both of these  
senses* till recently seemed to be *inadmissible*. For Quirinus was not known  
to have been governor of Syria till the  
year of Rome 758, after the banishment of  
Archelaus, and the addition of his territory  
to the province of Syria. And the birth  
of our Lord occurred *at least eight years  
before this,* previous to Herod’s death, and  
when *Sentius Saturninus was governor of  
Syria*. But it has been made highly  
probable, by A. W. Zampt of Berlin, that  
Quirinus was TWICE governor of Syria.  
The substance of his researches is given at  
length in the note in my Greek Testament.  
The result of it is, that Zumpt fixes the  
time of his *first governorship* at from  
B.C. 4 to B.C. 1. It is true this does not  
quite remove our difficulty. But it brings  
it within such narrow limits, that any  
slight error in calculation, or even the  
latitude allowed by the words **was first  
made** might well cover it. I may mention  
it as remarkable, that Justin Martyr  
(Century 2) three times distinctly asserts  
that *our Lord was born under Quirinus*,  
and *appeals to the register then made*, as  
if from it the fact might, if necessary, be  
confirmed.

We conclude then, that an assessment  
or enrolment of names with a view to ascertain the population of the empire, *was  
commanded and put in force at this time*.  
It was unaccompanied (probably) by any  
payment of money. We know that Augustus  
drew up an account or *summary of the whole  
empire*, which took many years to arrange  
and complete, and of which the enrolment  
of the inhabitants of the provinces would  
naturally form a part. Of the data for  
this compilation, the enrolment in our text might be one.

That *Judæa was not a Roman province at this time,*is no objection to our text; for the compilation  
of Augustus contained the “*kingdoms*” of  
the Roman empire, as well as the provinces.

**3–5.] {3}** There is a mixture here of Roman and Jewish customs, which is not at  
all improbable, considering the circumstances. In the Roman census, men, women, and children were all obliged to go  
and be enrolled. But then this census was  
made at their *dwelling-place*, not at that  
of their *extraction*. The latter practice  
springs from the Jewish genealogical  
habits, and its adoption in this case *speaks  
strongly for the accuracy of the chronology.* If this enrolment, was by order of  
Augustus, and for the whole empire, it of  
course would be made so as to include *all*,  
after the Roman manner: but inasmuch  
as it was made *under the Jewish king  
Herod,* it was done *after the Jewish  
manner,* in taking this account of each *at  
his own place of extraction*.

{4} Mary being apparently *herself sprung from the lineage of David*  (see ch. i. 32), might on  
this account go to Bethlehem, being, as  
some suppose, an inheritress; but this  
does not seem to be the Evangelist’s meaning, but that, after the Roman manner,  
she *accompanied her husband*.

{5} No stress must be laid on **espoused**, as if she  
were *only* the *betrothed* wife of Joseph at  
this time;—she had been taken to his  
house before this: the history in our text  
happening during the time indicated by  
Matt. i. 25.

**7.]** Now that *“first-born”* has disappeared: from the text of  
St. Matthew (i. 25), it must be here remarked, that although the term may undoubtedly be used of an *only* child, such  
use is necessarily always connected with  
the expectation of others to follow, and can