

**WAS CHRIST BORN AT  
BETHLEHEM? A STUDY  
ON THE CREDIBILITY  
OF ST. LUKE; PP.1-279**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649731329

Was Christ Born at Bethlehem? A Study on the Credibility of St. Luke; pp.1-279 by W. M. Ramsay

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Cover @ 2017

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Bethlehem? A Study on  
the Credibility of St. Luke. By <sup>Wm</sup> W. Mitchell  
Ramsay, M.A., D.C.L. \* \* \*

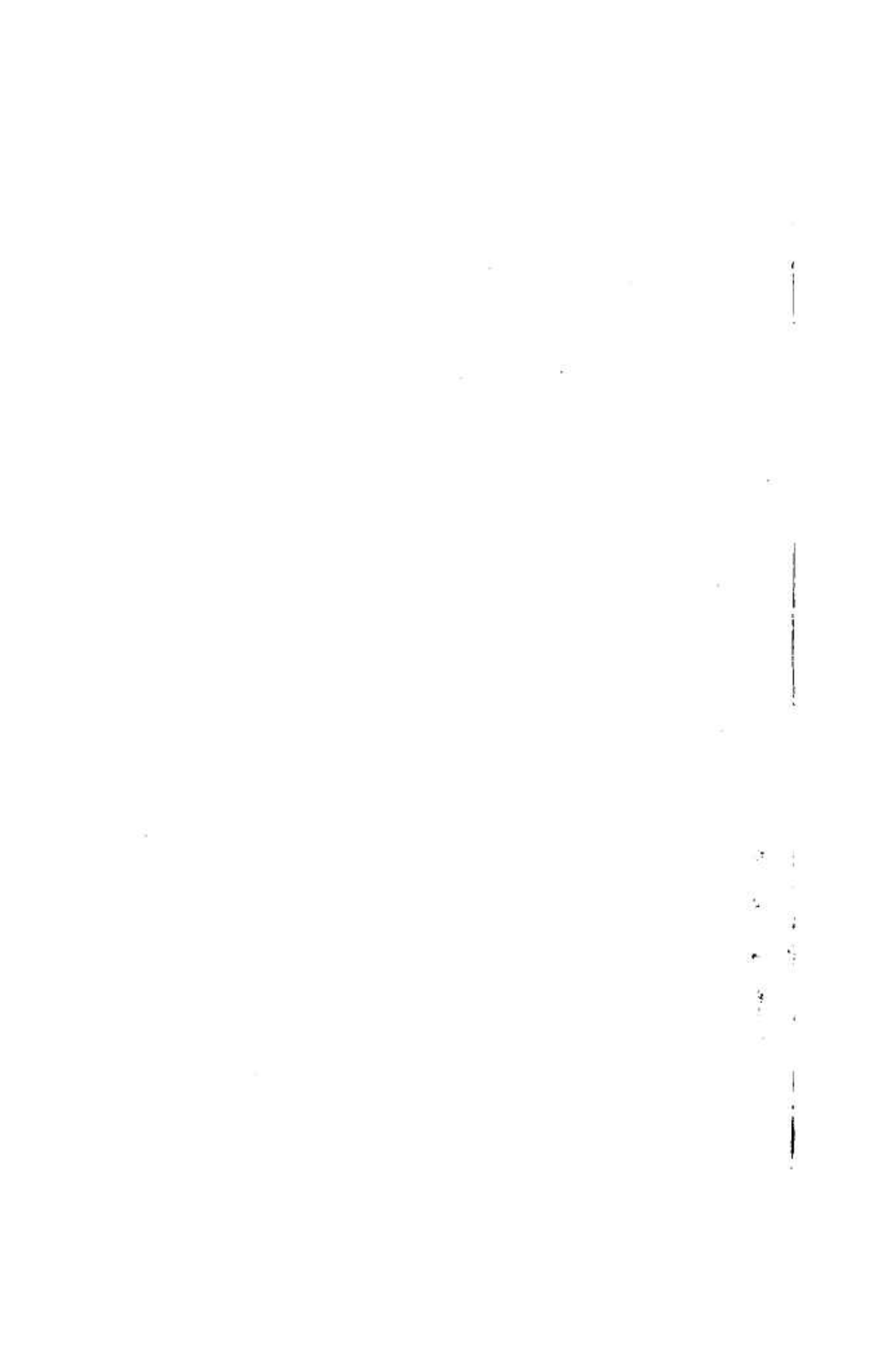
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SECOND EDITION

LONDON: HODDER AND  
STOUGHTON + + 27  
PATERNOSTER ROW 1898



**Dedicated**  
**TO THE MEMORY OF**  
**MY UNCLE**  
**ANDREW MITCHELL**





## PREFACE

UNDERSTANDING that a certain criticism implied a sort of challenge to apply my theory of Luke's character as a historian to the Gospel, I took what is generally acknowledged to be the most doubtful passage, from the historian's view, in the New Testament, Luke ii. 1-4. Many would not even call it doubtful. Strauss (in his *New Life of Jesus*) and Renan dismiss it in a short footnote as unworthy even of mention in the text.

This passage, interpreted according to the view which I have maintained—that Luke was a great historian, and that he appreciated the force of the Greek superlative (in spite of the contradiction of Professor Blass and others)—gave the result that Luke was acquainted with a system of Periodic Enrolments in Syria, and probably in the East

generally. I looked for evidence of such a system ; and it was offered by recent discoveries in Egypt. The confirmation afforded to Luke was explained in the *Expositor*, April and June, 1897.

Realising better in subsequent thought the bearings of the Egyptian discovery, I have enlarged these two articles into an argument against the view that Luke sinks, in the accessories of his narrative, below the standard exacted from ordinary historians. At the risk of repeating views already stated in previous works, the second chapter attempts to put clearly the present state of the question as regards the two books of Luke, without expecting others to be familiar with my views already published.

The names of those scholars whose views I contend against are hardly ever mentioned. The scholars of the "destructive" school seem to prefer not to be mentioned, when one differs from them. I have learned much from them ; I was once guided by them ; I believe that the right understanding of the

New Testament has been very greatly advanced by their laudable determination to probe and to understand everything, as is stated on p. 33 ; but I think their conclusions are to a great extent erroneous. It might, however, be considered disingenuous if I concealed that the weighty authority of Gardthausen, the historian of Augustus, is dead against me, p. 102.

My best thanks are due to Professor Paterson, who has discussed many points and cleared up my views in many ways ; to Mr. B. P. Grenfell, who read the first proof of chapter vii., and enabled me to strengthen it ; and, at last, to Mr. F. G. Kenyon ; to Mr. A. C. Hunt ; to Mr. Vernon Bartlett ; and to Mr. A. Souter.

The language of the book has profited much by my wife's care in revision.

It would be impossible—and only wearisome to the reader if it were possible—to trace the origin of every thought expressed in the following pages. Where I was conscious, at the moment of writing, that I was